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THE JAMAICA BROADCASTING CORPORATION
AND THE MANLEY GOVERNMENT 1972-1980:
CONFLICTING VIEWS OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

© PHILIP H. SMITH, 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
Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Carleton University .

Ottawa, Ontario

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The undersigned hereby recommend to the Faculty of
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines public broadcasting in Jamaica in the light of several generally accepted principles. The thesis concentrates on one of these principles; the obligation of the public broadcaster to maintain its freedom of control from vested interests.

The paper traces the development of public broadcasting in Jamaica from its Canadian roots and examines the activity of the Manley Government as it gradually exerted its influence over the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation in the 1970s.

The paper describes the effects of governmental control on a public broadcasting organization and it concludes with some observations about the value of public broadcasting to society.

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Chapter I: Broadcasting and its role in national development

We will define "communication" in more detail later, but we can initially describe it as a process through which people interact, share information and ideas. Communication can, as described, range from a process involving two people talking to each other to satellite technology that distributes information simultaneously to hundreds of millions of people. This latter aspect of communication has a pervasive impact on most activities in our society, and indeed, modern western society considers communications technology to be its lifeblood.¹

But the sophisticated communications systems that operate in the developed economies are not established to anywhere near the same level in developing countries. Many of the developing countries lack even a basic communication infrastructure such as roads, let alone electronic pathways.

Despite the gaps in their communication systems, the development of such systems was not, until recently, seen as a priority in the Third World. There were, manifestly, more

1. "Communication in Third World Countries," Canadian International Development Agency, a pamphlet outlining Canada's activities, Ottawa, 1983.

urgent problems to solve such as public health, water supplies, food supplies, energy supplies, etc. But, beginning slowly in the 1960s, and led by Unesco, the United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the importance of communication in the development process has become apparent.²

But although the importance of communication has been accepted, no distinct role for communications has been agreed upon. As we note below, some see communication as a vibrant change agent for the most backward elements of society; others see it as a new tool for those in power to consolidate that power; and then there are those who see communications as able to facilitate beneficial changes in society if other conditions for change are also present.³

A definition is in order. There is no standardized meaning for "communication" or for "information". The terms are used in a variety of ways. There is a general understanding that "information" is basically the signs or messages transmitted from a source to a receiver; and

2. Sean MacBride et al, Many Voices, One World, Report by the International Commission for the Study of Communications Problems, Paris: Unesco, 1980. The MacBride Report, as it is known, was one of the latest of many Unesco publications that stressed the value of communications in development. The MacBride Report's value was somewhat lessened by its contentious recommendation concerning the licensing of journalists.
3. See M. Tehranian, "Communications and international development: some theoretical considerations, Media Asia, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1979 for an interesting review of the schools of thought regarding the place of communications in development.

"communication" refers to the complex interchange of signs and symbols between individuals or communities. The definitions used herein follow that general convention and are those used by the MacBride Commission to differentiate between the two different phenomena, but with an understanding that the phenomena are often intertwined:⁴

"communication": as the process of exchanging news, facts, opinions, messages between individuals and people.

"information": as the product i.e. news, data and various other content and outputs of media, cultural activities or industries.

The concept that communication is a major component of the development process is a new one, and requires a brief examination of the development process itself.⁵

The transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy and society has historically been called "modernization" or "development" and three major theoretical perspectives of development have emerged.⁶ First, the

4. Sean MacBride et al, Many Voices, One World, p. 283.

5. Wilbur L. Schramm, Mass Media and National Development: The Role of Information in National Development, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964. Professor Schramm is one of the first to recognize the role of communication, in its various forms, in development. See also Schramm and Daniel Lerner, eds. Communication and Change: The Last Ten Years and the Next, Honolulu, University of Hawaii, 1976. Lerner's own work, The Passing of a Traditional Society, New York: The Free Press, 1958, is also an important contribution.

6. M. Tehranian, "Communications and international development; some theoretical considerations, pp. 157-160.

liberal political economists view the development process in terms of the pluralization of society, policy and economy. The essence of the pluralist's view is the differentiation of society into distinctive structures and functions, increasing divisions of labour, growth of diverse interest groups and the sought-for dynamic balance among those competing groups.

The stage theorists emerged as the second school of development.⁷ Marx, Weber, Rostow and others placed an emphasis on the increasing levels of rationalizations as the key element in the process. The Hegelians highlighted the role of reason in the process of historical development. Marx and his adherents saw technological advances as a fundamental part of the historical process. Weber saw culture and development as the twin incentives for social progress. The state assumed a much greