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THE RISE AND DEMISE OF INFORMATION CANADA

by

Beverley A. Edwards, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
Department of Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario.

October 1979

Abstract

The Rise and Demise of Information Canada

This thesis attempts to determine whether a centralized, decentralized or mixed system of government information services is more desirable for the Canadian Government to adopt and maintain. Information Canada's history and functions are described and discussed in order to provide a case study from which conclusions regarding the future of Canada's information services may be drawn. The Rise and Demise of Information Canada points out the various administrative, political and financial problems faced by this agency throughout its short life span and the numerous reasons for Information Canada's abolition. Finally, it proposes a new mixed system of Canadian Government information services which encompasses the most favourable aspects of the centralized and decentralized systems along with the most desirable information functions of Information Canada. It also emphasizes the urgent need for a comprehensive government information policy, in order to bring some rationality into the information process.

ABSTRACT

Through a formal resolution passed at the World Council of Indigenous Peoples' Conference by representatives from a majority of the countries where indigenous peoples live, the wish was expressed that aboriginal rights should be recognized as a principle of international law. Our goal, in this thesis, is to examine the implications of this demand with specific reference to Canada. In the absence of extensive scholarly analyses on the subject, and indeed, on account of the general misunderstanding of the concept of aboriginal rights, this thesis provides an analysis which has never been attempted before, and indeed, a new perspective to international human rights. In pursuing this objective, our research method consists of an analysis of existing data on the subject from a variety of sources including published research, historical studies and even primary archival material as well as the results of research surveys of our own. With this method, we focus on the social, economic, cultural, political and legal components of aboriginal rights, which help to identify a model of dualism and conflict in Canada. At the same time, these variables define a Canadian Indigenous Community as a distinct national minority, thus permitting us to relate established concepts of human and minority rights to aboriginal rights as well.

By its very meaning, the term aboriginal rights divides Canadians between descendants of the first inhabitants of the country and others. This initial division establishes cause for other distinguishing characteristics which tend towards further polarization of the groups on account of different cultural perceptions, unequal standards of living, and a different world view. When a separate Indigenous Community has been identified, we examine it further in order to find out the cohesiveness of the group, since particular degrees of cohesion would determine the international rights for which the group would qualify.

A closely knit group may, in fact, possess attributes of nationalism which can be of particular interest to the international community. The existence of power relationships of colonial dominance would also evoke a particular international response. Since the group is identified as a national minority, we are able to examine the problem from the perspective of the rights of national minorities which, already, are well established by international custom. This allows a review of the interests of the United Nations and its organs in that subject, as well as the issue of the rights of indigenous minorities. It permits as well, a close scrutiny of Canada's response to international enquiry about its indigenous minorities.

Our analysis therefore allows some comparisons with conditions of indigenous deprivation in other countries, which resulted in a series of recommendations based upon international experience in these matters, including the issue of decolonization. Conclusions of dualism involving the Indigenous Community of Canada, explain, in the end, various aspects of aboriginal rights, a concept which lies at the roots of the conflict, like a pervading ideology. The term refers to a special relationship with the land as Provider and Creator. It is a reassertion of the right to traditional livelihood patterns, to the cultural integrity, and even the residual sovereignty, of Indigenous Canadians. With these assertions, the leaders of this group come into conflict with the social status quo, the imperatives of industrial and economic development, and even the political stability of the Canadian Confederation.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Trudeau's essential error or betrayal is centralization, not only not required by scale, but inefficient because of it."¹ Information Canada is an example of one of Prime Minister Trudeau's experiments in centralization which took place regularly before his government made a firm commitment to decentralize some of its operations. The Canadian Government has not been able to decide which system best suits its purposes, especially its important task of keeping the Canadian public informed of its policies, programs and operations. Throughout the history of the Canadian Government's information services, they have moved from total decentralization to partial centralization then back again to almost total decentralization. What then is the most desirable system for Canada, centralization, decentralization or a combination of these two systems? In order to determine which system is best suited to meet the Canadian public's increasing informational needs, three possibilities shall be examined. Furthermore, because Information Canada was the one and only attempt by the Trudeau Government to partially centralize the Canadian Federal

¹Phyllis Brönfman in Peter C. Newman, Bronfman Dynasty: The Rothchilds of the New World, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1976), p. 161.

Government's information services, it shall be examined in detail as a case study and in order to help determine what type of information system is best suited for the Canadian situation.

The short life span of Information Canada has left many people to wonder if the creation of this agency was just a futile exercise and a gross waste of public funds or whether it was a necessary and needed organization which should not have been abolished for strictly monetary reasons. These questions need to be answered if one is to decide whether or not the reasons put forward by the Canadian Federal Government to justify the abolition of Information Canada were legitimate. This thesis attempts to answer these and other pertinent questions.

Other questions which need to be answered if a complete understanding of the creation and abolition of Information Canada is to be made possible, are as follows: When Information Canada was first introduced to the Canadian Parliament, it was heralded as a great step forward in the area of better provision of government information. If this was true, why was it abolished just a few years later? Was Information Canada abolished for purely economic reasons or were there other undisclosed reasons for its sudden disappearance? If the need for such an agency to deal with government information was so great, why was it phased out, while other programs retained their budget allocations or had them increased? Does a need still exist for the services provided by Information Canada and if so, what, if any programs now exist to meet those needs? Should Information Canada or a similar agency or any of its services be re-introduced by the

Canadian Federal Government? Was Information Canada a useful and viable organization?

In order to answer the above questions, explain the short history of Information Canada, present the arguments for and against this agency and determine what system of government information services is most desirable for the Canadian Government to adopt, several research methods were used. First, several pieces of published and unpublished printed material were used as historical and political references. These were also used to provide several sources of differing opinions on various matters. This printed material included newspaper and periodical articles, government publications, government reports, books and independent reports. Secondly, personal and telephone interviews were conducted with some of Information Canada's former employees in order to find answers to some questions which were not covered in the printed material. Thirdly, numerous letters were written to former employees of Information Canada, officials within the various government departments' information offices, ex-Cabinet Ministers responsible for Information Canada, the three leaders of the major political parties, other politicians and ex-members of "The Twelve Apostles".² The replies to these letters also provided answers to several questions which needed

²"The Twelve Apostles" were a group of twelve men who were top officials in the information services of the major departments of the Canadian Government. They worked in co-operation with Information Canada's officials in order to give advice and opinions on the agency's functions.

to be answered and opinions of Information Canada's past performance and the present and future of the Canadian Government's information services. Finally, some of Information Canada's files were examined at the National Archives shortly after they were released to the public in August, 1978.

Before one reads this thesis, it is useful to be aware of its structure. In short, it begins with a theoretical discussion on the favourable and unfavourable aspects of centralization and decentralization of information services, with an attempt to determine which system is more desirable for western democratic governments to adopt. It then proceeds to examine Information Canada's operations and functions throughout its five years of existence with emphasis on its ability to provide more and improved government information to the Canadian public. It also points out the numerous problems and faults that this agency was forced to face throughout its short life span. Then it examines and explains the numerous reasons for Information Canada's final fate, abolition. Finally, it ties the theoretical discussion to the case study, when it points out the direction that future government information services should take in order to meet the continuous and increasing informational needs of the Canadian public. Furthermore, it proposes a desirable system of government information services for the Canadian Government to adopt.

There are seven chapters which divide this topic into logical portions. Chapter One is the Introduction. It states the problem which needs to be solved and the questions which need to be asked in order to solve this problem. It also

describes what research methods were used in order to write this thesis. Finally, it outlines the structure of this thesis and the contents of each chapter.

Chapter Two is the theoretical chapter. It discusses the pros and cons of centralized and decentralized government information services. This chapter also compares and contrasts the information services of four western democracies. These are the information services of France, Great Britain, Canada and the United States. Finally, it concludes that total centralization and total decentralization are undesirable. A suitable system would contain the most favourable aspects from both systems in order to induce efficiency and effectiveness.

Chapter Three discusses the creation of Information Canada. It outlines the major events leading up to this agency's creation including the Task Force on Government Information. This chapter also describes the announcement of the agency's creation in the House of Commons and the initial reactions of the opposition political parties to this announcement. Furthermore, it also examines the criticisms voiced by members of the mass media and various officials within the government departments' information services in reaction to the establishment of Information Canada. Finally, it discusses the fact that Information Canada was established without a clear mandate and through an Order-In-Council, instead of having its responsibilities and activities enshrined in an Act of Parliament.

Chapter Four deals with the first era of Information Canada's existence, which lasted for twenty-six months. It

discusses the logical division between the agency's two distinct periods of operation and the initial set-up of the agency. In addition, this chapter outlines Information Canada's main activities throughout this time period. Chapter Four then describes and discusses the first era's problems, faults and Information Canada's attempts to make itself a more viable and legitimate government institution.

Information Canada's second era of operation is the main topic of Chapter Five. This chapter discusses how the second era differs from the first and what activities the agency was involved in throughout this time period. Furthermore, it explains the changes which took place under the new Director-General, Guy D'Avignon and how these changes affected Information Canada. In addition, it describes the criticisms of the agency which were put forward by the Wall Report and The Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada and these reports' suggestions for change. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the problems and faults which the agency faced throughout its second era and its last ditch efforts to save itself from destruction.

Chapter Six begins with a summary of the major events leading up to Information Canada's abolition. It covers the Finance Minister's announcement of its abolition in the House of Commons and the reasons which the government put forward in order to explain this action. This chapter also discusses other reasons for Information Canada's abolition which were given by various senior civil servants, ex-Information Canada employees and

ex-politicians. Furthermore, the government's reasons for the agency's abolition are refuted and the real reasons are given.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven, is the conclusion to the entire thesis. It examines the question of whether or not Information Canada or any of its services should be re-introduced to the Canadian Government's information services. It also outlines which services and programs that had formerly belonged to Information Canada are still in existence in their original or modified states. In addition, it discusses Information Canada's past experiences as they relate to the present informational needs of the Canadian Federal Government and the Canadian general public. Finally, it describes what system of information services is most desirable for the government to adopt in order to meet these informational needs, and proposes a new mixed system of government information services.

In summary, this thesis deals with the general question of centralization versus decentralization of government information services. It also uses Information Canada as a case study in order to solve this problem and to help determine which system is most desirable in the Canadian context. In the end, it is found that neither total centralization nor total decentralization is desirable for the Canadian situation. Only a mixed system of government information services which takes advantage of the most favourable aspects of both systems would benefit the Canadian public to the fullest.

CHAPTER II

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES: CENTRALIZATION VERSUS DECENTRALIZATION

"The people's right of access to information about the working of its government is fundamental to the democratic process."³ This statement implies that in order for the public to make rational and knowledgeable decisions about how they are going to vote in elections and whether or not the government should be criticized for its actions between elections, it must be able to obtain access to government information. In modern western democracies, those who are in possession of government information are also in possession of government power. Therefore, in order to have a truly democratic society, all members of a given society must receive equal access to the information stored within the confines of government institutions, agencies and departments. Furthermore, complete and open access to government information should be the normal practice of a democracy, and confined and limited access should be the exception to its normal routine.

If one accepts the previous argument for increased public access to government information and the need for an informed public in a democratic society, then one must determine what

³S. David Thurman, The Right of Access to Information From the Government, (New York: Oceana Publications Inc., 1973), p. v.

type of information service or system is most desirable and able to achieve these ends. Furthermore, even if complete and open access to government information is not possible in the foreseeable future, the type of information service that is implemented to carry out the normal information functions of a democratic government determines how informed and knowledgeable the public will be about government policy decisions and programs. Therefore, whether or not a government's information services are centralized will help determine the amount of access an individual member of the general public has to available government information, how much control a government has over the release of information, and what potential exists for the manipulation of information by government officials for the explicit purpose of keeping the government in power.

Whether a government's information services should be centralized or decentralized has been debated extensively by political scientists and public administrators in western democracies throughout the era since World War II. This debate over how centralized information services should be will be examined in the light of developments which have taken place in Canada, Great Britain, France and the United States. In addition, an attempt will be made to determine whether or not a centralized information service is desirable from the public's point of view, since it is the public which is ultimately affected in one way or another by the implementation of a given information system.

A centralized government information service is seen as desirable by some people because it would facilitate the flow

of information to and from the government. The government, by virtue of its position in society, is in possession of vast quantities of information that it collects by itself and from outside sources. As a result, it is in receipt of huge amounts of information which needs to be organized, catalogued and eventually made available to the public and various government departments and agencies. "It is therefore both legitimate and essential that within clearly and publicly defined policies, the State develop instruments to collect, store, retransmit and, in some cases, interpret the information it possesses."⁴ This function, according to some people, should be the sole responsibility of a central information service.

Another reason a centralized information service is seen as desirable is that it would eliminate the duplication and fragmentation of government information services. In many instances, two or more government departments have closely related programs or responsibility for different portions of a single program. As a result, these departments may produce informational literature on the same program which is basically identical or neither will produce informational literature on the program because they expect the other department to do so. Proponents of a central information agency maintain that a centralized system of information production, co-ordination and dissemination

⁴ Canada, Task Force on Government Information, To Know and Be Known: The Report of the Task Force on Government Information, Volume II, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), p. 19.

would not allow either situation to occur. They maintain that "Policy decisions will still be taken by the departments; the information agency will have the responsibility for seeing what the departments want to get across is prepared, packaged and distributed in the most effective way."⁵

Frequently, individuals do not know what government department or agency to contact for the information they are seeking. As a result, they may expend large amounts of time and energy looking for a single piece of information. According to the proponents of centralization, a central information service would not allow this to happen. It would receive most requests for all forms of information and either supply it directly or inform the inquirers of the proper sources to contact.

Arguments have also been put forward against the centralization of government information services. Proponents of decentralization maintain that the centralization of information services creates an undesirable monopoly situation. It allows the government to accumulate vast quantities of information under one agency and in effect, monopolize the information market. They warn that "Where knowledge and information are the monopoly of the few, the conditions of modern society ensure that political power would also be concentrated in the hands of the few."⁶ The public, as a result, would only receive that information

⁵Clive Baxter, "Ottawa to Beam its Message Through Single Agency", Financial Post, Volume 63, April 26, 1969.

⁶Canada, Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada, (Queen's Printer, 1974), p. 7.

that had been "pre-selected, pre-evaluated and pre-packaged."⁷

It has been argued by critics of centralized information services that the organization and co-ordination of government information through one agency would not be a more efficient system than allowing numerous agencies and departments to carry out their own information functions. They maintain that the channelling of all government information into a central information agency "would be more likely to produce an artificial and unnecessary bottleneck rather than a rational path to popular enlightenment."⁸ In other words, a central agency would become overloaded with information from all government and private sources and would spend most of its time organizing and filing information rather than responding promptly to requests from the public. The departments, on the other hand, would have less information to organize and catalogue and therefore, would be able to handle public requests more quickly and efficiently.

Proponents of decentralization further maintain that a centralized information agency would not be able to adequately meet all the informational needs of all the departments and agencies due to its lack of full understanding of their respective programs, responsibilities and publics. They believe that only the departments and agencies are able to devote the right amount of time and energy which is necessary to formulate and produce information programs that are tailored to the exact

⁷Ibid., p. 7.

⁸Ibid., p. 8.

specifications of the departments and agencies.

We do not believe that a standardized form of organization for the function can or should be imposed on ministries. Organization must be developed according to operating needs, taking into account the level of communications, activities, the nature of programs, the publics served and the total organizational structure.⁹

A fourth criticism of central information services is that they may be used by governments for purposes other than the dissemination of government information. Critics fear that they will be used as a means to maintain the existing government in power. A government may simply use the information service to produce information which is only favourable to itself or it may produce information which is couched in jargon that is too difficult for a layman to understand or a combination of both. Claus Mueller explains the problems associated with the language government uses in the information it releases as follows:

If the members of a political community are not significantly involved in the decision-making process and if they do not dispose of sufficient socio-political knowledge as well as language that facilitates the unscrambling of government jargon and expository style often designed to disguise intent, they have no counterinterpretations to offset official ones, nor can they establish relationships among fragmented pieces of political information they may obtain through the mass media.¹⁰

Finally, proponents of decentralization do not believe that

⁹Ontario, Committee on Government Productivity, Interim Report Number Seven, (Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1972), p. 18.

¹⁰Claus Mueller, The Politics of Communication, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 87.

a centralized information service will serve regional interests. They maintain that an information service which originates and operates out of central offices cannot possibly understand or meet the distinct needs of the various communities and the numerous sub-groupings within these communities. Regional offices designed to meet the specific needs of the regions in which they are located are seen by decentralists as desirable alternatives to centrally operated offices for the following reasons:

- 1) regional program delivery could become more sensitive to the needs of particular areas.
- 2) ... (it) could provide more opportunities for citizen participation in the decision-making process.
- 3) ... (it) could create greater opportunities for coordinating the delivery of services at the local level.¹¹

From the previous discussion it is obvious that the centralization of government information services has many advantages as well as numerous drawbacks. However, before any conclusions are reached it is desirable to examine the developments which have taken place in various western democracies, in order to understand how their central governments have coped with the debate over how centralized an information service should be. The developments within France, Great Britain, the United States, and Canada will provide a reasonable cross-section of western democratic countries for this purpose.

"Between 1944 and 1969, France had a centralized government

¹¹ Ontario, Committee on Government Productivity, Interim Report Number Three, (Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1971), p. 52.

information (services) headed by a Minister of Information but in June, 1969, the ministry was disbanded and replaced by a more strictly interdepartmental liason."¹² Even though it appears that the French Government is tending to move away from a centralized information system, it must be made clear that the French system has never been completely centralized. During the period of centralization, "All ministries maintained their own press and information services, and they have always been free to issue their own press releases when they wished."¹³ Therefore, the previous system in France was a somewhat decentralized system with the central agency performing more of a coordination role between departments than an all-encompassing role of collection, organization, transmission and re-transmission of government information.

The Direction de la Documentation Française, which is formally attached to the Government's General Secretariat, has carried out many of the functions that would normally be given to a central agency. A government order which was issued on November 30, 1950 gave the Direction de la Documentation Française the following functions:

1. It is charged with assembling general documentary information on the main present-day problems affecting France and other countries,

¹²Peter P. Mills, "Information, Information Services and the Task Force on Government Information", Research Paper for the Department of Political Science, Carleton University, Ottawa, April, 1971, p. 47.

¹³Canada, To Know and Be Known, Vol. II, p. 37.

with a view to placing it at the disposal of Government departments and the public.

2. It publishes and distribute(s) documents of general information and popularization.
3. While carrying out this varied work, it achieves interministerial information, on the one hand in the field of documentary information, on the other in that of the publishing and distribution of the various general-interest publications of Government departments.¹⁴

Throughout its history the Direction de la Documentation Française has become an increasingly important component of the French Government's information services which "... are the biggest and best funded of any in the noncommunist world."¹⁵ Even though its importance has been increased, its functions have basically remained the same, except they have become more elaborate and sophisticated. This is due to the modern technological developments which have taken place in the information field, such as the introduction of computerized information, and the additional experience that this department has gained in this area.

In short, the French Government's information services are not totally decentralized nor are they completely centralized. In fact, they contain elements of both systems. They are partially decentralized due to the fact that the various departments and agencies have been given control over what types

¹⁴France, "Note D'Information: The 'Direction De La Documentation Française', Unpublished informational notes distributed by the French Embassy, Ottawa, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁵Terry L. Deibel and Walter R. Roberts, Culture and Information: Two Foreign Policy Functions, (Washington D.C.: Sage Publications, 1976), p. 24.

and amounts of information are released. The departments and agencies are also free to write and publish their own periodicals, pamphlets, books and various other forms of informational literature. The French Government's information services are also partially centralized and this is evident when one examines the functions of the Direction de la Documentation Française. It was established to meet the government's perceived need to co-ordinate the information activities of the various departments and agencies and to make available professional advice and assistance to the departments and agencies for their publishing, research and information dissemination efforts. "It has, moreover, inherited the activities of bodies that no longer exist because of political or historical circumstances, and has deemed it desirable not to interrupt work that has no equivalent."¹⁶

The British Government also does not have a completely centralized information system. However, it does have a Central Office of Information which "is a common service department which produces information and publicity material, and supplies publicity services required by other Government departments which are responsible for the policy expressed in its work."¹⁷ Two major principles guide the operations of the Central Office of Information. First, public policy and public relations are not

¹⁶ France, "Note D'Information: The 'Direction De La Documentation Française', p. 2.

¹⁷ Britain, Central Office of Information, The Central Government of Britain, (London: Central Office of Information, 1977), p. 17.

separate functions of the government. Therefore, each Cabinet Minister must announce his department's policies to both the British Parliament and the general public. As a result,

there has never been in peacetime a single Minister of Information with sole responsibility for government information services and for every aspect of the Government's relations with the press and broadcasting authorities.¹⁸

The second principle which guides the operations of the Central Office of Information is the

- a dividing line is drawn between press and public relations work -- liason with newspapers and broadcasting - and the deliberate production of material, paid for out of public funds, in order to give information direct to the public.¹⁹

- In other words, the Central Office of Information will produce and distribute only information which the departments request it to produce and disseminate and which does not purposely advocate a political party's point of view. It will only produce, distribute and advertise information which factually presents the official government position. It will place advertisements and announcements in the mass media only if they meet the above criteria and are not to be used during an election.

¹⁸ Sir Fife Clark, The Central Office of Information, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), p. 11.

¹⁹ Ibid.

campaign.²⁰

Simply stated, the Central Office of Information was created in April, 1946 in order to supply the departments' information services²¹ with a central agency that is capable of providing them with specialized and professional advice, services and publicity material. Before it came into being, most of the departments and agencies could not afford to hire the skilled and technical staff which was necessary for the production of high quality informational and publicity material. Thus, the Central Office of Information was created to meet a very real need and not to become the political and propaganda arm of the political party in power, as the public once feared.²² In fact, the C.O.I.

²⁰ A number of established conventions governing the C.O.I.'s relations with the press have evolved since its creation in 1946. These conventions include the selection of periodicals and newspapers for advertising purposes on a purely commercial basis, its refusal to distribute Minister's speeches which were made on political party occasions, its non-participation in the editing and writing of official notices and the stoppage of departmental exhibits, information dissemination and advertising during general election campaigns. *Ibid.*, p. 159-160.

²¹ Each British Government department and agency has its own information service which, among other functions, issues press releases, writes and edits informational literature on its respective policies and programs and distributes its Minister's political speeches. Crown corporations and nationalized industries also have their own information services, but the Central Office of Information does not provide any services to them. They are expected to pay for all their advertising and informational literature out of their respective budgets. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²² Until the early 1950's, the Central Office of Information was suspected of being a propaganda agency by the public, press and opposition. Their suspicions were founded on the fact that the C.O.I. descended from the Ministry of Information, which was a propaganda and press censorship agency during the Second World War. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

is non-ministerial, non-policy-making, non-press relations, non-political (i.e.) not a party instrument), and ... providing a common production and advisory service to all ministries, both home and overseas; having its own Vote from Parliament and operating mainly on allied service terms; and employing specialized skills across the whole range of paid for publicity.²³

It must be mentioned that information services in Great Britain are highly co-ordinated. The co-ordination takes place at the central, regional and local levels of government. As previously mentioned, the Central Office of Information is responsible for a portion of the co-ordination between government departments. In addition, information services are also co-ordinated through the responsible Cabinet Minister and the Prime Minister's Chief Information Advisor. Thus, the government departments do not normally duplicate each other's efforts and there are no serious information gaps left wide open because one department expects another to produce informational literature it feels is the other's responsibility.

The domestic information services of the United States Government, on the other hand, have developed on an almost decentralized basis. This is mainly due to the evolutionary pattern most information offices in the United States Government have had to follow. Instead of establishing one large information office per government department, which would handle all of the information functions for that department, numerous program information offices have evolved which carry out information

²³Ibid., p. 156.

functions with little aid from the department's information office. As a result, a large number of government information offices "are attached to particular programs or groups of programs and handle all public inquiries relating to those programs."²⁴

One major problem with this type of information system is obvious. Very little co-ordination of information services takes place when so many information offices are established in a basically independent manner. In fact, it has been pointed out by an observer of the United States' system that very little co-ordination takes place between the numerous smaller offices within each department, never mind the various departments. According to Wayne Phillips, the Director of the Division of Public Affairs in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, "So fragmented is the world in which we live that the public information officers of the 12 federal departments, for example, know each other only casually and have only infrequent contacts in the course of their work."²⁵

The need for some type of central co-ordinating information service has been accentuated during the last twelve years. This is mainly due to the problems that have arisen since the United States Government has implemented its Freedom of Information

²⁴Wayne Phillips, "Organizing an Information Office" in Ray E. Hiebert and Carleton E. Spitzer (ed.), The Voice of Government, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1968), p. 248.

²⁵Canada, To Know and Be Known, Volume II, p. 36.

Act. A phenomenal number of requests for information have flooded into the various government departments and agencies since 1967. As a result, the processing of these resources has become a major function of the information offices. However, many departments and agencies, because of the lack of co-ordination, have not been able to meet these requests within the specified time limits of law nor have they been able to answer questions and inquiries efficiently. Furthermore, "record-keeping requirements are so loose that it is virtually impossible to determine the extent to which various departments and agencies provide information or withhold it."²⁶ Therefore, a central co-ordinating agency is necessary, under these circumstances, to direct and organize the handling of requests for information and to ensure that the various government departments and agencies comply with the provisions that have been set out in the Freedom of Information Act.

It is interesting to note that the foreign information services of the United States Government have not evolved in the same manner as its domestic information services. In fact, they are almost completely centralized. On April 1, 1978 the International Communication Agency was established by the Reorganization Plan No. 2 of President Carter. "Its basis is a consolidation of the former U. S. Information Agency and the

²⁶ Warren Weaver Jr., "U. S. Information Act: Difficulties Despite Success", New York Times, August 8, 1977.

former Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the Department of State."²⁷ Without getting into specifics, it is reasonable to state that the International Communication Agency co-ordinates and provides all the informational material and services which the United States Government feels are necessary in order to "... encourage the sharing of ideas and cultural activities among the people of the United States and the people of other nations."²⁸ However, it is prohibited from disseminating within the United States information which was prepared for use overseas and, as a result, the American public are unaware of what is being said about their country to foreign audiences.

The Canadian Federal Government's information services are currently organized on a decentralized basis. Each government department and agency is responsible for the planning, organization and dissemination of its own informational material. Between 1970 and 1975, the Canadian Government attempted to centralize some of the functions of the information services, in order to make them more efficient and effective. However, this experiment in partial centralization was not totally successful, but it was not totally unsuccessful either. Those elements of Information Canada which were seen by the government to be worthwhile and useful have continued up to the present

²⁷United States, International Communication Agency, "International Communication Agency: Fact Sheet", Office of Congressional and Public Liason, International Communication Agency, 1978, p..2.

²⁸Ibid., p. 1.

of the Crown.³⁸

As a result, the departments and agencies were not willing to implement a system of comprehensive information services and therefore, they kept their information functions to a bare minimum.

According to the Task Force on Government Information,

It is not surprising then to find that consecutive Federal Governments have reacted in conservative ways to the problem of information presentation; nor to find, on occasion, that the only official who felt strongly enough to break the conservatism and take some personal initiative to steer the course of information policy was the Prime Minister of the day.^{38a}

As public pressure increased for more government information, more information officers were hired by the government. However, ex-newspapermen, rather than trained and experienced information officers, were often hired to fill department vacancies.^{38b} Frequently; they were not given sufficient information about the departments' and agencies' programs and policies, and so the press lost any confidence it may have had in the information officers.

(T)he reporters in the Parliamentary Press Gallery, many of whom had their own direct contact with ministries or their staff, upon receiving press releases and requiring additional information would bypass the Information Branch and go directly to the top.³⁹

In short, by 1968 the Canadian Government's information services needed to be restructured. Interdepartmental co-operation and

³⁸Letter to Beverley Edwards from a senior civil servant and former official within Information Canada, Ottawa, August 8, 1978.

^{38a}Canada, To Know and Be Known, Volume II, p. 123.

^{38b}Letter to Beverley Edwards from a senior civil servant and former official within Information Canada, Ottawa, August 8, 1978.

³⁹Ibid.

in which they live, information offices designed to meet these special needs should be located in those areas which need them. Thus, the special informational needs of many people within various unique areas of a country will be met without placing extra demands upon a central information agency, which may not be able to satisfy these demands adequately.

In conclusion, it may be stated that there are serious drawbacks to both the centralized and decentralized systems of government information services. However, a mixed system which contains the most desirable aspects of both systems may eliminate many of these drawbacks or at least keep them to a minimum. It must be remembered that it is the public which suffers when a system does not fulfill the needs of a society. If one assumes that a democratic society can only operate properly when its population is informed and knowledgeable, then democratic governments must take steps towards making this more possible, instead of making it more difficult to achieve. Therefore, a mixed system of information services, for the reasons which have been stated previously, seems to be the only system which will allow the public to become well-informed about government programs and policies and able to act responsibly as a result.

the Federal Government's departments and agencies felt that the creation of Information Canada would result in a loss of a large portion of their power, personnel and financial resources.³⁴

Moreover, Information Canada was experiencing serious internal difficulties by 1974. Many of the problems it was facing were pointed out in the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada and the Wall Report.

As expected, the problems pointed out by the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance were mainly of a financial nature. In general, this committee wanted Information Canada to keep costs down by the continuous evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of all information programs and the implementation of the most efficient methods of information dissemination. The Wall Report, on the other hand, pointed out serious administrative problems that Information Canada was facing. The most important problems D. F. Wall, the assistant secretary of the Cabinet for security matters, found with Information Canada, in particular, and the Canadian Government's information services, in general, may be stated as follows:

a directionless Information Canada which maintains inadequate contact with the departments it serves, poorly prepared information packages, inadequate explanations of the content and rationale of policies, and exaggerated tendency of civil servants to remain cloistered and unavailable to journalists and MPs, an outdated Official Secrets Act and an unduly restrictive Oath of Office and Secrecy which invite

³⁴ These points are expanded upon in later chapters, so they are only stated briefly at this point.

ridicule and abuse, and a pervasive and long-standing tradition of over-classification of information.³⁵

On December 18, 1975, the Federal Government announced that Information Canada would be phased out by March 31, 1976, along with other government programs which were seen as economic burdens upon the public treasury. By the middle of 1976, few traces were left of this experiment in the central co-ordination of the Canadian Government's information services. Even though Information Canada had serious financial and administrative problems, one can not say that it was a total waste of money and personnel. During its short life span it was able to market huge quantities of books, reports and periodicals that were produced by all of the government departments. It was also able to provide vast quantities of written and unwritten information to the public through its regional enquiry centres. Most importantly, "With the co-operation of other departments it (had) ... begun to fill certain information gaps that none of them could fill on their own."³⁶ Nevertheless, Information Canada was totally disbanded by April, 1976, and the Canadian Government's information services reverted back to the previous system of decentralization.

From the previous discussion, it may be concluded that a

³⁵Paul G. Thomas, "Secrecy and Publicity in Canadian Government", Journal of Canadian Public Administration, Spring, 1976, p. 159.

³⁶Harry Bruce, "Misinformation Canada" in Maclean's Magazine, January, 1975, p. 50.

system of government information services which contains some elements of both the centralized and decentralized systems may be the most desirable from the general public's point of view. This mixed system should partially consist of a central co-ordination agency which is properly protected from partisan abuse. One of its main functions should be to co-ordinate the information efforts of the government departments and agencies, in order to avoid fragmentation and duplication. It should also be able to determine gaps within the existing information services and take the appropriate measures to close them quickly and efficiently with the aid of its research, organizational and technical facilities. Finally, a central co-ordination agency should be able to provide the public with the information which is requested or be able to direct the public to the proper source.

This mixed system of information services should also partially consist of a number of elements from a decentralized system. Departments and agencies should retain their control over information policy and the writing and editing of their publications because they are the bodies most familiar with their own respective policies and programs, and because a central co-ordination agency could not possibly become totally acquainted with all the policies and programs of each department and agency within a reasonable amount of time. Second, because most western democracies have several groups and sub-groups within their societies, which have special informational needs due their unique problems caused by the areas of the countries

in which they live, information offices designed to meet these special needs should be located in those areas which need them. Thus, the special informational needs of many people within various unique areas of a country will be met without placing extra demands upon a central information agency, which may not be able to satisfy these demands adequately.

In conclusion, it may be stated that there are serious drawbacks to both the centralized and decentralized systems of government information services. However, a mixed system which contains the most desirable aspects of both systems may eliminate many of these drawbacks or at least keep them to a minimum.

It must be remembered that it is the public which suffers when a system does not fulfill the needs of a society. If one assumes that a democratic society can only operate properly when its population is informed and knowledgeable, then democratic governments must take steps towards making this more possible, instead of making it more difficult to achieve. Therefore, a mixed system of information services, for the reasons which have been stated previously, seems to be the only system which will allow the public to become well-informed about government programs and policies and able to act responsibly as a result.

CHAPTER 3

THE CREATION OF INFORMATION CANADA

The Canadian Government's information services have grown "as unevenly, as hesitantly, and as haphazardly as the country itself."³⁷ This irregular growth of the government's information services is mainly due to the fact that the Canadian Federal Government has never formulated and adopted an information policy. As a result, each department and agency has been allowed to develop and operate its information services "largely independently one of the other."^{37a} Therefore, the government's various information services have not evolved at the same pace nor have they adopted the same organization, functions or operations.

During the post-World War II era, the Canadian Government expanded rapidly, and, as a result, the Canadian public's demands for more information about its operations also increased. However,

The need for and growth of information services in the Federal Government was accepted with considerable reluctance in the 1950's and early 1960's by senior civil servants and, to a large extent, Ministers

³⁷ Canada, To Know and Be Known, Volume I, p. 13.

^{37a} Canada, Royal Commission on Government Organization, Report of the Royal Commission on Government Organization, Volume 3, Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), p. 111.

of the Crown.³⁸

As a result, the departments and agencies were not willing to implement a system of comprehensive information services and therefore, they kept their information functions to a bare minimum.

According to the Task Force on Government Information,

It is not surprising then to find that consecutive Federal Governments have reacted in conservative ways to the problem of information presentation; nor to find, on occasion, that the only official who felt strongly enough to break the conservatism and take some personal initiative to steer the course of information policy was the Prime Minister of the day.^{38a}

As public pressure increased for more government information, more information officers were hired by the government. However, ex-newspapermen, rather than trained and experienced information officers, were often hired to fill department vacancies.^{38b} Frequently; they were not given sufficient information about the departments' and agencies' programs and policies, and so the press lost any confidence it may have had in the information officers.

(T)he reporters in the Parliamentary Press Gallery, many of whom had their own direct contact with ministries or their staff, upon receiving press releases and requiring additional information would bypass the Information Branch and go directly to the top.³⁹

In short, by 1968 the Canadian Government's information services needed to be restructured. Interdepartmental co-operation and

³⁸Letter to Beverley Edwards from a senior civil servant and former official within Information Canada, Ottawa, August 8, 1978.

^{38a}Canada, To Know and Be Known, Volume II, p. 123.

^{38b}Letter to Beverley Edwards from a senior civil servant and former official within Information Canada, Ottawa, August 8, 1978.

³⁹Ibid.

co-ordination took place very rarely, if at all.⁴⁰ According to the Task Force on Government Information, most of the departments and agencies were supplying the public with barely adequate, rather than high quality, information on social, political and economic issues, programs and policies. Information officers were not receiving adequate training, salaries or status. Furthermore, modern technological developments within the information field were either ignored by the departments and agencies or they were adopted with reluctance and resentment. In addition, most of the Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers did not consult with their department's information personnel when they were planning and formulating policies and programs which would eventually have to be publicized and/or explained by the department's information division.⁴¹

In 1962, the Royal Commission on Government Organization published its lengthy report on all aspects of government organization. Included in this report was an examination of the Canadian Federal Government's information services. In general, the report described the organization of the information services as follows:

The picture that emerges of public information services in the government is one of a general blur of diffuse activity, with growing clusters of organization. Central planning, direction and co-ordination are lacking.^{41a}

⁴⁰ This situation was mainly due to the fact that the departments and their Ministers were more interested in competing with each other than co-operating. As a result, numerous important press conferences were scheduled to take place simultaneously and the press was unable to cover all of them adequately.

⁴¹ For further explanation of the Task Force's findings see the Report of the Task Force on Government Information, To Know and Be Known, Volumes I and II.

^{41a} Canada, Report of the Royal Commission on Government Organization, p. 110.

The Royal Commission was basically in favour of a decentralized system of government information services because "Strong internal loyalties in departments and agencies are often powerful factors in the successful pursuit of objectives and should not be discouraged."^{41b} However, it also believed that inter-departmental co-operation and co-ordination was necessary in some instances. It warned, though, that this co-operation should not be forced because it may reduce the number of initiatives taken by departments. Instead, it recommended that

Somewhere in government there should be a lookout from which the broad sweep of the information landscape can be viewed with reasonable detachment and the perspective kept in focus.^{41c}

In short, the Report of the Royal Commission on Government Organization did not paint as gloomy a picture of the government's information services as the Task Force's report. However, it did not find that everything was running as smoothly as possible either. It pointed out several areas which needed improvement, changes and further study. For example, it recommended that the public service hire more bilingual information officers, public relations agencies be employed to supplement the services provided by the government information services, advertising accounts be awarded to agencies on a competitive basis and that

steps be taken to appraise the purpose and use of annual reports with a view to improving the general standard, eliminating redundant material and reducing the costs of preparation, editing, printing and free distribution.^{41d}

^{41b} Ibid., p. 111.

^{41c} Ibid., p. 112.

^{41d} Ibid., p. 94.

Shortly after Pierre Ellicott Trudeau was elected as the Prime Minister of Canada in 1968, he decided that the government's information services were in desperate need of study and improvement. His decision was based on his insistence that if Canadians became better informed of the government's operations, they would participate more fully in the democratic process. Therefore, on August 30, 1968, the Trudeau Government established the Task Force on Government Information and gave it the following terms of reference:

to study the structure, operation and activities of Federal departmental information services in Canada and abroad and, where necessary, their publicity programs, ... the activities of Agencies with specific responsibilities for producing and distributing Government information ... (and to) make recommendations to the Government on improvements it deems appropriate in order to effect the better co-ordination of Federal activities in this sphere and to promote greater efficiency in the diffusion of official information ... (and) on information activities the Federal Government might undertake in order to better inform itself of the interests of the Canadian people and their requirements in various areas.⁴²

The Task Force on Government Information was also requested by the government to bear in mind its concerns over national identity, federalism, and bi-lingualism and bi-culturalism. It was also to accomplish these tasks within six months of its establishment.

Before the Task Force's recommendations may be examined, one must be made aware of the fact that all three members of the Task

⁴²O. J. Firestone, The Public Persuader: Government Advertising, (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1970), p. 2.

Force on Government Information had had previous personnel and political connections with Prime Minister Trudeau and the Liberal Party. D'Iberville Fortier had participated in political campaigns with Pierre Trudeau, Bernard Ostry was a personal friend of Prime Minister Trudeau and Tom Ford had helped to organize Pierre Elliott Trudeau's leadership campaign. These political connections of the three members of the Task Force may have been the major reason why the press, opposition political parties and government departments suspected their report of being biased in favour of the Liberal Party's views.^{42a}

On August 29, 1969, the Task Force on Government Information submitted its final report, along with 17 major and 147 minor recommendations, to the Cabinet Committee for Culture and Information and a Committee of Officials.^{42b} The report

studied the structure, the operation and the activities of federal information services at home and abroad and make recommendations to improve co-ordination, ensure effectiveness and thus lead to the public's gaining a better understanding of the operations of government.⁴³

It also pointed out that the government's information services had many serious problems and faults, some of which have been

^{42a} Conversation with Dr. Joe Scanlon, Journalism Department, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, October 26, 1979.

^{42b} The findings of this report were not accepted by everyone concerned, especially the government departments and their information officials.

⁴³ Albert Bowron, "To Know and Be Known", Ontario Library Review, Volume 54, June, 1970, p. 113.

explained previously. In short, the Task Force concluded that the Canadian Government's information services were fragmented, unco-ordinated and lacked "a clarity of purpose."^{43a} In order to solve these problems it maintained that "the Government needs some permanent administrative mechanism to make sure that all the problems would actually be looked at and perhaps even solved long after the Task Force had folded its tents."⁴⁴

After the Cabinet Committee for Culture and Information and the Committee of Officials had studied the Task Force's findings and recommendations, they accepted in principle the Task Force's major recommendation that a central co-ordinating agency, called Information Canada, be established.⁴⁵ According to the Task Force, Information Canada was to be

an entirely new kind of central agency ... around which a number of existing and potential information functions could cluster and through which the Government could focus its efforts to improve (if not change) the system.⁴⁶

It also hoped that this agency would find most of the answers

^{43a}Canada, To Know and Be Known, Volume I, p. 47.

⁴⁴Eric Miller, "Information Canada April 1, 1970 - March 31, 1976: A Report on Federal Government Communication", An unpublished paper prepared for the Treasury Board, November, 1976, p. 7.

⁴⁵The Task Force's specific recommendations pertaining to Information Canada may be found on pages 59 and 60 of the Task Force on Government Information's Report, To Know and Be Known, Volume I.

⁴⁶Eric Miller, "Information Canada April 1, 1970 - March 31, 1976", p. 6.

to the long-term problems of the government's information services. However, as time progressed it became evident that the Canadian Government was not willing to invest the time, effort, personnel and finances which were necessary in order to allow Information Canada to become as efficient and effective as the Task Force had wished it to be.

On December 4, 1969, the Cabinet agreed to the creation of Information Canada by April 1, 1970. It also decided that its role would be:

- a) to ensure that federal government programs and policies are explained
- b) to provide information feedback from Canadians to the government
- c) to co-ordinate federal information campaigns and assist departments.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the Cabinet agreed that Information Canada would have its own administrative services and would consist of four main branches. They would be Planning, Information In, Information Out and Administration. In addition, the Cabinet decided to transfer the Canadian Exhibition Commission, National Film Board's Still Photo Division's Library, and the Queen's Printer to Information Canada.

It is somewhat surprising that the Cabinet agreed to let Information Canada adopt a role which would allow it to provide feedback from the general public to various government officials. When the Task Force report was under study by the Cabinet and its committees, members of the Privy Council Office made it

⁴⁷ Canada, "Organization of Information Canada", Treasury Board Minute #695894, approved April 23, 1970. p. 1.

known that they would not be in favour of Information Canada's adoption of this role. In fact, Jim Davey stated that

It is one thing to talk about the administrative efficiency of the preparation of press releases and government documents, it is entirely another to enter into the field of feedback of public reaction to government programs or policy and to discuss the notion of participation.⁴⁸

Even though it appeared in 1969 as if the Privy Council Office had lost this fight and Information Canada was given a clear mandate to perform a feedback function, this was not the case. By 1975, it was clear to all that Information Canada was never allowed to bring about its plans to make "participatory democracy" a reality and to supply meaningful feedback to the government.

On December 11, 1969, the Treasury Board approved the government's proposed estimates for Information Canada and on January 15, 1970, it approved Information Canada's proposed program activity structure.

The approved program and activity structure substantially followed the organization structure approved by Cabinet on December 4 inasmuch as there is only one program for Information Canada and the organization reflects the functional activities of the agency⁴⁹

As mentioned previously, Information Canada was to be composed of four main branches. The Planning Branch was to be

⁴⁸ Doris Shackleton, Power Town: Democracy Discarded, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1977), p. 72.

⁴⁹ Canada, Treasury Board Minute #695895, p. 2.

composed of the Planning and Priorities, Research and Reporting divisions. The Information In Branch was to be composed of the Enquiry Centres, Attitudinal Surveys and Media Analysis divisions. The Information Out Branch was to consist of the Communications, Audio Visual and Documentation Canada divisions. Finally, the Personnel and Administration Branch was to be composed of the Finance, Administrative Services and Personnel divisions.

Thus, from the previous discussion, it is obvious that by January 30, 1970, the Canadian Government was determined to bring Information Canada into being. It had already settled what its financial support, functions, organization and administrative setup would be. In fact, a number of officials were calling themselves "Information Canada", even though the Prime Minister had not officially announced the government's intention to establish this agency. When Prime Minister Trudeau was asked in the House of Commons whether this was true, he replied that

there are a very small number of officials who are perhaps calling themselves "Information Canada", but they are not actually Information Canada because the government has not yet taken a policy decision on the matter.⁵⁰

On February 10, 1970, Prime Minister Trudeau officially announced in the House of Commons that the Canadian Government intended to establish Information Canada on April 1, 1970. During his announcement, he stated that the government had accepted fifteen out of the seventeen major recommendations made by the Task Force on Government Information. It had

⁵⁰Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, January 14, 1970, p. 2383.

rejected recommendation number five, which had proposed that a citizen advisory bureau and neighbourhood councils be established, because it felt that this matter should be studied further. Recommendation number ten was also rejected. It had "suggested that a government agency undertake a role as public advocate which we feel more properly belongs to Parliament."⁵¹

Prime Minister Trudeau also explained that Information Canada was being established for three major reasons. First, it was needed in order to "promote co-operation among federal information offices now operating in mutual isolation."⁵² A second reason for Information Canada's establishment was to eliminate the fragmentation of government information. In other words, it was to handle information which dealt with the concerns of more than one department or agency and information which the departments did not handle because it did not directly concern them.⁵³ The third and final reason that Prime Minister Trudeau gave was that Information Canada would provide the government with feedback from the general public. However, he also was quick to maintain that "the primary responsibility for conveying to the government the views and attitudes of Canadians has always remained and always should remain with Members of

⁵¹Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, February 10, 1970, p. 3405.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³This would be information on broad government issues such as federalism, bilingualism and Canadian unity.

Parliament."⁵⁴

It must be noted that the Prime Minister's February 10th statement was purposely kept short and lacked a great amount of detail pertaining to the initial setup of the new organization. Furthermore, this statement did not make any mention of the other 147 recommendations that were made by the Task Force on Government Information and the reasons they were rejected or ignored. R. A. J. Phillips, the future Deputy Director of Information Canada, expressed the staff's disappointment with the Prime Minister's statement as follows: "This is a useful document as far as it goes but it carries the shortcomings of committee editing of a much longer statement when it was decided to issue only a brief declaration."⁵⁵

Immediately following the Prime Minister's announcement, the government was subjected to a barrage of criticism from the opposition parties in the House of Commons, members of the mass media and many officials within the government departments.^{55a} No one seemed to believe the government's contention that Information Canada was being set up as a modest co-ordination and common service agency which would service the government departments' information services only upon their request and that it would not completely take over all of the government's information

⁵⁴Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, February 10, 1970, p. 3405.

⁵⁵R. A. J. Phillips, "Draft: Information Canada - Objectives", November 30, 1971, p. 1.

^{55a}Much of this criticism may have been due to the fact that Information Canada's critics were aware of the previous political connections of the Task Force's members and therefore, did not trust the government's intentions to set up a new agency based upon the Task Force's recommendations because of their possible political biases.

functions. According to Harry Bruce, a ghost-writer for the Task Force's report and seven Information Canada reports, "no publicly financed body in the modern history of the federal government - not the railroads, not Air Canada, not even the CBC - had ever endured such a grisly and concentrated mauling."⁵⁶

The opposition parties in the House of Commons were the most vocal critics of the government's intention to create Information Canada. They predicted that once Information Canada came into being it would become a publicly funded propaganda agency which would be used by the government to keep it in power. Also, "The opposition doubts if it will voluntarily emit one iota of information which the government does not want given out."⁵⁷ Robert Stanfield, the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and leader of the Official Opposition, accused the government of not increasing the public's access to government information but decreasing it with the creation of a centrally run information agency. He maintained that the public did not need this type of information dissemination agency and "What the public really needs basically is information which the government does not want to give."⁵⁸ A Conservative Government would dismantle Information Canada, according to Robert Stanfield, because it

⁵⁶ Harry Bruce, "Misinformation Canada", Macleans Magazine, Volume 88, January, 1975, p. 45.

⁵⁷ John Bird, "Information Canada: Will it Give One Iota of Unpopular Information?" Financial Post, Vol. 64, March 21, 1970, p. 33.

⁵⁸ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, February 10, 1970, p. 3407.

was a potentially dangerous partisan instrument. Since Information Canada was still in its infant stages and there was no sign of its immediate destruction, he also proposed that

an independent watchdog should be set upon Information Canada, to function as the Auditor-General functions, and to watch for and prevent abuse of Information Canada for purposes of partisan propaganda.⁵⁹

The New Democratic Party and the Social Credit Party were also opposed to the creation of Information Canada. David Lewis, the leader of the New Democratic Party, called the new agency "Propaganda Canada" and claimed that it would act as a continuous election machine for the Liberal Party. He also maintained that its "only purpose is to befuddle, deceive and mislead the people; it is not to inform them."⁶⁰ Réal Couette, the leader of the Social Credit Party, basically agreed with David Lewis' and Robert Stanfield's claims that Information Canada would be used as a government propaganda agency. He stated that there was no need to create a new agency since the restructuring of existing government controlled organizations and agencies could serve the same purpose. He maintained that the CBC could keep the public informed of all government decisions and policies and it could also act as a source of feedback to the government. "That organization could work as a link between the public, that is the public we represent, and the duties we have assumed towards them."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Opening Statement of the Honourable Robert L. Stanfield, P.C., Q.C., M.P., To a Press Conference, Chateau Lacombe, Edmonton, Alberta, April 14, 1970, p. 2.

⁶⁰ House of Commons Debates, Feb. 10, 1970, p. 3409.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 3410.

The creation of Information Canada was also heavily criticized by various members of the mass media. They also maintained that the new agency would become nothing more than a publicly funded propaganda machine which would be used by the Liberal Government to maintain its political power. In addition, they were afraid that the creation of Information Canada would eventually lead to the government's ability to manage the news, and thus introduce various "encroachments upon the role of the press - and thought control"⁶²

Various officials within the government departments' information services resented the government's decision to create a central co-ordinating and common service agency for several reasons. First, they felt that Information Canada's creation would allow the government to reduce their financial, technical and human resources. The loss of these resources, they feared, would ultimately result in the loss of a large proportion of their power and influence within the governmental structure. Secondly, many of the departments believed that the government's information functions rightly belonged to them. Therefore, they viewed any attempt to change their traditional functions as an attack upon their competence, abilities and personal property. Finally, interdepartmental competition rather than co-operation had become a common practice. Thus, the departments were reluctant to readily forget past experiences and

⁶² Miller, "Information Canada: April 1, 1970 - March 31, 1976", p. 9.

collaborate with other departments which they had previously viewed as their rivals and possible enemies. Therefore, when Prime Minister Trudeau announced Information Canada's creation, these were the basic reasons why "most departments had become turned off and almost seemed to join the rabble who demanded the execution."⁶³

Most, if not all, of the fears of Information Canada's critics were largely unfounded. They were simply reacting to what they thought was Information Canada's potential for power and not to the power that it was actually receiving. This will become clearer when Information Canada is examined further in later chapters.

In spite of the barrage of criticism it was receiving, the Trudeau Government proceeded with its plans to establish Information Canada. On March 20, 1970, the Honourable Robert Stanbury, the Minister without Portfolio responsible for Information Canada, announced that it was "the government's intention to appoint as the first director of Information Canada, effective April 1 next, Mr. Jean-Louis Gagnon, distinguished Canadian journalist."⁶⁴ Mr. Gagnon had just completed his work as the co-chairman of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism when he was appointed. He had also been a long-standing member of the Liberal Party in Quebec and, as a result,

⁶³Letter to Beverley Edwards from J. B. Kinsella, Director, Information Energy, Mines and Resources, Ottawa, September 14, 1978, p. 1.

⁶⁴Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, March 20, 1970, p. 5269.

his appointment was severely criticized by Information Canada's opponents. If the Liberal Government had wanted to put an end to these criticisms, it should have known better than to appoint someone who Robert Stanfield described as being

identified in Who's Who in Canada as: The Founding Editor of La Réforme, the house organ of the Liberal Party of Quebec; a founding member of the Liberal Federation of Quebec; and the president for three years of the "Commission de Publicité et de Propagande" of the Liberal Federation of Quebec.⁶⁵

Many people argue that the number of problems which Information Canada faced during its short life span may have been eliminated or at least reduced if it had been established by an Act of Parliament. They argue that this would have given the agency some legitimacy and, as a result, it would have been accepted more readily by the various government departments and agencies. It would also have allowed Parliament "the opportunity to debate legislation responsible for establishing Information Canada"⁶⁶ and thus would have given the agency the appearance of being established through what the opposition regarded as the proper Parliamentary channels. Furthermore, Information Canada would have been able to enjoy the authority and respect which an act of Parliament would have given it.

Instead, the Trudeau Government chose to create Information

⁶⁵ Opening statement of the Honourable Robert L. Stanfield, P.C., Q.C., M.P., to a Press Conference, Chateau Lacombe, Edmonton, April 14, 1970, p. 4.

⁶⁶ M. L. Grant, "A Cart in Search of a Horse", An unpublished paper prepared for Professor P. G. Thomas, Political Studies Department, University of Manitoba, February 12, 1975, p. 2 - 3.

Canada through the use of an Order-in-Council, in order to meet its promised deadline of April 1, 1970. On March 26, 1970, they passed Order-in-Council PC 1970-559 which designated Information Canada as a department. It was not until June 26, 1970, however, that the Canadian Government passed the Appropriations Act which gave financial support and parliamentary approval to the new agency's functions. As a result, Information Canada was forced to operate for approximately three months with the knowledge that its functions had not been officially sanctioned.

In addition, it must be pointed out that Information Canada was never given a clear mandate nor a government information policy, in order to guide its operations. In fact, the only public expression of its mandate was the Prime Minister's statement of February 10, 1970. As mentioned previously, this statement was short and sketchy. It did not provide Information Canada with a set of well-defined objectives and functions nor with a promise of a forthcoming comprehensive information policy.

In the six years to follow, that statement was to be examined by the management of Information Canada like holy writ - in hope that it might be saying more (or less) than met the eye, or that it might allow for interpretation this way or that.⁶⁷

In addition, officials within Information Canada had to rely upon four other sources for guidance. These sources are the Report of the Task Force on Government Information, decisions

⁶⁷ Miller, "Information Canada: April 1, 1970 to March 31, 1976", p. 8.

The first is a product of the sheer complexity of modern government with its labyrinth of levels and jurisdictions. This complexity serves as a challenge, and sometimes a barrier, to the right of Canadians to know what their governments are doing and how they can use the federal structure to solve their problems; indeed, how they can participate in changing their structures when it becomes necessary A second problem is the loss of human contact in modern technological communications. Technology has a growing role in communications, and a vital one, but it has an anonymous influence. Governments are, and must remain, human institutions; they must involve themselves with the people ... on a human basis, face to face, listening as well as speaking.⁷⁶

At first Information Canada planned to establish an enquiry centre in each major Canadian centre. However, it was unsure of what its future financial situation would be, so it publicly promised to provide the centres in as many places as its resources would allow. By the time Information Canada had been dismantled in 1976 only seven centres were in existence. This means that not every province's capital was serviced by one of these centres, never mind every major Canadian urban centre.⁷⁷

In order to give a clearer picture of what functions the Enquiry Centres carried out, a general description of them follows. According to Information Canada's Annual Report 1970-1971,

A typical centre includes a bookstore, absorbing the former Canadian Government publications outlet, photo sales, a reading lounge, a small reference section and

⁷⁶ Pierre Elliott Trudeau, "Notes for Remarks by the Prime Minister at the Opening of the National Enquiry Centre," Ottawa, November 16, 1970, p. 1.

⁷⁷ By December, 1975, there were Enquiry Centres in Halifax, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Edmonton.

In summary, Information Canada was created for two basic reasons. The Trudeau Government gained the impression from the Task Force's report that the government's information services were unco-ordinated and somewhat disorganized. It saw the introduction of a new central and common service agency as the answer to many of the information problems which were facing the government during the late 1960's. Secondly, the creation of Information Canada was seen as the solution to the Cabinet's dilemma over how to make "participatory democracy" appear as a reality under the leadership of a Liberal Government. The Liberals had promised during the 1968 Federal Election Campaign to introduce "participatory democracy" to the Canadian system of government and were anxious to make the public believe that they had fulfilled this particular campaign promise. When the Task Force had reported to the government that the implementation of its recommendations may result in "participatory democracy", the Cabinet saw this as the perfect opportunity to prove to the public and the opposition that the Liberal Government would not renege on its promise.

From the very beginning, it was evident that Information Canada was not bound to lead a quiet and peaceful life within the confines of the governmental structure. It successfully alienated most of its possible allies before it had officially begun its operations. It seemed as if only the Cabinet and an unknown segment of the general population were in favour of its creation. The fact the Information Canada was created through an Order-in-Council and not through an Act of Parliament also

contributed to the troubles that the infant agency was facing at its birth. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the lack of a clear mandate and the absence of a government policy on information sealed Information Canada's fate. Due to these three major factors, Information Canada was doomed to live out its life as one of the most misinterpreted, misunderstood and misrepresented agencies that had ever existed within the Canadian Government.

CHAPTER 4

INFORMATION CANADA IN OPERATION: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM - APRIL 1, 1970 TO JUNE 30, 1972

The history of Information Canada's operations may be divided into two distinct eras. The first era consists of the period of time between Information Canada's creation on April 1, 1970, and the appointment of Guy D'Avignon as the Director-General on June 30, 1972. The second era consists of the time period between Guy D'Avignon's appointment and the Canadian Government's decision in December, 1975, to disband this department. The division of Information Canada's history into these two eras is not simply chronological. It is based upon several events and circumstances which helped to shape and characterize these two periods of time into two distinct historical eras which existed during Information Canada's short life.

The most important and influential events and circumstances which helped to mold the distinct characteristics of each era will be discussed below in order to clarify why this division may be made. First, Information Canada received two divergent forms of direction and leadership during these two eras. This was mainly due to the fact that each era had a different Director-General who brought to this office his own distinct administrative style and form of leadership. Secondly, during the first era

the Trudeau Government was in a majority situation. This allowed the government to create the department without the opposition's approval. It also gave Information Canada a sense of false security and, as a result, it undertook experimental projects and programs which were not necessarily politically wise given different circumstances. For approximately two years of the second era, the Trudeau Government was in a minority situation. Therefore, during this time period, Information Canada was operating under a considerable amount of stress and pressure which was caused by the government's lack of political certainty. As a result, Information Canada was constantly striving to justify its continued existence and forced to limit its experimental endeavours.

A third factor which helped to shape Information Canada's operations into two eras was the fact that each era symbolized two different stages in Information Canada's development. The first era, as previously mentioned, was a period of experimentation. It was also the period in which Information Canada set up its initial structure and functions. In addition, this stage of Information Canada's development was characterized by a confusing mixture of a limited amount of uncertainty and boldness. This was mainly due to the fact that Information Canada had not been given a clear mandate nor a government information policy to follow and adapt its operations to. It was also due to the fact that the staff had only received piecemeal instructions from the Cabinet and the Prime Minister and a "common law" had not yet been fully developed within the department.

The second era, on the other hand, was a period of limited and more cautious experimentation. Some of the results and consequences of the experiments and Information Canada's initial administrative and operational setup, which were begun during the first era, had become known during this time period. As can be expected, a few of these new innovations were unsuccessful or unworkable. Therefore, they either had to be improved or eliminated during the second era, if Information Canada was to continue its operations without any major political and economic repercussions. As a result, the second era was, in a sense, a period of reconstruction and correction. It was also a period during which Information Canada had to fight its hardest in order to justify its existence.

From the previous discussion, it may be concluded that the history of Information Canada's operations may be logically divided into two distinct eras. Therefore, they will be discussed and examined separately, in order to understand what influence each had upon Information Canada's future. All relevant criticisms of and comments made by Information Canada's opponents will also be examined.

Information Canada spent much of its first year in operation setting up and "building the necessary structure for undertaking its manifold assignment without any precedent to guide it."⁷⁰ Its initial structure was designed according to

⁷⁰Canada, Information Canada, Annual Report 1970-1971, (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1972), p. 1.

the specifications which it received from the Cabinet. These specifications were based on the Cabinet's decision of December 4, 1969, which stated that Information Canada would be composed of the Planning, Information In, Information Out and Administration Branches. It was also composed of various divisions and sub-divisions which fell under the respective jurisdiction of these four main branches.⁷¹

Two major problems plagued Information Canada during its first year of operation. First, it had virtually no staff, except for some of the top officials, when it was created on April 1, 1970. In fact, it did not start to actively recruit the majority of its staff until June, 1970. This delay in the recruitment of staff members was largely due to the government's late appointment of the Director-General and other authorities which were necessary in order to administer and control this procedure.⁷² As a result, Information Canada was not able to swing into full operation until at least six months after its creation. Nevertheless, by the end of its first year, Information Canada had hired 501 out of the 520 people it had been authorized to hire. Three hundred and seventy-five of these people were transferred into this department when it absorbed the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission and the publishing

⁷¹ See Appendix I for Information Canada's Organizational Chart.

⁷² Jean-Louis Gagnon, "Memorandum for All Members of Information Canada: Where We Are and Where We Are Going", Ottawa, June 3, 1970, p. 2.

branch of the Queen's Printer. The remaining 126 were hired through the normal procedures of the Public Service Commission or they were given fixed term contracts.⁷³

The second major problem of Information Canada during its first year was not as easily solved as the first. In fact, Information Canada was never able to solve it and so it continued to irritate the department until it was finally dismantled in March, 1976. This was the other departments' insistence upon making Information Canada's life as difficult as possible by refusing to co-operate with this newly created agency. Information Canada had been instructed only to service the other departments when they specifically requested its help. Furthermore,

Because Information Canada's role in relation to the information divisions of the other departments and agencies of the federal government is limited to co-operation, co-ordination, resource assistance and advice, its operations do not take precedence over, nor replace, their individual information programs.⁷⁴

Therefore, Information Canada was given no authority to force the departments to use its services, even if these services were the only ones available to complete the departments' tasks properly, efficiently and economically. As a result of Information Canada's lack of authority in information matters and the other departments unwillingness to co-operate with it, the departments and agencies continued to operate and even increase

⁷³Information Canada, Annual Report 1970 - 1971, p. 2.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 2.

their information services. "In the first year of InfoCan's existence, separate information staffs of the various federal departments grew from 900 to 1,992 people, and they have been growing ever since."⁷⁵ Thus, the very departments which Information Canada had originally set out to serve became its competitors and, in some instances, its adversaries.

Nevertheless, during its first year of operation, Information Canada was able to undertake several new major projects and programs. Among these innovations were the Federal Identity Program, the Federalism Program, the Enquiry Centres and a series of exhibits on federalism. These four programs and projects were basically experiments in government communication, and their continued existence depended upon their acceptability to the general public and government officials.

In answer to the Task Force's and the public's demands for a two-way flow of communication between the governed and the government, and in order to fulfill the Trudeau Government's promise that Information Canada would provide a channel for feedback, the first Enquiry Centres were opened during Information Canada's first year of operation. When Prime Minister Trudeau opened the first enquiry centre in Ottawa on November 16, 1970, he stated that the new government service was designed to meet and possibly solve two major information problems. He explained these problems as follows:

⁷⁵Doris Shackleton, Power Town: Democracy Discarded, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1977), p. 74.

The first is a product of the sheer complexity of modern government with its labyrinth of levels and jurisdictions. This complexity serves as a challenge, and sometimes a barrier, to the right of Canadians to know what their governments are doing and how they can use the federal structure to solve their problems; indeed, how they can participate in changing their structures when it becomes necessary A second problem is the loss of human contact in modern technological communications. Technology has a growing role in communications, and a vital one, but it has an anonymous influence. Governments are, and must remain, human institutions; they must involve themselves with the people ... on a human basis, face to face, listening as well as speaking.⁷⁶

At first Information Canada planned to establish an enquiry centre in each major Canadian centre. However, it was unsure of what its future financial situation would be, so it publicly promised to provide the centres in as many places as its resources would allow. By the time Information Canada had been dismantled in 1976 only seven centres were in existence. This means that not every province's capital was serviced by one of these centres, never mind every major Canadian urban centre.⁷⁷

In order to give a clearer picture of what functions the Enquiry Centres carried out, a general description of them follows. According to Information Canada's Annual Report 1970-1971.

A typical centre includes a bookstore, absorbing the former Canadian Government publications outlet, photo sales, a reading lounge, a small reference section and

⁷⁶Pierre Elliott Trudeau, "Notes for Remarks by the Prime Minister at the Opening of the National Enquiry Centre," Ottawa, November 16, 1970, p. 1.

⁷⁷By December, 1975, there were Enquiry Centres in Halifax, Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Edmonton.

an enquiries consol or "informatheque" for direct-line answering service.⁷⁸

The Informatheque was perhaps the most important component of the Enquiry Centres. It answered thousands of enquiries from members of the general public on almost all aspects of the federal government's programs and policies, and referred them to the proper authorities and sources when it felt that it was necessary to do so and when it was unable to supply the enquirer with the correct answer. It was also staffed by trained information officers and supplied with a referral system and information bank which were designed to provide information rapidly and easily to the public.

A second major program which was initiated during Information Canada's first year was the Federalism Program. Its

objective is to make it easier for citizens to get information about Canada and government programs, to use government services, to comment on governmental affairs and, in general, to engage in participatory democracy.⁷⁹

Under this program, a Federal Secretariat was established in order to initiate projects and innovations within the public service which would help civil servants to help the public understand how the federal government's institutions operate and how the federal governmental process works in theory and in practice. By the end of Information Canada's first year, this

⁷⁸Information Canada, Annual Report 1970-1971, p. 4.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 8.

program was not in full operation due to the fact that it was still short of four staff members. However, other members of the Information Canada staff were attempting to fill the gaps on a part-time basis.⁸⁰

The Federal Identity Program was one of the few programs that was initiated by Information Canada which was able to survive long after the department was disbanded. In October, 1970, Information Canada decided that a standardized federal symbol was necessary in order to achieve two purposes. First, it would save a fair amount of money for the government because the government's printers would have to deal with only one universal design instead of as many designs as there were departments and agencies. Secondly, it "would identify not so much individual activities of departments as the corporate presence of the Federal Government."⁸¹

The design which was finally decided upon was based on the Canadian flag. "The left-hand bar is the same as on the flag, as is the maple leaf in the center. Where the right bar would be is the title of the federal agency involved."⁸² It was also decided that the names of the departments would be shortened and made bilingual. For example, the Royal Canadian Mail would become Poste Canada and Canada Post.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸² Clive Baxter, "Image-making 'Federal White' may be New Ottawa Trade Mark", Financial Post, Volume 64, October 24, 1970, p. 1.

Despite the Cabinet's efforts to keep the new logo secret until it was unveiled in Parliament by the Honourable Robert Stanbury, the Minister responsible for Information Canada, it was revealed to the public without the Cabinet's consent. During the third week of October,

every bus in Ottawa carried an advertisement proclaiming the coming opening of the first Information Canada public information centre - and there, right on the advertisement, was the hush-hush logo.⁸³

No major repercussions resulted from this incident. However, the government was forced to reveal its plans earlier than it had expected, due to the actions of a few over-zealous individuals within Information Canada. Nevertheless, it is an example of the poor judgement exercised by some of Information Canada's officials which only helped to antagonize some of the Cabinet Ministers and their departments' information services and thus further reduce the departments' willingness to co-operate with this new department.

The Federal Identity Program, despite all its minor difficulties, was determined to succeed. During its first year in operation, Information Canada was able to introduce the new logo to a few departments. It was expected to be "in general use on stationary and cheques",⁸⁴ and possibly on some government signs and vehicles during the 1971 - 1972 fiscal year. Information Canada was aware that the cost would be a prohibitive factor, so it was careful not to promise too much too fast and

⁸³ Ibid:

⁸⁴ Information Canada, Annual Report 1970-1971, p. 10.

approached the problems of changeover slowly and cautiously.

The fourth program that Information Canada initiated during its first year of operation was the Federal Exhibit Program. This program was the responsibility of the Expositions Division, which was formerly the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission. Even though the Canadian Government had previously put together various domestic and foreign exhibits before, it had never emphasized the federalism theme as strongly as it did under the Federal Exhibit Program. During 1970-1971,

Information Canada designed and largely completed a number of mobile exhibits to carry to Canadians in all parts of the country the story of federalism with particular emphasis on federal services, the myriad of problems government has to face and how it tries to solve them.⁸⁵

It also designed and constructed numerous exhibits and displays to be used in various trade fairs and exhibits throughout the world. It was hoped that the domestic displays and exhibits would further the Canadian public's understanding of and support for the existing federal structure. The foreign exhibits were aimed at increasing international trade and tourism. On the whole, the program was very successful and drew wide support. This was due to the fact that the Expositions Division had the aid of a well-experienced staff which had been part of an older and respected government agency, the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission.

During the 1971 - 1972 fiscal year, Information Canada was engaged in other activities which probably cannot be considered as major innovations in government communication. However, they

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 11.

helped shape the overall operations and image of the department. In general, it produced posters on Canadian themes and started a series of discussions between provincial and federal information authorities in order to promote federal-provincial co-operation in information matters. It also established a group to study the possibility of formulating a government publishing policy, since one did not exist and the Publishing Division was in desperate need of a source of guidance and direction. This division also attempted to

find solutions to such recurring problems as those involving cost control, the cost of printing in two official languages, pricing, quality control, marketing, distribution, and inventory control, as well as the general question of the effectiveness of non-technical government publications.⁸⁶

In addition, Information Canada helped to organize the Council of Federal Government Information Directors. Its overall purpose was to promote co-operation and co-ordination between the various government departmental information services and between these services and Information Canada. Finally, Information Canada was given the responsibility of implementing the government's new policy on mailing lists, which was designed to save a considerable amount of production and mailing costs. This policy required that a written request must be made before information would be sent to an individual or an organization and that if the recipient of the information wished to receive it on a continuous basis, a yearly written request of this nature was

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 14.

necessary.

Information Canada's second year of operation was much more settled than its first, from an administrative point of view. By April 1, 1971, most of its staff had been recruited and its organizational structure was almost complete. On August 1, 1971, the National Film Board's still-photography division was transferred to Information Canada. Thus, "This completed the restructuring consequent on the creation of the agency."⁸⁷

The Expositions Division of Information Canada boasted that it had accomplished two firsts during the 1971-1972 fiscal year. First, it had for the first time in the history of this division prepared "a series of exhibits for Canadians about Canada and its government."⁸⁸ It estimated that approximately 600,000 people had seen these exhibits during the summer of 1971. Secondly, the Exhibition Division adopted a "total cost recovery plan which, after economies of about \$1 million in overhead, charged true costs to the client department, a measure to stimulate efficiency, economy and better accounts."⁸⁹ This decision to put the Expositions Division on total cost recovery was not made by Information Canada. It was ordered to do so by the government, in order to reduce this division's high design and production costs. As a result of the implementation of total

⁸⁷ Canada, Information Canada, Annual Report 1971-1972, (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1973), p. 1.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

cost recovery and the government's perceived need for more financial restraint, Information Canada dismissed the former chief of the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission and two of its top officials. In addition, it decided "to dismiss about 17 of the designers and commission officials."⁹⁰ Needless to say, those who were dismissed were shocked by this move. However, the Public Service Commission attempted to find other positions for most of them within the civil service, and many of the designers sought positions within the private sector.

After the National Film Board's still photo section was transferred to Information Canada in August, 1971, it was opened to the public in September and was able to offer an up-to-date collection of over three hundred thousand photographs of Canada and Canadians. It also offered "a comprehensive advisory service to assist departments with photographic problems and with indexing and cataloguing difficulties."⁹¹ At the request of other departments and agencies, this division also arranged for photographers to provide their services for special assignments and to be made available to the departments. In addition, it developed a new photo stories service called Fotomedia, which covered Canadian activities that were of a topical nature and were significant changes within Canadian society.

⁹⁰"Exhibition Chief Aids Latest Cuts", Financial Post, Volume 65, February 6, 1971, p. 20.

⁹¹Information Canada, Annual Report 1971-1972, p. 3.

During the 1971-1972 fiscal year, Information Canada's Enquiry Centre Program improved and expanded its operations. For the National Centre in Ottawa this was "a year of consolidation, streamlining and preparation for the back-up support of regional centres to be opened subsequently."⁹² Only one regional centre was opened during this period. It was opened in Winnipeg in April, 1971. Information Canada had planned to also open centres in Toronto and Montreal before the year ended, but these openings had to be postponed due to accommodation problems. In addition, this program had started to negotiate for locations in Halifax and Vancouver for the 1972-1973 fiscal year.

The bookstore operations of the Publishing Division were combined with the Enquiry Centres' operations during 1971-1972. Information Canada's rationale for this move was stated as follows:

The past year's experience suggested that greater cross-pollination of information and expertise could be achieved through an integrated administration of the two operations. Recognizing also the information service element in the distribution of government publications, Information Canada undertook a shared information plan for the bookstores and enquiry centres.⁹³

It is interesting to note that although Information Canada was still being severely criticized throughout this period by various members of the opposition and the press, its Enquiry

⁹²Ibid., p. 8.

⁹³Ibid., p.p. 8-9.

Centres were receiving some favourable coverage in the mass media. For example, Clive Baxter of the Financial Post wrote of the Enquiry Centres as follows: "If the others match the Ottawa centre, Canadians are going to be well served."⁹⁴ In addition, those members of the general public who had had an opportunity to use the new facilities were, in general, satisfied with their operations and, in some cases, enthusiastic about their potential. As a result, many enthusiastic members of the general public generated a large amount of word-of-mouth publicity which caused a dramatic increase in the number of enquiries that the Centres received.⁹⁵

The Federal Identity Program made substantial progress during the 1971-1972 fiscal year. It was able to implement the new federal symbol in twenty-two government departments and, by the end of the year, the logo was on all of the Department of Supply and Services' vehicles. It had also been used in some of the departments' advertising campaigns. In addition, "The interdepartmental advisory committee was expanded to

⁹⁴Clive Baxter, "Why Information Canada has an 'Image Problem'", Financial Post, Volume 65, May 8, 1971, p. 4.

⁹⁵During the 1970-1971 fiscal year, the National Enquiry Centre in Ottawa handled 72,000 enquiries. The number of enquiries this centre handled increased to 76,650 during the 1971-1972 fiscal year. In addition, the Winnipeg centre handled 19,605 enquiries and temporary centres in Montreal and Toronto handled 36,934 enquiries during Information Canada's second year of operation. Sources: Information Canada's Annual Reports 1971-72, p. 8 and 1970-71, p. 4.

include a sub-committee on linguistic matters and another on signage,"⁹⁶ or the use of the new logo on various types of signs and billboards.

By the middle of 1971, the Federal Identity Program was one of Information Canada's programs which would not be fought tooth-and-nail by most of the other departments' officials. This was probably because the changeover became mandatory and all departments were required to update their names and use the new logo by January 1, 1976.⁹⁷ Thus, it was not only Information Canada that the departments would have to fight, they would also have to battle the Cabinet and the Treasury Board. Therefore, the departments found it easier to go along with a program which did not pose a serious threat to their autonomy, than to fight with the government's major political force and the keeper of the public purse-strings, the Cabinet and Treasury Board.

Nevertheless, the Federal Identity Program did receive some criticism. It "irked ardent monarchists such as John Diefenbaker by downgrading the royal coat of arms."⁹⁸ Monarchists were upset that no department would use the coat of arms as their symbol. According to their point of view, this

⁹⁶ Information Canada, Annual Report 1971-1972, p. 10.

⁹⁷ Approximately twenty government organizations such as Air Canada, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Canadian National Railway were exempted from the Federal Identity Program, on the grounds that they had to operate on a competitive commercial basis.

⁹⁸ Sheldon E. Gordon, "At Least Now the Government Knows What to Call Itself", Financial Post, Volume 69, February 8, 1975, p. 7.

was an unforgivable break with tradition and the British monarchy. They were not even consoled with the fact that the judiciary, Parliament and Government House would continue to use the coat of arms as their symbol.

This program was also criticized for the confusion and inconvenience it caused to the public. According to Sheldon Gordon:

Ironically, the array of terminology and symbols has been even more confusing during the phase-in period than it was prior to the program. Not only have various departments used different nomenclature, but the changeovers have not occurred uniformly within departments.⁹⁹

As a result of this situation, the public was not sure what were names of the departments it was corresponding or dealing with. Many members of the public became confused and sometimes irritated with the new system.

In addition, during the 1971-1972 fiscal year, Information Canada's Research and Evaluation Branch

which exists to assist other branches of Information Canada and other federal departments in conducting research to develop new information programs and techniques, and thereby improving, those in existence,¹⁰⁰

was fairly active. The background research for eight studies, which fell under the Planning Review section's jurisdiction, was conducted by this branch. It also conducted various surveys in Quebec City and Vancouver, in order to determine how knowledgeable their respective populations were of the federal

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Information Canada, Annual Report 1971-1972, p. 10.

government and its various operations. Furthermore, it had evaluated the operations and effectiveness of various informational programs, such as the Domestic Exhibit Program and was in the process of planning other studies for the upcoming fiscal year.

It must also be mentioned that the introduction and implementation of the Research and Evaluation Branch of Information Canada was a new step forward in the area of government communications. Never before had the Canadian Federal Government dedicated the time and resources which were needed in order to fulfill the very important function of predicting and developing more efficient and effective communication programs. The government had always hoped that its information programs were meeting these requirements, but it had never taken the appropriate steps to guarantee that they were.

Other developments which took place during Information Canada's second year of operation include the Publishing Division's acquisition of the exclusive right to be the only Canadian agent for Her Majesty's Stationary Office in Great Britain. This right formerly belonged to the British High Commission in Canada. The Publishing Division also made some progress

towards the comprehensive revision of government publishing policy, coupled with an initial examination of the feasibility of introducing a cost recovery system for Information Canada's publishing operations.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 5.

This division also made progress in the development of policies concerning the return of books and the giving of discounts. The Communications Division was able to delete 50,000 names from its mailing lists and this resulted in a saving of approximately 500,000 dollars. Various films on numerous topics related to federalism were produced by the Communications Division. In addition, the Domestic Exhibit Program constructed three movable "Canadomes" and an "Informa" pavilion at the Kan and His World site in order to house its exhibits. The Media Analysis Division "developed a system for the automated retrieval of editorial comments and news items on the federal government from the electronic media and printed press."¹⁰² Finally, independent research studies which examined communications at the community level were organized by the Planning Services Branch. "The purpose was to indicate the state of communications at that level and to provide general guidelines for future information planning by government departments."¹⁰³

Throughout its first two years of existence, Information Canada tried desperately to give the appearance that all of its operations were running smoothly and that everything it was doing was perfectly legitimate. However, attacks from the new department's opponents did not ease during this period, nor did they die down to less than a dull roar. Information Canada was still being referred to as a propaganda agency which would

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 10.

do nothing more than further the aims of the Liberal Party. In addition, its every move was watched carefully by its opponents in order for them to find proof to support their accusations.

This, in turn, has forced Robert Stanbury, the responsible minister, and Jean-Louis Gagnon, the director of Information Canada, to spend so much time stressing all the things their agency isn't going to do, they leave themselves open to the inevitable impression that perhaps the government doesn't really need any such organization at all.¹⁰⁴

During 1971 and 1972, Information Canada's opponents were given some of the evidence they needed in order to prove that Information Canada was not running as smoothly, efficiently and legitimately as its officials had claimed that it was. First, Information Canada made the mistake of publishing some information before it had been approved by Parliament. Immediately after the Official Opposition discovered that this was true, Robert Stanfield brought it to the public's attention. In a speech he made to the Central Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Association on February 22, 1971, he stated:

In fact, at the same time as our Members were arguing their case, the government had the gall to issue through Information Canada a P. R. booklet, entitled "How Your Tax Dollar is Spent", which coolly states even before Parliament has spoken, that the Department of Fisheries had been wiped out.¹⁰⁵

Secondly, Information Canada's first annual report was

¹⁰⁴ Baxter, "Why Information Canada has an 'Image Problem'", p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ "Notes for a Speech by the Honourable Robert L. Stanfield, P.C., Q.C., M.P., Leader of the Opposition to the Annual Meeting of Central Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Association", Westville, Nova Scotia, Monday, February 22, 1971, p. 2.

not tabled in the House of Commons until March, 1972. This was approximately one year later than it was due to be tabled. As a result, this new agency, which had been established to provide the most efficient system of information dissemination that Canada had ever had, was made to look totally incompetent by this incident. The opposition in the House of Commons greeted the report with laughter and jeering because of the agency's obvious inability to meet a scheduled deadline. The press was also amused by this incident and took every opportunity to relate the events surrounding it. In fact, Information Canada

had to inform by newsmen that its report had been tabled in the House of Commons that day and could the media have some copies, please. Getting the copies to the Press Gallery from Info Can, three blocks away, took three hours.¹⁰⁶

A third incident, which gave Information Canada's opponents evidence to prove that this department was not as efficient and productive as it claimed to be, was the leakage of a memo which was sent to Jean-Louis Gagnon, the Director-General, by R. A. J. Phillips, the Deputy Director-General. Somehow, this memo ended up in the hands of the Toronto Globe and Mail during February of 1972 and was printed in the newspaper shortly afterwards. Its contents were extremely incriminating to the leadership of Information Canada and the government which established it. This is evident when one examines the text of the memo. In it, R. A. J. Phillips, who by this time was almost totally disappointed with how Information Canada was functioning and the reception it was

¹⁰⁶Shackleton, Power Town, p. 74-75.

receiving, stated his views in the following manner:

The record of the past six months ... leads one to conclude that it is urgent to consider some projects to justify our budget and existence Virtually all new visible projects have been cancelled, although our budget continues to rise Unless there are rapid changes, the current year will indicate that Information Canada is doing roughly what other departments did previously in managing the activities which we took over; that we are providing a certain pool of resource support which could come from private industry; and that most of the major projects we had launched to create a better understanding of the federal government have been dropped, shelved, or left in a limbo of indecision.¹⁰⁷

Once the Phillips' memo was brought to the attention of the public, it became another source of ammunition for the press and the opposition parties to battle Information Canada. For example, Robert Stanfield referred to the memo on March 23, 1972, when he stated that

this agency recently finally succeeded in getting out its first bit of useful information. This was to the effect that Information Canada is a disaster in limbo that doesn't know yet what it is doing, or where it is supposed to be going.¹⁰⁸

By March, 1972, it seemed obvious that Jean-Louis Gagnon was unable to provide the type of leadership which Information Canada desperately needed. According to some of the Ottawa bureaucrats who were in close contact with Jean-Louis Gagnon, he was clearly not qualified to be a top administrator within

¹⁰⁷M. L. Grant, "A Cart in Search of a Horse", An unpublished paper prepared for Dr. P. G. Thomas, Political Studies Department, University of Manitoba, February 12, 1975, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸"Notes for a Speech by the Honourable Robert L. Stanfield, P.C., Q.C., M.P., to a Fund Raising Dinner at the Calgary Inn", Calgary, Alberta, March 23, 1972, p. 7.

the Canadian Public Service. They maintained that he

was a master of the three-hour lunch; a man whose indecision drove his subordinates half-mad; a professional charmer whose eagerness to be professionally charming inspired him to agree with one man's proposal one minute and with another man's flatly opposing proposal the next minute; a diplomat whose instinct to see things go smoothly led him to invite tough old mandarins from tough old departments to treat Info Can with contempt.¹⁰⁹

In addition, he was criticized for his habit of making frequent trips throughout the country to publicize the operations of Information Canada. His critics felt that he was ignoring his responsibilities as an administrator when he did so and that these responsibilities were too important to be shoved aside in favour of a high public profile.

As early as June, 1971, Mr. Gagnon had realized that Information Canada was facing a number of serious administrative and organizational problems. In a memorandum to Robert Stanbury dated June 10, 1971, he stated that there had been a failure to recognize the Expositions Branch as a vital component of Information Canada. He went on to state that:

This failure in turn stems from the present structure of Information Canada which has increasingly revealed itself to be illogical and non-functional. If a logical principle were applied, the resultant new structure would have... beneficial effects.¹¹⁰

In the same memo he also pointed out that a proposal from Information Canada to the Cabinet respecting cost recovery had been flatly rejected, and that the Treasury Board was questioning the

¹⁰⁹ Bruce, "Misinformation Canada", p. 46.

¹¹⁰ Jean-Louis Gagnon, Memorandum for the Honourable Robert Stanbury, Subject: Redefinition of Mandate, June 10, 1971, p. 1.

validity of many of the projects which the agency had planned for the future. He concluded that "This developing attitude seems to call for more radical action on our part than the mere questioning of cost recovery."¹¹¹ He also suggested that the Cabinet be requested to accept Information Canada's proposals concerning the clarification and redefinition of the agency's mandate to include "a revised, project-oriented organizational structure along functional lines,"¹¹² and accept its estimates of the cost of the functions which would be carried out under a revised mandate.

As a result of the controversy that the Phillips' memo had caused, Jean-Louis Gagnon's inability to provide the proper type of leadership, and the severe political and administrative problems that were facing Information Canada, the Trudeau Government was forced to seek a new Director-General and Deputy Director-General. Within a few months of the leakage of the memo, Jean-Louis Gagnon and R. A. J. Phillips accepted positions elsewhere within the public service. Therefore, on June 30, 1972, Guy D'Avignon was appointed by the government to be the second Director-General and Eric Miller was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Phillips.

From the previous discussion, it is quite clear that by the middle of 1972, Information Canada was in serious political and administrative trouble. It was unable to gain the support of the opposition parties due to their claim that Information Canada

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹² Ibid.

was nothing more than a propaganda arm of the Liberal Party. Even though the Minister and the Director-General had tried desperately to discourage and deny these claims,¹¹³ Information Canada's opponents continued their attacks. Perhaps these attacks upon Information Canada were maintained continuously partly because the press and the opposition had been told by anonymous government officials the content of the Prime Minister's speech of April 27, 1971, to the Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning. During this speech, Prime Minister Trudeau had stated Information Canada's functions as follows:

I see Information Canada, as it exists and as it should exist, as a very neutral body. I see another function, a sort of ministry of propaganda to present the government's position, possibly using the technical facilities of Information Canada.¹¹⁴

Thus, it is obvious that the opponents' fears were not totally unfounded. Even though Information Canada never did take on a propaganda role, this unofficial statement by the Prime Minister was proof that the agency had the potential to fulfill this possible future role and that the Liberal Party was not totally averse to the use of Information Canada for its own purposes.

In addition to Information Canada's inability to appease its opponents, its new programs were being cancelled and its

¹¹³ Jean-Louis Gagnon stated in an address to the Canadian Library Association that "no propaganda machine can function in the absence of certain conditions, and that these did not exist in Canada." Source: Jean-Louis Gagnon, "Information Canada, Ontario Library Review, Volume 55, June, 1971, pgs. 65-68.

¹¹⁴ R. A. J. Phillips, "Draft - Information Canada Objectives", An unpublished paper, November 30, 1971, p. 4.

wanted to receive government information. This was especially true in the small urban centres, rural, northern and coastal areas throughout the country. According to an Information Canada official:

From the research we knew that most people who used enquiry centres were urban, well-educated, and informed enough to find us. The majority of Canadians outside these categories, however, had the same right to information, but not the same access. We wanted to equalize access.¹²¹

The introduction of the mobile information officers was seen as desirable for a second reason. By the end of 1972, only six out of the forty-four federal government departments and agencies had information staff situated outside of the National Capital Region. Therefore, it was hoped that the mobile officers would

Not only strengthen immediately the presence and effectiveness of a number of federal regional offices, but ultimately, ... lay the groundwork for an ongoing program that could rationalize and reduce the possibility of proliferation of regional departmental information services for all 44 departments.¹²²

When the first mobile information officers were hired in 1973, they were sent to rural Manitoba and Nova Scotia. These were regions which had previously received little or no informational material for the Canadian Federal Government. If this program was well received by the public, it was hoped by many

¹²¹ "Communications: Some Simple Concepts (Part Two)", Unsigned article, p. 4.

¹²² Canada, Information Canada, Annual Report 1972-1973, (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1973), p. 1.

methods of communicating with the Canadian public. This was very much a period of experimentation and exploration in the communications field which was unlike any other period in the history of government information services. Unfortunately, the political and administrative problems it was facing were too important and serious to be ignored. As a result, opposition to Information Canada increased and the government was forced to recognize the fact that changes were necessary, if the agency was to survive.

CHAPTER 5

INFORMATION CANADA IN OPERATION: THE STORM - JUNE 30, 1972 TO DECEMBER 31, 1975

The second era of Information Canada's short history, as previously mentioned in Chapter Four, was distinct from its first era for several reasons. First, the Trudeau Government was in a minority situation for approximately two years of this time period, while it was in a majority situation throughout the entire first time period. Secondly, Guy D'Avignon was the Director-General of Information Canada throughout its second era of operation and not Jean-Louis Gagnon who had held this position previously. Thirdly, the second era was a time of re-evaluation and reorganization, while the first era was responsible for the agency's initial organization and most of the problems which faced Information Canada's chief administrators during the second era. Fourthly, the first era was characterized by the experimentation with and introduction of new innovations in the field of government information. The second era, however, was characterized by limited experimentation and cautious attempts to improve the communication process between the Canadian public and its government. Finally, two very important and influential internal government studies which examined Information Canada's main operations and functions were initiated and completed during the second era. These studies were

the Wall Report and the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Finance on Information Canada. Studies of this type and magnitude were never initiated nor completed during Information Canada's first period of operation.

As previously mentioned, on June 30, 1972, Prime Minister Trudeau announced that Guy D'Avignon was appointed as the second Director-General of Information Canada. Since 1966, Mr. D'Avignon had been a senior civil servant employed by the Canadian Federal Government. Prior to his appointment as Director-General he had "been the Assistant Deputy Minister for Finance and Administration in the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce since 1971."¹¹⁷

The first three months of Guy D'Avignon's directorship were characterized by extreme caution and secrecy. In fact, throughout the summer of 1972, the new Director-General of Information Canada and the Minister responsible for the agency, Martin O'Connell, would not speak to the press not the general public about Information Canada's future or present state of affairs. The aura of secrecy and caution which surrounded this troubled agency was mainly due to the administrative and political problems which it had experienced throughout 1971 and part of 1972.¹¹⁸ When Guy D'Avignon was appointed he decided that before he and his officials could proceed further with

¹¹⁷Office of the Prime Minister, Press Release, June 30, 1972, p. 1.

¹¹⁸These problems were explained in Chapter 4.

their responsibilities a thorough study and re-examination of Information Canada's operations and functions was necessary. Therefore, he and his colleagues felt that it was essential to maintain a high degree of secrecy and caution, in order for this task to be completed without arousing further political controversy.

Throughout the summer of 1972, the press speculated on what would be the result of the Director-General's and his officials' activities. Many members of the press were convinced and tried to persuade the general public that the outcome of the re-examination of Information Canada would be a thorough administrative and organizational "shake-up". They maintained that this "conclusion is inescapable", given the agency's past performance and the character and reputation of its newly-appointed director-general.¹¹⁹

Once D'Avignon and his colleagues had finished their difficult task of re-evaluating the functions and organization of Information Canada, it became evident to all concerned that the major administrative and organizational "shake-up" which had been predicted by the press was not to become a reality. Instead, Information Canada continued to function more or less in the same manner as it had before, except that it had undergone a few significant changes. Guy D'Avignon admitted in an interview that despite the changes which had taken place and

¹¹⁹ Stephen Duncan, "InfoCan: Our Uninformative Information Service", Financial Post, Volume 66, July 29, 1972, p. 3.

were planned for the future, Information Canada

Remains the sort of time-bomb that governments come to fear. Opposition parties know they can get applause any time by taking a crack at Information Canada. Every time they do 525 employees become a little more nervous and a bit more anxious about their future.¹²⁰

One of the most significant changes which took place just after Guy D'Avignon had become Director-General was the abolishment of the Automated Information Monitoring System. This program was planned under Gagnon's directorship, even though it was heavily criticized by the press for its potential. Because it was intended to monitor all press, television, radio and public speeches and then supply the government with this information on a daily basis, both Guy D'Avignon and the press felt that the danger of it becoming abused by people inside and outside of the government was too great. Therefore, AIMS was never put into operation and it died on the drawing boards before its dangerous potential activities could become possible.

A second significant change which took place shortly after Guy D'Avignon took over the reins of Information Canada was the introduction of mobile information officers. This experiment in government communication was initiated in response to the inadequacies of the Enquiry Centres. Many people within Information Canada, especially its top officials and researchers, felt that the Enquiry Centres were not reaching and informing large segments of the Canadian population which needed and

¹²⁰ Clive Baxter, "Info Canada Changes Its Image", Financial Post, Volume 67, January 13, 1973, p. 14.

wanted to receive government information. This was especially true in the small urban centres, rural, northern and coastal areas throughout the country. According to an Information Canada official:

From the research we knew that most people who used enquiry centres were urban, well-educated, and informed enough to find us. The majority of Canadians outside these categories, however, had the same right to information, but not the same access. We wanted to equalize access.¹²¹

The introduction of the mobile information officers was seen as desirable for a second reason. By the end of 1972, only six out of the forty-four federal government departments and agencies had information staff situated outside of the National Capital Region. Therefore, it was hoped that the mobile officers would

Not only strengthen immediately the presence and effectiveness of a number of federal regional offices, but ultimately, ... lay the groundwork for an ongoing program that could rationalize and reduce the possibility of proliferation of regional departmental information services for all 44 departments.¹²²

When the first mobile information officers were hired in 1973, they were sent to rural Manitoba and Nova Scotia. These were regions which had previously received little or no informational material for the Canadian Federal Government. If this program was well received by the public, it was hoped by many

¹²¹ "Communications: Some Simple Concepts (Part Two)", Unsigned article, p. 4.

¹²² Canada, Information Canada, Annual Report 1972-1973, (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1973), p. 1.

people within Information Canada, that it would be expected to cover many more rural areas throughout Canada.

In addition to the previous two changes, Guy D'Avignon made a conscious effort to decentralize and expand Information Canada's book selling operations. He attempted to undertake negotiations with three hundred "book shops across the country to carry the range of government publications turned out by the Queen's Printer under Information Canada."¹²³ Not only did he want to sell additional copies of Information Canada's books, he wanted the stores to designate special areas for the purpose of displaying and selling government publications. In an attempt to justify his actions in this regard, Guy D'Avignon stated: "It is going to cost money initially, but it should increase the \$4 million or so we get back from such sales now."¹²⁴

Some other fairly important developments also took place shortly after Guy D'Avignon was appointed. One such development was the opening of an enquiry centre in Halifax. The Halifax centre was unique in one very important aspect. It was not operated solely by the federal government, but was operated and controlled by a co-operative agreement between the federal and Nova Scotian governments. When it began operation, however, it was burdened with one serious bureaucratic problem. "Because neither government has legislative power to sell the other's publications, initially at least there will

¹²³Clive Baxter, "Info Canada Changes Its Image", p. 14.

¹²⁴Ibid.

be two separate cash registers."¹²⁵

An additional development which took place was the introduction of credit card privileges to Information Canada's bookstore and mail order customers. This development was not introduced in order to provide an additional and convenient service to the general public. It was initiated for a functional reason. What Information Canada referred to as "good faith credit" was introduced for orders and purchases of \$5.00 or less in order to speed up the processing of book orders.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, shortly after Guy D'Avignon's appointment as Director-General, Information Canada recognized the fact that the Canadian native population had special needs and interests. It was also made aware that the people's interests and needs do not necessarily follow along the strict lines of the various government departments and agencies. This development was explained by Information Canada in the following manner:

Following a study by Information Canada on the employment of Indians in the sugar beet fields of southern Alberta, an information officer from Communication Services was seconded to the recommendations of the study - the hiring of a native person to answer workers' questions on housing, welfare, etc., questions which cross a number of departmental lines.¹²⁶

Even though Guy D'Avignon and his officials were beginning to solve many of the administrative and organizational problems which were plaguing Information Canada, they were unable to

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Information Canada, Annual Report 1972-1973, p. 4.

avoid additional political problems. During the first week of July, 1973, the Progressive Conservative members of the House of Commons "made a spirited - if vain - effort to vote down funds for Info Can's budget."¹²⁷ This event reminded Information Canada's officials that their agency still had not gained the wide acceptance that they had hoped for and that they still had a number of battles to fight in order to achieve the level of acceptance which they desired. Shortly after this incident in parliament, Prime Minister Trudeau, when speaking in defense of Information Canada, stated:

Information Canada wasn't something that was going to die with the Liberal government, whenever that was going to be; this was something we had set up so that the people of Canada could know of the benefits and rights that they enjoy under the federal system of government, and what the tax dollars paid to the federal government gets them in terms of benefits direct or indirect. And yet, ... it was sabotaged from the beginning, it was ridiculed and attacked by the media and the Opposition. And quite frankly, it's very, very difficult to get it off the ground.¹²⁸

Despite Information Canada's reluctance to proceed with any further experimentation because of the severe criticisms it was receiving and the increased opposition it was facing, it did introduce two new programs during the latter months of 1973. One new program was the "feedback" program. It was designed in order to allow Information Canada to discover who was using

¹²⁷ Stephen Duncan, "Can a Man With Flair Rejuvenate Info Can?" Financial Post, Volume 67, July 28, 1973, p. 13.

¹²⁸ Pierre Elliott Trudeau, "Transcript of the Prime Minister's Speech at the Liberal Party Convention", Vancouver, July 15, 1973, pp. 13-14.

the enquiry centres and what questions they were seeking answers for. According to the agency's officials,

Armed with this information it is possible to plan information programs more effectively, and Information Canada can now offer a more complete and valuable service to other federal departments by helping them to identify special publics as well as gaps in their own information programs.¹²⁹

The second new program which Information Canada introduced during the latter months of 1973 was the "networking" program. It was involved in the exchange of information through established community and provincial organizations and institutions such as public libraries, schools and information centres. This program was seen as both desirable and necessary by Information Canada due to the fact that community centres and organizations are the main focal points for the exchange of information within the various urban and rural communities.

Thus by supporting these network contacts in each community (by means of special reference materials; telephone contact with the regional enquiry centre and limited training support) networking ... developed into an on-going part of Information Canada's services, to both rural and urban communities.¹³⁰

By 1974, it was painfully obvious that Information Canada was still in serious political and administrative trouble, despite its efforts to convince its opponents and the general public that it was a viable, useful and efficient government agency. Two internal government reports, which were heavily critical

¹²⁹Bradley Mann, "Evolution and Information Canada", INC, Information Canada's house organ, Volume 2, No. 5, August, 1975, p. 11.

¹³⁰Ibid.

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of Information Canada's activities, were released during 1974. These were the Wall Report and the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada. Both of these reports will be examined briefly in order to outline their main criticisms of Information Canada. They will also be reviewed in order to emphasize the facts that the philosophical framework in which Information Canada operated was not the same as other bodies within the government, and that its operations were as efficiently run as Information Canada's officials would have others believe.

In October, 1973, D. F. Wall was requested by the Secretary to the Cabinet to

examine the existing means of providing information to Parliament and the public, with a view to recommending means by which the process might be improved in order to achieve a better public understanding of government initiatives and actions.¹³¹

When D. F. Wall's report, "The Provision of Government Information", was completed and presented to the government in April of 1974, it contained, among other things, the views of various government officials on the positive and negative aspects of Information Canada. It also contained suggestions for the improvement of Information Canada's role within the Government of Canada.

¹³¹D. F. Wall, "The Provision of Government Information", Privy Council Office, 1974, Appendix to the Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence of the Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments, Wednesday, June 25, 1974, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1975), p. 32.

D. F. Wall found five major faults with Information Canada when he interviewed numerous government officials between October, 1973, and April, 1974. First, as previously mentioned, Information Canada did not possess clear terms of reference. Secondly, it did not distribute very much substantive information because it was unable to develop adequate working relationships with the various government agencies and departments. As a result, the departments were antagonistic and unwilling to co-operate with the few initiatives which were put forward by Information Canada and, as a further result, the public viewed these initiatives as inadequate to meet its many and varied needs. Fourthly, many government officials felt

that in any event it could not possibly direct, control, operate or even fully co-ordinate substantive information programmes in defiance of statutory departmental and ministerial responsibilities and 'dollar control'.¹³²

In addition, many government officials which were interviewed by D. F. Wall felt that Information Canada's staff did not have enough knowledge of the Canadian Government's functions and operations to carry out the agency's functions properly and efficiently. Finally, it was concluded "that, for many of these reasons, it was not attracting staff of the necessary quality to make it credible and effective within its existing terms of reference."¹³³

However, not all of the comments given by the officials

¹³²Ibid., p. 41.

¹³³Ibid.

which were interviewed were negative. Positive comments were given when Information Canada's potential was discussed. In fact,

most of the more positive commentators saw it as a central "mechanism of availability" of, or delivery system for, information provided largely by departments, and as a much needed "mechanism of two-way response in the regions."¹³⁴

However, they warned that Information Canada would not be able to carry out these functions, unless it received precise and clear direction along with a large degree of support from the government and its various departments and agencies. This support, they maintained, would only be gained if Information Canada was able to prove to the government, and its departments, that it could achieve their goals "better and more economically than could the departments and agencies themselves."¹³⁵

As previously mentioned, D. F. Wall's report also suggested some measures which he felt were desirable if Information Canada was to become a more useful central information agency. Most importantly, he felt that it could become more useful if it expanded its activities into four main areas. These areas were outlined by Mr. Wall as follows:

- (a) As a central mechanism of availability of information;
- (b) As a source of advice and expert assistance in the presentation and direction of information, and on whether to 'make or buy' information programmes;
- (c) As a necessary complement to departmental operations in the regions; and

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

(d) As a training resource.¹³⁶

From the previous discussion it is obvious that D. F. Wall was able to identify many of Information Canada's faults, as well as put forward some suggestions for its future growth. However, there was one very important aspect of the entire discussion which D. F. Wall failed to mention. He neglected to discuss how his suggestions could be implemented. For example, he maintained that Information Canada would have to gain acceptance and trust from the various government departments and agencies in order for it to carry out its functions properly. However, he failed to suggest the means by which this trust and support could be acquired. In addition, he did not suggest any methods which could be used to convince the departments and agencies that their first impressions of Information Canada were not grounded on fact, but on emotions, such as jealousy and resentment.

In short, D. F. Wall prescribed a number of possible solutions to some very real problems, but he neglected to fully explain these solutions. In addition, he neglected to fully explain the underlying reasoning and philosophy of his solutions. In order for government officials to decide whether or not to accept D. F. Wall's suggestions, they needed to know how he arrived at his conclusions and what his philosophical premises were. Without this knowledge, they do not know whether he arbitrarily chose these solutions without any forethought or

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

prejudices or not.

During 1974, a second major report which examined Information Canada's activities was released. This was the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada. The report explains the Standing Senate Committee's decision to examine Information Canada in depth as follows:

In May 1973, the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, in the course of examining the 1973/74 Estimates, decided to examine in detail the appropriation of one department, and chose Information Canada for this purpose.¹³⁷

The committee originally intended to complete its examination of Information Canada at the same time as the Estimates. However, it was unable to do so until the next fall, because it felt that it needed more time "... to do full justice to the examination of Information Canada and table a fair and impartial Report"¹³⁸

The Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada had more influence upon the future of Information Canada than the Wall Report for the following reasons. First, the press reported the Standing Senate Committee's findings more fully to the public. Thus, the public was made aware that there were major problems with the agency and that the press, which was originally opposed to its creation, was not always being over-critical of Information Canada in its

¹³⁷ Canada, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1974), p. xiii.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

coverage, as some politicians and civil servants claimed. Secondly, this report, because of its detailed criticisms of some of the agency's activities, was used by the opposition parties to confirm their claims that Information Canada was not run as efficiently and effectively as the government claimed. Finally, the report was more influential than D. F. Wall's, simply because the Standing Senate Committee was composed of a number of prestigious and powerful individuals who were in a position to influence the government's actions either directly or indirectly.

The Report of the Standing Senate Committee as previously mentioned, did not agree with many of the activities which Information Canada was engaged in by the end of 1973. In fact, the Committee disagreed with many of the basic philosophical concepts on which the agency was based. For example, it did not believe that Information Canada should continually assess public attitudes regarding government programs and policies because, traditionally, that role had belonged to the elected Members of Parliament and various other political institutions. The report went on to state that "While Information Canada should, as a matter of course, remain aware of issues of public concern, it is felt that a formal structure to carry out this task is unnecessary."¹³⁹ In other words, the Committee wanted to eliminate Information Canada's 'Information-In' function, for the

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 2.

reasons stated above. It wanted the flow of information between the Canadian Government and the general public to be "mainly a one-way affair where Information Canada is concerned."¹⁴⁰ It did not want Information Canada to be in a position which would give it any political power and which could be interpreted as a threat to the existing political institutions.

The Committee was also in favour of Information Canada's authority and responsibilities being enshrined in an Act of Parliament. It believed that this was necessary for one very important reason. The agency was unable to carry out its many activities and responsibilities efficiently and effectively due to the vagueness of its establishing authority. The Committee stated this position in the following manner:

Promoting co-operation among government information offices, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of said offices, and advising and servicing them on request; all require a strong hand at the helm, or, at the very least a strong sense of direction if the government's information vessel is not to flounder on the shoals of unrestricted growth and irrelevant projects.¹⁴¹

Furthermore, the Committee was strongly opposed to Information Canada's implementation of the Mobile Officers Program. It felt that the Mobile Officers were supplying very little government information to the people who were situated in the regions which were being serviced by them. According to the

¹⁴⁰ Victor Mackie, "The Senators Look at Information Canada", Ottawa Journal, Wednesday, May 8, 1974, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ Canada, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada, p. 4.

committee, this situation was due to the Mobile Officers' confusion over what their exact role was and what it should have been. They tended to counsel people on the social programs of the federal government, rather than strictly give out general information on the various programs. The Committee felt that this was not the Mobile Officers' duty nor was it their concern. Therefore, they should have simply handed out information and if someone had needed counselling, the Mobile Officers should have referred them to the appropriate government department or agency. Simply stated, the Committee claimed

that the Mobile Information Officer program has developed into a social welfare service, which was taking on tasks belonging to others, which would be very expensive to expand as was intended, and which should be discontinued.¹⁴²

The Mobile Officers Program's self-liquidation scheme was also heavily criticized by the Committee. It did not believe that the Mobile Officers would be able to establish a permanent and continuous information network which would eventually replace the Mobile Officers. In fact, the Committee was convinced that clients would become more dependent upon the Mobile Officers, rather than more independent. It based this conclusion on the following rationale:

With the best intentions and the best personnel in the world, self-liquidating schemes rarely turn out that way, especially if financed by the inexhaustible 'Horn of Plenty' which is the taxpayer's pocket.¹⁴³

¹⁴² "Free-wheeling Info Can", Unsigned news story, The Globe and Mail, Thursday, May 2, 1974.

¹⁴³ Canada, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada, p. 21.

When it discussed the regulation of government information services, the Committee stated that it believed Information Canada should not be a central information agency which was responsible for all the information functions of the Canadian Government. Instead, it wanted the Secretary of State to be responsible for the informational functions of the government. Information Canada would then be responsible to this ministry as the agency which would co-ordinate and regulate all the government's information services. This does not mean that the various government departments and agencies would discontinue their information activities. Instead, their information services would be co-ordinated and regulated by Information Canada for the Secretary of State in order "to achieve an effective overall information service to the Canadian public at the lowest possible cost."¹⁴⁴

If Information Canada was to fulfill its role as a regulatory and co-ordinating agency, the Standing Senate Committee felt that it should not emphasize the fact that it was able to initiate and implement new information programs. Alternatively, Information Canada should seek out and identify specific information needs. According to the Committee, once these needs have been identified and thoroughly researched, it should make sure that the proper government department or agency take the appropriate measures to meet these needs.

The Standing Senate Committee also recommended that

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

In the Blue Book of Estimates, the cost of information services should be fully and clearly shown for each program of each department and for all government agencies.¹⁴⁵

Furthermore, it suggested that Information Canada be appointed as the Treasury Board's agent which would be responsible for the screening of all the departments' and agencies' information budgets. In addition, the Committee wanted Information Canada to advise the Treasury Board on the departments' proposed estimates for various information programs. These recommendations were seen as essential, due to the fact that the amount of government funds which was being spent on information could not be determined. This situation occurred repeatedly because many government departments and agencies disguised a fair amount of their actual information costs under various categories in their estimates and budgets.

In addition, the Committee stated that there should be Information Canada Regional Offices only in Halifax, Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Toronto. This would limit the size of Information Canada's staff in the Regional Offices. However, it would still allow the agency to evaluate the effectiveness of the federal government's information programs. Despite its insistence upon only having six Regional Offices, the Committee admitted that the enquiry centres and the services they provided were "the most valuable and potentially the most significant aspect of Information Canada's operations, from the point of view of effective contact between Canadians and the federal

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 15.

government."¹⁴⁶ In addition, the Committee endorsed the Communications Services, Publishing and Expositions Branches' activities, even though it saw some areas within these branches which needed some improvements and/or changes.

The Report of the Standing Senate Committee was not received warmly by everyone concerned. In fact, it received a fair amount of criticism from various sources. It was criticized by some because it did not blame the Trudeau Government for any of the agency's faults or weaknesses. According to Arthur Blakely, a reporter for the Montreal Gazette,

The report doesn't lay a glove on Prime Minister Trudeau for the blurred and unrealistic guidelines which he devised for Info Can back in 1970, any more than it blames the agency for its inability to measure up to them.¹⁴⁷

The Committee's suggestion that Information Canada's main function should be to co-ordinate and regulate the information activities of the various government departments and agencies, in order to allow the Canadian public to receive a low cost, but effective information service, was also criticized. The critics of this proposal pointed out that this suggestion was overly optimistic on the part of the senators, due to the fact that Information Canada had not been able to establish any trust or co-operation between itself and the various departments and agencies. In fact, the departments and agencies openly displayed their hostility and suspicions towards Information

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁴⁷ Arthur Blakely, "Info Can is Alive and as Well as Could be Expected", Montreal Gazette, May 4, 1974.

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Canada on a regular basis, since they still believed that the new information agency was established to eliminate their information services and thus, some of their power. Even though their fears had not become a reality, Information Canada was viewed by the departments and agencies as a potential threat to the survival of their information programs. The Standing Senate Committee must not have taken this situation seriously enough when it made this recommendation. Otherwise, it would have come up with another solution to Information Canada's problems. Instead, the senators believed that this hostility and antagonism on the part of the departments and agencies would simply disappear once they were assured that their information functions would not be taken away from them. When Information Canada was created, Prime Minister Trudeau expressed basically the same view. However, "Departmental information services have increased their staffs and enlarged their budgets just as if Info Can didn't exist."¹⁴⁸ Therefore, it may be concluded that the departments and agencies could not be forced to cooperate with Information Canada until they were willing to and were convinced that Information Canada was not a threat to their financial and political power.

Furthermore, the Report of the Committee was criticized for its insistence that Information Canada avoid emphasizing its ability to initiate new information programs. "But that

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

is like counselling an artist not to paint, or an actor to avoid the stage."¹⁴⁹ Information Canada was given this role in order to meet some of the informational needs of the Canadian public which had previously not been met by the established information services of the government departments and agencies when they were operating independently. Therefore, if it de-emphasized this role, some very important informational needs would go unfulfilled^{149a} and the Canadian public would suffer as a result.

Finally, the report was criticized for its statement that Information Canada's Information-In function should be eliminated because it bypassed the political institutions. The senators were not totally correct when they made this statement. When Information Canada was requested to fulfill this role, it was requested to do so from the political leadership of the government. Therefore, if the political leadership felt that this function of the new agency would jeopardize the traditional functions of Parliament and the Members of Parliament, they would not have delegated this role to Information Canada when it was created.

Despite the increased amount of opposition and criticism that Information Canada was facing throughout 1974, it tried to conduct its operations as if nothing was wrong. However, it was suffering from severe morale problems. Information Canada's staff was working from day to day without knowing for certain whether or not their efforts would be severely criticized

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

^{149a} For example, the informational needs of people in rural Nova Scotia and Manitoba would not have been even partially met if Information Canada had not introduced the Mobile Information Officer Program. This is because these people find it difficult to communicate with departments situated only in the provincial capital cities or Ottawa.

by the press, departments, opposition political parties or various other sources. Members of Information Canada's staff were also concerned about their futures. Because their future employment was dependent upon the acceptance of Information Canada by the Members of Parliament, they were never sure whether or not their jobs would still be there in the upcoming fiscal year. This nervousness was especially prevalent after the near defeat of Information Canada's estimates in the House of Commons during 1973. This was a result of the minority situation which the Trudeau Government was facing from 1972 to 1974.

Nevertheless, Information Canada did make some progress during the 1974 to 1975 fiscal year. In fact, it was able to gain some further co-operation from a number of government departments and agencies. According to Roger Pepler, by the time Information Canada was abolished, the number of government departments which requested technical and professional aid from Information Canada had increased substantially and was still increasing throughout 1975.¹⁵⁰ This small degree of co-operation was largely due to the efforts of the Departmental Liason Division which undertook the responsibility of providing these services to the client departments and agencies.

During the 1974-1975 fiscal year, Information Canada started operating its Publishing Branch on a cost-recovery basis. This same branch, in conjunction with the Macmillan Company of Canada, signed a major co-publishing agreement for

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Roger Pepler, Acting Director, Publishing Centre, Department of Supply and Services, Ottawa, Ontario, September 4, 1978.

the publication of the National Atlas of Canada. In addition, five new enquiry centres were opened, the Expositions Branch had 235 new exhibits and the

Research and Evaluation Branch had been restructured to provide for the evaluation of virtually all of the planning and production elements in the information process, and was so acting on behalf of a number of departments.¹⁵¹

Among other activities, this branch was also involved in

the pre-testing of graphic and photographic design elements, copy, advertising creative components, audiences, concepts and media; the post-testing of information penetration, audience responses and attitudes, message registration and comprehension, and campaign effectiveness; the collection, administration, maintenance and dissemination of data on research into pure communication; the processing and evaluation of public feedback on government programs for distribution to the appropriate federal departments and to Parliament.¹⁵²

Furthermore, the Graphic Design Secretariat, which was responsible for the Federal Identity Program, announced that the new standardized federal symbol would be in use by all government departments by January 1, 1976. However, the changeover phase of the program tended to more confusing to the Canadian public than the old system of numerous symbols. "Not only have various departments used different nomenclature, but the changeovers have not occurred uniformly within departments."¹⁵³ It was hoped by Information Canada that this situation would

¹⁵¹ Miller, "Information Canada, April 1, 1970 - March 31, 1976," p. 30.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Gordon, "At Least Now the Government Knows What to Call Itself", p. 7.

straighten itself out once the existing stocks of stationary had been depleted.

By December, 1975, it was becoming more and more obvious that Information Canada was in deep political trouble. It was being criticized on a more regular basis for many of its initiatives and practices. In fact, after September, 1975, the opposition parties in the House of Commons did not let many debates go by without at least one call for Information Canada's abolition. The government departments continued to increase their own information staffs and programs and to pressure the government for the agency's abolition.^{153a} Meanwhile, the press never missed an opportunity to criticize Information Canada for any of its actions. Furthermore, some members of the Liberal Government began to question Information Canada's right to exist in a period of high inflation and to believe the allegations which were being made by the departments and press.¹⁵⁴

In conclusion, it may be stated that Information Canada's second era of operation was not free from serious political and administrative problems. Even though Guy D'Avignon and his top officials tried desperately to undo the harm which was caused by Jean-Louis Gagnon's term as Director-General, they were not totally successful. Information Canada continued to suffer from serious morale problems. It was also subject to an increased amount of criticism from various segments of the

^{153a} Letter to Beverley Edwards from a former Information Canada official, Ottawa, Ontario, August 2, 1978, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Letter to Beverley Edwards from Robert Stanbury, ex-Minister responsible for Information Canada, Hamilton, Ontario, September 29, 1978, p. 2.

population. Even though it had been able to convince some government departments and agencies to co-operate with it, the amount of co-operation which took place was still small compared to the potential amount of co-operation and co-ordination which could take place. Furthermore, during its second era, Information Canada's 1973-1974 estimates were almost defeated in the House of Commons because the Trudeau Government was in a minority situation. It went through two different Cabinet Ministers during this three year period due to the Cabinet shuffles immediately following the 1972 and 1974 general federal elections. Thus, there was no continuity in the leadership of the agency. Therefore, it continued to guess at what its original mandate actually meant and to operate without a comprehensive set of guidelines.

As a result of the many problems which were facing Information Canada during its second era of operation, the agency seemed to invite more problems. For example, it was the main subject of the Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada. As a result, the report's findings, many of which were negative, were released to the public and Information Canada received even more criticism from the press, public and government departments. Information Canada was also criticized briefly in D. F. Wall's report and thus received even more negative publicity. Furthermore, the agency made various attempts to solve many of its problems. However, these attempts were usually met with further criticism and very little praise. As time progressed, Information Canada did not gain many additional allies. In fact, it

seemed to gain more adversaries. In the end, those who gave birth to Information Canada were the same people who abolished it.

CHAPTER 6

THE ABOLITION OF INFORMATION CANADA

Information Canada's abolition came as no surprise to the members of the opposition parties in the House of Commons. Nor did it come as a shock to the press or the various officials within the government departments and agencies. In fact, this move by the Trudeau Government, seemed to be welcomed by everyone concerned except, of course, by the employees of the victim agency.

After June, 1975, the opposition parties in the House of Commons increased their demands for the abolition of Information Canada. There had been periodic calls for the dismantling of this agency during its five years of existence, but never had there been such relentless and continuous demands for its abolition as there were from June to December, 1975. This becomes very clear when one examines the House of Commons debates for this period, especially the debates on the Anti-Inflation Act and the Excise Tax Act.

During 1975, the Canadian Government was faced with the major problem of rising and uncontrolled inflation. In reaction to this problem, the Minister of Finance, Donald S. MacDonald, tabled a policy statement entitled "Attack on Inflation: A Program of Nation Action" in the House of Commons on October 14, 1975. In addition, the Canadian Government introduced and passed

the Anti-Inflation Act during the same month. In his statement, Mr. MacDonald claimed that

There are no simple or easy remedies for quickly resolving this critical problem. The inflationary process in Canada is so deeply entrenched that it can be brought under control only by a broad and comprehensive program of action on a national scale.¹⁵⁵

A long and heated debate followed the introduction of Donald S. MacDonald's policy statement and the Anti-Inflation Act. Needless to say, Information Canada was repeatedly accused by the opposition parties of being one of the major contributing factors to the government's inflationary practices. They maintained that Information Canada should be eliminated in order to reduce government spending and thus allow the government to live within its means. For example, during the debate on the Anti-Inflation Act, Lorne Nystrom stated:

There is needless expenditure - for example, the opening of Mirabel Airport, the champagne, the caviar. There was a lot of wasted money there. Talk of restraint a few days after that extravaganza cannot be taken seriously by Canadians. We can cut out waste by eliminating such organizations as Information Canada.¹⁵⁶

However, the Trudeau Government was not quite ready at that time to abolish the agency it had defended consistently for five years. It maintained that the opposition's estimates

¹⁵⁵Canada, Minister of Finance, Donald S. MacDonald, Attack on Inflation: A Program of National Action, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1975), p. 1.

¹⁵⁶Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, October 17, 1975, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1975), p. 8320.

of Information Canada's expenditures and total cost to the taxpayers were exaggerated. It also claimed that Information Canada was meeting some very real informational needs of the Canadian population. During the debate on the Excise Tax Act, Mr. Francis stated the following in defense of Information Canada:

Some say that the government should have made savings in other programs, without specifying where, or else that a program such as that carried out by Information Canada be abolished, which would by no means provide the sums of money needed.¹⁵⁷

Meanwhile, the press and numerous government departments and agencies continued to pressure the government for Information Canada's abolition.¹⁵⁸ Eventually they, along with the opposition political parties, were granted their wish. On December 18, 1975, Jean Chretien, during his explanation of the new additional measures of the Anti-Inflation Program, simply announced that:

The agency known as Information Canada will be terminated. The book stores and the division which handles expositions for the government will continue to exist as parts of other departments.¹⁵⁹

No other explanation of this action was given at the time of the announcement.

Information Canada's budget for 1975-76 was 9.5 million dollars. So when the announcement of its abolition was made, many people believed that this measure was taken simply in order

¹⁵⁷Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, July 22, 1975, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1975), p. 7832.

¹⁵⁸Interview with Roger Pepler, Acting Director, Publishing Centre, Department of Supply and Services, Ottawa, Ontario, September 4, 1978.

¹⁵⁹Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, December 18, 1975, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1975), p. 10156.

to save the government approximately ten million dollars a year and to prove to the public that the government was doing its best to fight inflation. However, as will be explained later, fiscal restraint was not the only reason why Information Canada was abolished. In fact, by abolishing this agency the government was not going to save 9.5 million dollars. It was only going to save approximately two million dollars because

\$3 million will still be spent on salaries for the 677 employees who will be transferred to other departments ... (and) Another \$2.5 million will be spent on the bookstores and the branch which arranges government displays at trade fairs and exhibitions.¹⁶⁰

Furthermore, at the time of its abolition, Information Canada was in the process of offering to the government some new recommendations which would save the government approximately fifty million dollars a year.

Confidential memorandums obtained by the Canadian Press outline Info Can proposals to streamline, co-ordinate and cut at least 25 per cent from the \$200 million a year that all federal departments spend on information, public relations and advertising.¹⁶¹

Information Canada recommended that it undertake an analysis of all advertising and information programs in order to determine their expected impact and then take steps to reduce the amount of useless and unnecessary information which was advertized and published by the various departments and agencies of the government. It also recommended that an interdepartmental inquiry

¹⁶⁰ Michael Lavoie, "Info Can to Slip Quietly Away - 11th Hour Battle Lost", Ottawa Citizen, December 19, 1975.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

be launched in order to clarify how public relations and information services actually are operating in the government and how they should operate. This inquiry was seen as necessary by Information Canada because it believed that many deputy ministers and other senior civil servants misunderstood the purposes of these services and thus increased their information staffs but did not seem to increase their departments' outputs of informational material. Thirdly, Information Canada recommended that the enquiry centres be expanded in order to provide the majority of government information to the general public. It claimed that

If the government were to spend \$75 million less on dissemination of information and \$25 million more on access (through enquiry centres) we can guarantee a saving of \$50 million and a more effective communications process.¹⁶²

Finally, it recommended that the government "buy more advertising directly from the media"¹⁶³ instead of through advertising agencies because it would result in a saving of \$3.75 million annually. Nevertheless, this attempt by Information Canada to save itself from destruction was unsuccessful and its recommendations were never taken seriously by the Cabinet.

Since Information Canada employed approximately 565 people at the time of its abolition,¹⁶⁴ all these people needed to be

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ I am uncertain how many people were actually employed by Information Canada at the time of its abolition. Every source sites a different amount. According to Information Canada's 1974-1975 Annual Report, there were 565 permanent and term employees as of January 29, 1975. Canada, Information Canada, Annual Report 1974-1975, (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), p. 16.

transferred to other departments or else find jobs outside of the government. The government had promised to try to find alternative employment for them within the Public Service of Canada by their termination date, March 31, 1976. However, it was not able to do so. Though it was able to relocate approximately seventy per cent of them. On March 2, 1976, Jean Chretien, the President of the Treasury Board, in answer to a question about how many Information Canada employees had actually been transferred to other departments, stated that "until now we have relocated 216 out of 301 persons. So instead of 20 per cent, it is almost 70 per cent have other positions."¹⁶⁵ Of course, for political reasons, he purposely did not mention that the other thirty per cent were still jobless after March 31, 1976.

Even though the government stated that it would keep Information Canada's bookstores open after the rest of the agency was dismantled, it did not keep this promise for very long. On August 6, 1976, Supply and Services Minister Jean-Pierre Goyer announced that the bookstores would close within ninety days of that date. The reasons given for their closing were that it

would save taxpayers about \$1 million in the next year ... (and) The move is also tied to the government's current policy of trying to keep spending down¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, March 2, 1976, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1976), p. 11405.

¹⁶⁶The Canadian Press, "Taxpayer Saving: Gov't. Bookstores to Close in 90 Days", Ottawa Citizen, August 6, 1976.

This additional move by the government meant that 47 additional Information Canada employees would have to find other jobs within or out of the Public Service. It also meant that the general public would have more limited access to government publications, since the commercial bookstores which were to take over the selling of government publications were not expected to carry as wide a variety as that which was offered by the Information Canada bookstores. According to the Montreal Star, "The ultimate result of the supposed move to help citizens learn more about their government is to ensure that they know less."¹⁶⁷

In short, by the end of 1976, there was only one visible sign left of the once highly controversial government information agency. This was the standardized federal symbol which had been developed by Information Canada's Federal Identity Program and had been adopted by all government departments by the end of 1976. All of the former employees of the agency had found other jobs within the Public Service of Canada or they had left the government in order to search for employment in the private sector. The bookstores and enquiry centres had closed down and the mobile information officers were non-existent. The Expositions Division was transferred to the Department of Supply and Services along with the Publications Branch. In addition, all the support and research facilities were simply

¹⁶⁷"No More Information", Unsigned news story, Montreal Star, August 7, 1976.

disbanded and thus, ceased to exist.

As previously mentioned, Information Canada was not abolished for purely economic reasons. Numerous former Information Canada officials maintain that the agency could not have been abolished for only economic reasons simply because it was not a large financial burden upon the government's treasury. According to Robert Stanbury, a former Cabinet Minister who was responsible for the agency,

It involved little if any net increase in cost when established (because it was essentially a grouping of previously existing functions), and its disappearance provided little if any saving (because most of the functions were redistributed among other departments).¹⁶⁸

In addition, Roger Pepler, a former official of Information Canada, stated that Information Canada's last year of operation cost the government approximately four million dollars, even though it had a ten million dollar budget, mainly because it had recovered approximately six million dollars in revenues.¹⁶⁹ Thus, it is obvious that Information Canada was not a large financial burden upon the government while it was in operation and that there must have been other reasons for its abolition.

Several reasons for Information Canada's termination, none of them economic, were given by various former officials of the agency and other senior civil servants. Many of these officials

¹⁶⁸Letter to Beverley Edwards from Robert Stanbury, Hamilton, Ontario, September 29, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹Interview with Roger Pepler, Acting Director, Publishing Centre, Department of Supply and Services, September 4, 1978.

blamed the government departments for Information Canada's abolition. They maintained that the departments did not trust the agency from the beginning because there were afraid of losing some of their power and resources.^{169a} Therefore, the departments went out of their way to cause trouble for the agency and continually pressured the Cabinet for its abolition. A former official within the Regional Operations Branch of Information Canada believes that the departments were able to accomplish their goal of abolishing the agency because the "Federal government, is in effect, a federalism running a federalism."¹⁷⁰ In other words, the federal government is composed of a federation of departments which in turn run or supervise various operations of a federation of provinces and territories on behalf of the federal government.

J. B. Kinsella, the Director of Information for Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, did not deny that the departments lobbied for Information Canada's abolition. However, he attempted to explain a possible reason why the agency was phased out and the departments' role in this decision. Information Canada was unable

to settle into a productive role. It was just about the time that Info-Can had shaken down its operation, eliminated some deadwood, and had begun to finally offer the services to the departments it had promised, when the axe fell. Had it hit its stride in the first year - and it's

^{169a} The departments' mistrust of Information Canada was also based upon their knowledge of the political connections of the Task Force members, which were mentioned on page 33 of this thesis.

¹⁷⁰ Letter to Beverley Edwards from a former Information Canada employee, Ottawa, Ontario, August 9, 1978, p. 2.

easy to be critical - it might have survived. But most departments had become turned off and almost seemed to join the rabble who demanded the execution.¹⁷¹

Another contributing factor to Information Canada's abolition was that the agency had become "... for most of its life ..., a political football, which caused much diversion of energies from the real goals."¹⁷² The press and opposition political parties had continuously accused the agency, among other things, of being a political arm of the government and a waste of the taxpayers' money. They also continuously pressured the government to abolish the agency until their efforts were finally rewarded in December, 1975.

It was also pointed out by another former official of Information Canada that many members of the Trudeau Cabinet did not support the creation or the continuation of the agency. When Information Canada made its initial mistakes, there were few supporters in the Cabinet who would speak in defence of the agency. As the mistakes increased and became more embarrassing to the government, even Ministers who had originally supported the idea came to doubt its usefulness.¹⁷³ Furthermore, Robert Stanbury and his refusal to make it a tool of the Liberal Party was not acceptable to many members of the

¹⁷¹Letter to Beverley Edwards from J. B. Kinsella, Director, Information, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, September 14, 1978, p. 1.

¹⁷²Letter to Beverley Edwards from J. C. Douglas, Director, Technical and Production Services Branch, National Film Board, Montreal, Quebec, September 22, 1978, p. 1.

¹⁷³Letter to Beverley Edwards from a former Information Canada employee, Ottawa, Ontario, August 8, 1978, p. 3.

Cabinet and political appointees of the government. In his words, its lack of partisanship and his "refusal to have it serve any purpose remotely controversial (such as in the October Crisis) sapped its appeal to those in Government whose expectations of political benefit were disappointed."¹⁷⁴ Thus, when the government decided to abolish Information Canada, its loss was not mourned by many member of the government. In fact, for the reasons stated previously, many Liberal Members of Parliament were quite glad and perhaps relieved to approve its abolition.

G. M. Carman, the Director General of Agriculture Canada's Information Services, was the first chairman of the "Twelve Apostles."¹⁷⁵ Therefore, he worked very closely with Information Canada and "was one of the men that for some years tried so desperately to make the organization viable, and regretted exceedingly that it failed."¹⁷⁶ Mr. Carman believes that Information Canada was abolished for three major reasons. First, its goals were never accomplished because the agency had tried to undertake too many activities and please too many people all at the same time. Secondly, it did not use financial common sense because it had what Mr. Carman calls "delusions of grandeur." As a result, it became a financial burden upon

¹⁷⁴Letter to Beverley Edwards from Robert Stanbury, Hamilton, Ontario, September 29, 1978, p. 2-3.

¹⁷⁵The "Twelve Apostles" was an inter-departmental committee which was established to advise, consult and aid Information Canada. It was composed of twelve information directors from the same number of government departments.

¹⁷⁶Letter to Beverley Edwards from G. M. Carman, Director General, Information Services, Agriculture Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, July 19, 1978, p. 1.

the government. Finally, its staff "had, in trying to be a complete entity for government information, become so top-heavy in their organization and in their methodology that they were failing in both."¹⁷⁷ As a result of the above factors, he concludes that Information Canada had become an embarrassment to the government and so it had to be dismantled because of its overall failures and the government's desire to rid itself of this embarrassment.

Another ex-member of the "Twelve Apostles", who had also worked within Information Canada at a senior level, believes that Information Canada was a failure because the Cabinet accepted the Task Force on Government Information's premise that the government was a monolithic entity. He maintained that this was a serious mistake and was the major reason why the "Twelve Apostles" and Information Canada were unable to solve many complex problems.

What the task force failed to conceive was that the diversification of interests and activities in the public sector - given the complexity of our social structure and inter-nation dependencies - is as great, and requires specialists in as disparate fields as in the private sector.¹⁷⁸

Finally, a former employee of Information Canada maintains that the agency was a failure because its leadership and management were 'incompetent'. He understood that the government had a difficult time finding someone who was willing to be Director

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Letter to Beverley Edwards from a former employee of Information Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, September 15, 1978, p. 2.

General of the agency. "The individual who finally did take on the position, whatever his good intentions might have been, was completely inadequate for the position."¹⁷⁹ He claims that the First Director-General of Information Canada did not have adequate management and administrative experience, travelled widely to make speeches and left his assistant to run the agency. However, his Deputy Director-General, even though he was an experienced administrator and career civil servant,

did not seem able to establish good working relationships with individual departments and for the most part was unable or unwilling to recruit either within or outside the government the kind of experienced public relations people who might have made the organization work.¹⁸⁰

From the previous discussion of Information Canada's abolition, it may be concluded that there was not just one reason for this action by the Federal Government, but several reasons for it. Some of these reasons were financial in nature, but many of them were not. In short, Information Canada was abolished because it had experienced serious administrative problems, it was unable to gain acceptance and co-operation from the various government departments and agencies, the government was pressured by the press and opposition political parties to abolish it, many of the Cabinet members did not support it, and it was politically wise for the Trudeau government to abolish it as part of the Anti-Inflation Program.

¹⁷⁹Letter to Beverley Edwards from a former employee of Information Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, August 8, 1978, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

The government's claim that Information Canada was abolished in order to cut down on government expenses, therefore, was simply an excuse to rid itself of a controversial and sometimes embarrassing government agency. Information Canada was so controversial and embarrassing because when the government created the agency it made some major mistakes which plagued the agency throughout its entire short life. Among other things, it did not enshrine Information Canada's authority and responsibilities in an Act of Parliament, but gave it a vague and misunderstood mandate. It also accepted the Task Force on Government Information's premise that the government was a monolithic entity. Furthermore, Information Canada was superimposed on existing government departments, which only caused antagonism and mistrust rather than co-operation and acceptance.

Finally, just as the agency had been introduced in order to fulfill one of Pierre Trudeau's election campaign promises, the Liberal Government's willingness to help make participatory democracy a reality, five years later it was eliminated in response to another election campaign. Just one year after the 1974 election campaign had been fought on fiscal restraint and Wage and Price Controls, Information Canada was eliminated, according to the government for fiscal reasons. Thus, Information Canada's existence was dependent upon the political climate of the country. When political circumstances dictated, it was created and abolished accordingly. If the Trudeau Government had truly believed that the Canadian public needed and was entitled to more and better government information, it would have taken the proper measures to ensure that Information

Canada would have become a permanent, non-partisan, government institution.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: WAS IT ALL WORTH IT?

The Canadian Government's abolition of Information Canada marked the end of a very important stage in the history of the federal government's information services. While it was in existence, Information Canada ventured into some areas which had never been explored before by any other information service within Canada or across its borders. It was the only peacetime centralized government information agency that had ever been in existence in this country.^{180a} Its short life span was characterized by experimentation. In the beginning of its operations, it was engaged in fairly bold experimentation in order to bring more and better government information to the Canadian public. During its last three years of existence it was engaged in limited and more cautious experimentation in order to justify its existence to its opponents and to some members of the government. Furthermore, it was able to supply large quantities of government information to thousands of Canadians who normally would not have received any government information under the previous system. Therefore, even though Information Canada had numerous faults and was very controversial, it is sad to realize that with the exception of the people who worked there, and a number of Canadian citizens they had managed to help, Information

^{180a}In November 1939, the Federal Government established the Directorate of Public Information, which was a highly centralized information service. It was later replaced by the Wartime Information Board. When World War II ended, the board was dismantled and the Canadian Government's information services were allowed to once again operate independently. Source: Canada, The Royal Commission on Government Organization, Report of the Royal Commission on Government Organization, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1962), Volume 3, p. 110-111.

Canada departed unsung and largely unmourned.¹⁸¹

Even though the government information agency known as Information Canada does not exist any more, many of its services have survived under the jurisdiction of various other government departments and agencies. It must be mentioned that those services which still exist are splintered and are not co-ordinated or monitored through one agency. Furthermore, the services are not run in the same manner or publicized as widely as they were when they were under the jurisdiction of Information Canada. As a result, a fair number of information gaps do exist and many informational needs of the Canadian general public are not being met.

In order to understand what informational needs are being met and which ones are not, it is necessary to briefly describe the activities of those information programs which survived Information Canada's abolition. The Canadian Unity Information Office is one government agency which had taken over some of Information Canada's functions. The Secretary of State is responsible for the Canadian Unity Information Office (C.U.I.O.) and the office is administratively attached to this department. The C.U.I.O. works very closely with the Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (Co-ordination) in order to carry out its four major functions. These functions are described by the C.U.I.O.

¹⁸¹Eric Miller, "Information Canada, April 1, 1970 - March 31, 1976: A Report on Federal Government Communication", An unpublished report presented to the Treasury Board, Ottawa, Ontario, November, 1976, p. 39.

as follows:

gathering, developing and distributing information and documentation designed to enlighten the issue of Canadian unity.

responding to requests for information from individuals and non governmental organizations, on matters relating to Canadian unity.

guiding and advising groups seeking assistance for projects promoting Canadian unity.

working in co-operation with federal departments to ensure the enhancement of the Canadian unity theme in the information components of major government programs.¹⁸²

When one examines these functions, one must keep in mind that this office was established in response to the election of the Parti Quebecois during the 1976 Quebec Provincial Election. It was not established to fulfill an obvious informational need of the Canadian public. It was established as a promotional agency for National Unity. Even though Information Canada carried out a similar function, it emphasized and explained what federalism is and means to the Canadian public. Furthermore, it did not carry out this function strictly in order to promote National Unity. It undertook this function because many people outside of the government did not understand or were confused about how the Canadian federation operated and how it should operate. Therefore, the Canadian Unity Information Office does not fulfill exactly the same functions as part of Information Canada did. However, it does supply some information

¹⁸² Canadian Unity Information Office, "Canadian Unity Information Office (C.U.I.O.)", An informational sheet put out by this office, Ottawa, Ontario, 1978, p. 1.

to the Canadian public which the government would normally not supply if the political circumstances were different in the Province of Quebec.. This situation will not last for long though. As soon as another government is elected in Quebec, the public will witness the disappearance of another government information agency.

The Privy Council Office's Information Secretariat also handles some of the functions which formerly had belonged to Information Canada. The secretariat, which has a group of experienced information people in its employ, fulfills a co-ordinating function when it examines the major policy decisions of the various government departments. According to a former employee of Information Canada,

The Prime Minister's Office, and the Privy Council Office are the pivotal points of power and decision insofar as the Government's information and communications activities are carried out today. This type of organization simply did not exist in any practical way 10 years ago.¹⁸³

A third government agency which carries out some of the functions that had previously been performed by Information Canada is the Treasury Board. Since 1976, the Federal Identity Program, which had been developed and initiated by Information Canada, has been under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Board. Furthermore, this agency developed and published an index of all the government's services and programs, in order to partially

¹⁸³Letter to Beverley Edwards from a former Information Canada employee, Ottawa, Ontario, August 8, 1978, p. 3.

fill the information gap which was left open when Information Canada's enquiry centres were closed down. It was expected, by government officials, that this index would be in wide use by the end of 1978 and that it would "be on the desk of all front-line public servants who will be able to direct any inquiry to the responsible agency or department."¹⁸⁴

Other former Information Canada activities, divisions and programs also survived the agency's abolition. Its Still Photo Division was transferred back to where it originated, the National Film Board. The Exhibition Commission, Government Publisher, book sales and four people from the Enquiry Correspondence Unit were transferred to the Department of Supply and Services. In addition, this department developed and initiated a correspondence referral service for publications. It was designed in order to fill a gap which was left by the closing of Information Canada's bookstores. Since the general public could no longer inquire about various government publications at a central location, this service was designed to assist those people who write letters requesting publications, but do not know which government department or agency to contact for them. Finally,

many bookstores carry a large amount of information and data about government operations ... (and) The National Library, through its inter-library loan services, can provide answers to questions relayed to it by local public libraries throughout the land.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴Letter to Beverley Edwards from P. J. Lerous, Director, Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, Hull, Quebec, July 31, 1978, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵Letter to Beverley Edwards from R. L. Richardson, Deputy Secretary, Treasury Board, Ottawa, Ontario, August 22, 1978, p. 2.

Even though some of the information programs and activities which formerly belonged to Information Canada survived in their original or modified states, many of them did not. For example, the Regional Operations, Communications, Research and Special Projects Branches were dismantled. The bookstores and enquiry centres were closed down and the Mobile Information Officers Program ceased to function. As a result, many informational needs, which had previously been met by these activities and programs, are no longer being met by any government department or agency. Instead, these needs are being ignored by the government and it does not seem to have any plans to meet them in the near future.

Many government officials agree that the Canadian general public still needs more and better government information. However, they do not agree on whether a central government information agency should be instituted in order to meet these needs. Furthermore, those who want the government to create a second central government information agency do not agree on the structure or functions it should adopt. In order to understand the various views put forward on this subject and to aid in the determination of the most appropriate solution to this problem, the differing opinions of various government officials shall be discussed.

Robert Stanbury, the first Cabinet Minister who was responsible for Information Canada, believes that there is a public need for all of Information Canada's services. He maintains that the bookstores and enquiry centres should be re-established because they would be just as useful in the

present as they were in the past. He further maintains that

The central resource to complement departmental information services, avoid duplication of their facilities, establish standards and means of evaluation for them on a co-operative basis, check costs and staffing, build professionalism - this is surely more than ever needed, and would no doubt again be resented, until well established.¹⁸⁶

> An agency structured along the same lines as Information Canada is seen as desirable by Robert Stanbury. However, he would prefer that the agency be given another name because the name 'Information Canada' gives it an "Orwellian colouring".¹⁸⁶ Mr. Stanbury states that a central government information agency is necessary now more than ever because the functions, which has previously been under the jurisdiction of Information Canada, have become more expensive, less co-ordinated and less efficient than they had been under the control of the agency. In addition, he maintains that "Other functions, such as citizen-government communication on a factual, non-partisan basis, are more than ever needed but sorely neglected when no such focus for them exists."¹⁸⁷

J. B. Kinsella, the Director of Information for Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, also maintains that the need still exists for a central government information agency. The main reason for his belief that a central agency is necessary is that there is an urgent need for the co-ordination of the various government information services. In his opinion, only a central

¹⁸⁶ Letter to Beverley Edwards from Robert Stanbury, Hamilton, Ontario, September 29, 1978, p. 4.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

agency can achieve this. In addition Mr. Kinsella maintains that

I was always of the personal opinion that the agency should even be the godfather of a career pattern for information officers, but that may have usurped the function of the Public Service Commission. Yet the military has one and runs it well.¹⁸⁸

Furthermore, he is a firm believer in the centralization of government information services because he thinks it is a better alternative than decentralization. In his words,

Decentralization may be great if you manufacture widgets in seven plants across Canada, but without a bottom line imperative, you invariably get the best for your buck in a centralized operation.¹⁸⁹

In contrast to the previous two opinions, G. M. Carman does not believe that a central government information agency should be reinstated by the Canadian Government unless its functions and structure are drastically different from those of Information Canada. Since he believes that there still is a need for those services which were provided by the abolished agency, he would welcome a new agency if it met certain criteria. First, in his opinion, a new agency would only be acceptable if it were complimentary and supplementary to the informational programs of the various government departments and agencies instead of trying to control them. Secondly, he maintains that

if a very small, very professional, hard-core organization that had as its terms of reference a methodology and principle of co-ordinating information required by government and from government, I think it

¹⁸⁸Letter to Beverley Edwards from J. B. Kinsella, Director, Information, Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, September 14, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

could be made viable and a service to the country.¹⁹⁰ Finally, in his opinion, a large bureaucracy serves no purpose and benefits no one.

Roger Pepler, the Acting Director of the Department of Supply and Services' Publishing Centre, and Alan Duckett, the Director of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce's Office of Information and Public Relations, do not believe that a totally centralized government information agency is desirable. In Roger Pepler's opinion, a partly centralized system is desirable only for the dissemination of free and salable information. He feels that it is not desirable for all information functions because the government departments are against it and would fight its implementation tooth-and-nail. Furthermore, he believes that a totally centralized information agency would not be a politically wise move on the part of the government because of all the opposition it would have to face.¹⁹¹

Alan Duckett does not believe that a totally centralized government information service is desirable under any circumstance. He maintains that the implementation of such an agency would only lead to news management and the manipulation of government information. Very few people, he warns, would use the services of the agency, as a result. "As an example, newsmen

¹⁹⁰ Letter to Beverley Edwards from G. M. Carman, Director General, Information Services, Agriculture Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, July 19, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Roger Pepler, Acting Director, Publishing Centre, Department of Supply and Services, Ottawa, Ontario, September 4, 1978.

would never deal with such an agency for their major information needs."¹⁹²

In short, even though many government officials agree that there still is a need for many of the services that had previously been provided by Information Canada, they do not agree on whether or not there is a need for a centralized government information agency in Canada. Before a conclusion may be reached about what type of information system is desirable in the Canadian context, one must be reminded of the basic arguments for and against the implementation of totally decentralized and centralized systems. Therefore, a summary of the arguments for both systems, which was presented in Chapter One, shall be presented along with their relationship to the Canadian system of government.

First, a centralized government information agency is seen as desirable by some people because it would facilitate the flow of information to and from the government and would eliminate the duplication and fragmentation of government information services.¹⁹³ The Canadian Government, because it currently allows its various departments and agencies to carry out the majority of its information functions, does not run its information services as efficiently as they could be under a centralized system. Duplication and fragmentation still occur because there

¹⁹²Letter to Beverley Edwards from Alan Duckett, Director, Office of Information and Public Relations, Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Ottawa, Ontario, September 8, 1978, p. 2.

¹⁹³For elaboration on these and other arguments, see Chapter One of this thesis.

is no central agency to co-ordinate or provide an overview of the government's information services.

Furthermore, the flow of information to and from the government tends to be slow and complicated, due to the fact that the general public is forced to deal with numerous government departments, instead of just one. Also, many people do not know which government department to contact for information on a certain subject. If a central agency was established, it could either supply the information which was requested or refer the inquirer to the proper department, depending on the circumstances. Even though the Canadian Government is now using an index of all its programs and services, there are still areas of interest which cross departmental lines. Thus, problems which are related to these areas may not be properly answered by one or more departments unless their informational activities are co-ordinated in some way.

Some proponents of decentralization, on the other hand, maintain that centralization creates a dangerous monopoly situation. Others insist that "A central information agency providing all kinds of information to all Canadians is less of a threat to the liberties of citizens than it is a threat to efficient dissemination of information."¹⁹⁴ They claim that a centralized government information agency only creates a bottleneck, in regard to the free flow of information. The departments, they

¹⁹⁴ Canada, Senate, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1974), p. 8.

maintain, have less information to catalogue and organize than a central agency would have if it was responsible for and handled all government information. Thus, the departments are able to answer public inquiries more efficiently and promptly than a central agency would because they are not bogged down with the organization and cataloguing of the vast quantities of information which the government possesses.

Decentralists also maintain that a centralized government information agency cannot possibly meet the informational needs of all the government departments and agencies because it would not have the time nor resources to allow it to fully understand and act upon the specific needs of each department and agency. Furthermore, they maintain that the sheer volume of requests for information that the departments and agencies receive could not be handled by one agency. For example, the Department of Agriculture received, during 1978, an average of five hundred letters and three hundred and fifty phone calls per day at its Ottawa office.¹⁹⁵ Since there are twelve major government departments, a central information agency would have to answer at least 6,000 letters and 4,200 phone calls per day, if they all handled the same amount of requests as Agriculture Canada. Decentralists insist that a central agency could not possibly handle this number of requests for information efficiently and adequately, plus carry out its other numerous duties properly.

¹⁹⁵Letter to Beverley Edwards from G. M. Carman, Director General, Information Services, Agriculture Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, July 19, 1978, p. 2.

Centralized information services, according to the proponents of decentralization, may be used by the government in power to maintain itself in power by the manipulation of government information. Even though this is a possibility in the Canadian context, it is unlikely that it would become a reality. If anything can be learned from the Information Canada experience, it is that a central information agency would probably not abuse its position in the Canadian Government any more than the departmental information services do right now. Information Canada refused to become partisan from the very beginning of its existence. On several occasions, Robert Stanbury defended the agency's unwillingness to become an instrument of any political party. For example, on April 22, 1970, he once again stated that

It is not intended that Information Canada will advertise on any medium the proposals of any political party. It will be guided by the ethics applicable to any branch of government which must distinguish between government and partisan activities.¹⁹⁶

Even though some of the Cabinet Ministers tried to persuade it to become a political instrument of the governing political party,^{196a} it never wavered from this commitment.

Finally, decentralists maintain that a centralized information agency would not serve regional interests. A totally centralized agency which runs its operations out of centralized offices, they insist, cannot possibly understand nor fulfill the

¹⁹⁶ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, April 22, 1970, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 6155.

^{196a} Letter to Beverley Edwards from Robert Stanbury, Hamilton, Ontario, September 29, 1978, p. 2-3.

needs of Canada's five major regions and its various sub-regions. A decentralized system, which runs separate information programs and offices that are specially designed for each region and sub-region, they claim, is the only solution to the problem of serving the informational needs of Canada's regions and sub-regions.

From the previous discussion, it is obvious that total centralization and decentralization have both negative and positive aspects. Therefore, as was previously mentioned in Chapter Two, the Canadian Federal Government's information services, which should be designed to fulfill the informational needs of the general public, would probably be more effective and efficient if they contained the most favourable aspects of both systems and few, if any, of their unfavourable aspects. Hopefully, a mixed system would result in greater benefit for the Canadian public due to the varied programs and services which a mixture of both systems could provide.

A mixed system of Canadian information services should partially consist of a central co-ordinating agency which is properly protected from partisan abuse, by some means. In order to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings and the confusion which results from an ambiguous and vague mandate such as Information Canada's, a new central co-ordinating agency should have its authority and responsibilities firmly entrenched in an Act of Parliament. This is necessary because an imprecise, confusing and ambiguous mandate is simply unworkable and the cause of many inter-departmental conflicts. "And, while a great deal can be said for the opportunities produced by

imaginative interpretation, a fuzzy mandate can also tempt you into doing dumb things."¹⁹⁷

Presently there are numerous gaps within the information services of the Canadian Federal Government which need to be closed. In addition, a fair amount of duplication and fragmentation plague the government's information services. Therefore, one of the main functions of a new central co-ordinating agency should be to co-ordinate the informational efforts of the various government departments and agencies, in order to avoid duplication and fragmentation. It should also be able to determine what gaps exist within the government's information services and then take the appropriate steps to close them quickly and efficiently with the aid of its research, technical and organizational facilities.

Before Information Canada was abolished, "With the co-operation of other departments, it had begun to fill certain information gaps that none of them could fill on their own."¹⁹⁸ For example, it helped the departments design, write and publish free booklets which were distributed to special publics. A new central co-ordinating agency should pick up where Information Canada left off in this area and perhaps improve this function administratively and organizationally. However, it must be

¹⁹⁷ Eric Miller, "Information Canada, April 1, 1970 - March 31, 1976: A Report on Federal Government Communication", An unpublished paper presented to the Treasury Board, Ottawa, Ontario, November, 1976, p. 15.

¹⁹⁸ "Info Can Reconsidered", Unsigned article, Maclean's Magazine, Volume 88, January, 1975, p. 50.

careful that it does not alienate the departments and agencies as Information Canada did. Instead, they should be assured that the agency is only in existence to improve the quality and delivery of the government's information services and not to play power games with the departments. Therefore, when the new agency is in the process of determining information gaps it should consult the departments as often as possible in order to foster mutual trust and understanding and to allow the central agency to always be aware of and in touch with the activities of and actual situations within the departments.

In addition, a new central co-ordinating agency should hire and maintain a staff of highly trained and professional information officers who are fully acquainted with all aspects of the information field. Besides carrying out the day-to-day functions of the agency, these professionals should also perform two other very important functions. They should also provide technical, administrative, research and organizational facilities and advice to the federal government's numerous information officers within the various departments. Secondly, they should also develop and initiate a training program for the government's information officers and those people within the Public Service of Canada who wish to work in the field of information. When Information Canada was abolished so was DACM, the system which Information Canada utilized to train information officers.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, there is no mechanism, at the present, to train people properly for this

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Roger Pepler, Ibid.

very important role in the federal government's information services. A training program of this nature is badly needed and so it should be a priority of a new central co-ordinating agency.

A new central agency should also revive two very important services which had been major components of Information Canada. These services are the bookstores and the enquiry centres. The bookstores should be revived because they provided a central location within six of Canada's major cities where people could just walk in and find the government publication they wanted or order them through the store. The bookstores allowed the public to deal with just one agency which could locate all existing publications from every government department and agency. Such is not the case now. If a person wants a government publication, he/she has to know which department to contact and then must wait for the delivery of it through the mail, if it is in stock. Alternatively, a person may contact the Department of Supply and Services' Enquiry Correspondence Unit. However, he/she has to be aware it exists, which may be difficult since its existence is not widely publicized. When the bookstores existed one simply had to go downtown if you lived in a city which was fortunate enough to have an Information Canada bookstore in operation. It may be argued that the authorized dealers have taken the place of the bookstores. However, they do not handle the variety of government titles that Information Canada did nor a referral service for the public. Therefore, it may be argued that the revival of government bookstores would benefit not only the public but the government as well through increased sales of books which people normally would not send

away for due to their dislike of writing letters.

As previously mentioned, the enquiry centres should also be revived. During their short existence, they were able to supply thousands of Canadians with information which they may not normally have received, or they referred people to the proper government departments for answers to their questions. Even though the index system, which was mentioned previously, is in operation now, it only gives civil servants enough information to allow them to refer the public to the proper department if they know which program or service the inquirer wants to know about, and it does not provide information on questions that do not relate to specific federal government programs or services. Therefore, there is no mechanism set up within the government to handle general questions on government policy, procedure and operations. The reintroduction of the Enquiry Centres would provide this much needed service. The statistics on their use indicate that they provide a valuable service. Information Canada's Enquiry Centres handled 135,000 inquiries during the 1971-72 fiscal year. The number of inquiries had increased to 500,000 by the end of the 1973-74 fiscal year.²⁰⁰

As previously mentioned in Chapter One, this mixed system of government information services should also contain some desirable aspects of a decentralized system. The government

²⁰⁰ "Info Can Reconsidered", Unsigned article, p. 50.

departments and agencies should retain their control over the writing and editing of their respective publications for two very important reasons. First, the departments and agencies are the government bodies which are the most familiar with their own respective policies, programs and operations. Second, a central co-ordinating agency could not possibly become fully acquainted with all of the policies, programs and operations of each department and agency. This is largely due to the likelihood that the agency's time and resources would not be sufficient to carry out this task plus all of its other duties efficiently and effectively.

Moreover, in order to allow the Canadian public to be close to the direct source of government information, regional offices of the central co-ordinating agency should be placed at regular intervals throughout the various regions of the country. Information that is especially designed to meet regional needs should also be made available to the public through these regional offices. In addition, provincial and local governments, organizations and associations should be consulted regularly about all aspects of government information and persuaded to co-operate with the federal government's information services, in order to ensure that regional and local interests are taken care of adequately.

Finally, the Mobile Officers Program, which was abolished with most of Information Canada, should be reintroduced with modifications. There should be one Mobile Officer attached to every regional office and if resources allow it, there should be one mobile officer attached to every sub-regional office.

According to an ex-Information Canada official, an ideal mobile officer fits the following description:

Envision someone who knows an area well. Who understands its problems. Who knows how information gets around. Who knows what community resources are available. Who is not tied to a telephone. Who has no preconceived notions about forms of communication. Their guideline is, if it works - use it.²⁰¹

Even if the people who are hired for these positions do not fill these qualifications perfectly, they should fit this description as closely as possible, in order to allow the Mobile Information Officer Program to be as efficient and effective as it could possibly be.

The Mobile Information Officer Program should be re-introduced for two important reasons. First, it should be re-introduced in order to meet the informational needs of those people who do not live close to a regional or sub-regional office and to allow these people to receive the same or similar services and programs as those who do live within close proximity of an office. Secondly, where it had previously been in operation, this program was met with favourable response from the public it had served and thus, it was widely used. According to an article which appeared in Maclean's Magazine in January, 1975, the mobile officers in Manitoba and Nova Scotia met the following response: "On the whole, the reaction of the backwoods weekly press, of the regional administrators of federal government

²⁰¹"Communications: Some Simple Concepts (Part Two)", Unsigned article, INC, Information Canada's house organ, August, 1975, p. 4.

programs, and of the people themselves, has been highly favourable.²⁰²

As previously mentioned, the Mobile Information Officer Program should undergo some changes when it is re-introduced. First, it should be made available in every region and sub-region within Canada in order to allow every Canadian citizen the opportunity to use its services and programs. Secondly, taped and written records should be kept of the views of the people with whom the mobile officer comes in contact.

As these were being recorded for the benefit of the message originators, they could also be played back to other citizens. In my view this is using electronic media the way in which it was supposed to be used, to leap time and space and act as a contact point for people.²⁰³

Finally, this program should make full use of the local facilities which are available within the communities that the officers are in contact, instead of relying upon central government resources. For example, the officers could arrange that the dissemination of information and counselling facilities be carried out through local libraries, service organizations and community clubs.

In order to avoid many of the serious problems which tend to arise as a result of the lack of a Canadian Freedom of Information Act and an unbiased, neutral authority which regulates the operations and administrative decisions of the government's

²⁰²"InfoCan Reconsidered", Unsigned article, p. 50.

²⁰³David Baxter, "Information Canada Mobile: Some Thoughts", An unpublished paper, Calgary, 1974, p. 2.

information services, a regulatory authority must be established within the new mixed system of government information services. This regulatory authority should consist of a board of commissioners selected by the government on the basis of their professional and technical experience in the field of government information and communication. The members of the "Information Commission" should be appointed for a fixed term of office, in order to allow a variety of government information experts to have input into the commission and to guard against the possibility of the commission becoming stagnant and resistant to change. However, the commissioners' terms should not begin and end at the same time. They should be staggered so that there will always be new commissioners learning from the past experiences of those who had served on the board for a longer period of time. Thus, experience and knowledge of the board's operations will be passed on continuously to new generations of commissioners and hopefully, better and fairer decisions will be made as a result.

The "Information Commission", above all else, should not fall under the responsibility of a Cabinet Minister and/or a department for two basic and very important reasons. First, if the commission is to remain neutral and make unbiased rational decisions, it should not be controlled by and/or subject to the political whims of any elected official and his/her political appointees. Secondly, the commission, because of the very nature of its activities as a regulatory authority, must deal with the problems and requests of all government departments, agencies and institutions which are engaged in any government

information and communication functions. Thus, its activities would be interdepartmental in scope and it would not be strictly concerned with one department. Since government information services would be its constituents, it should not fall under the jurisdiction of one Cabinet Minister and/or one department because it would run the risk of favouring that department above all others, in order to appease its Cabinet Minister and remain in existence. In addition, to ensure that the "Information Commission" remains a non-political and unbiased regulatory body, its responsibilities, structure, authority and financial support should be entrenched in an Act of Parliament so that they can not be easily revoked by the political wing of the government, Parliament.

Furthermore, because government information services tend to spend large sums of public funds and attract political controversy, the "Information Commission" should report directly to Parliament in much the same way as the Auditor General does. An annual report of the commission's activities which would be tabled in the House of Commons once a year would allow the Members of Parliament to debate the commission's activities and make constructive criticisms on a regular basis. The commission, in turn, should take note of the suggestions made by various Members of Parliament and, depending upon the validity of these suggestions, it should either improve its operations accordingly or constantly be aware of Parliament's concerns in order to avoid unnecessary antagonism between these two bodies.

At first glance, this proposed mixed system of government

information services may appear to be nothing more than a resurrected Information Canada. However, there are some major differences. First, the new system would have its authority and responsibilities clearly defined and entrenched in an Act of Parliament, in order to avoid the confusion and mistakes experienced by Information Canada's officials throughout the agency's short life span. Second, it would co-ordinate the informational efforts of all government departments and agencies. When Information Canada was in existence, this only occurred when the departments concerned requested the agency to do so. They did not make these requests at regular or predictable intervals. Thus, very few departmental informational efforts were co-ordinated through a single agency and duplication and fragmentation were the result. Third, it would put into operation a training program especially designed to meet the needs and requirements of the government's information officers. At present no such training program is in existence.

In addition, it would establish sub-regional offices, as well as regional information offices. This would allow more people throughout the country to visit and utilize the facilities housed in these offices, without having to travel the great distances that were necessary in order to reach Information Canada's regional offices from the rural areas. Furthermore, the Mobile Officers Program, as previously mentioned, would undergo two important changes. It would make more and better use of the available local facilities, than its predecessor and it would be made available to the general public in all regions and sub-regions throughout Canada. Finally, the

government has learned some valuable lessons from its brief experimentation with a partially centralized government information service. As a result, a new mixed system would probably not make the same administrative and political mistakes as Information Canada and would, hopefully, venture into other areas of information production and dissemination that were not utilized by the previous agency.

Furthermore, this new mixed system of government information services would have an "Information Commission" which would regulate the new system's operations and administrative decisions. It would be entrenched in a separate Act of Parliament and report directly to Parliament, instead of through a Cabinet Minister. When Information Canada was in existence, it did not have such a commission to regulate its activities. Instead, Information Canada had to report to Parliament through an elected Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister. As a result, its activities were never judged and regulated by a non-political and neutral body of men and women who were government information and communication experts. If it had had a non-partisan regulatory authority of this nature, it may have been stopped from making many of its administrative and operational mistakes before it was too late to reverse these decisions, and thus may have survived up until the present time.

This proposed system of government information services can not possibly work efficiently and effectively until the Canadian Government has committed itself to the development of a comprehensive and rational information policy. At present, no such policy is in existence nor had it ever been. Without

such an information policy and

Without clear terms of reference, no organization and in particular no governmental organization, can avoid straying into areas where it does not belong, nor can it escape the bureaucratic snare of unregulated, unlimited growth.²⁰⁴

In conclusion, much may be learned from the Canadian Government's brief experimentation with the partial centralization of government information services in the form of Information Canada. This agency ventured into areas within the field of government information which had never been explored by other governments before or since its existence. It opened up new paths and introduced new and exciting methods of communicating with the Canadian public. However, as we have seen, Information Canada was far from perfect. It suffered from some serious administrative, organizational, economic and political problems. At the end of its five short years of existence, Information Canada was abolished by the Canadian Government because of these problems.

However, the government did not abolish the Canadian public's continuous and increasing need for more and better government information. Even though some of the services and programs which had previously belonged to Information Canada have survived in modified forms and have been transferred to various departments, there still is a need for some of the programs and services which had been abolished, such as the bookstores, enquiry centres,

²⁰⁴ Canada, Report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance on Information Canada, p. 4.

mobile officers and regional information offices.

It seems that the only information system that can meet the Canadian public's informational needs is one which encompasses the most favourable elements of the centralized and decentralized systems, for the reasons stated previously. However, no system will work in Canada until the government becomes committed to the principles associated with the public's right to free access to government information and a Freedom of Information Act is passed in the House of Commons. Furthermore, the government must also formulate and adopt a comprehensive and rational information policy. As we have seen, the lack of such a policy contributed considerably to Information Canada's abolition. Without such a policy Canada's information services will continue to suffer from inefficiency, ineffectiveness and political criticism.

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APPENDIX I

ORGANIZATION OF INFORMATION CANADA 1971 - 1972

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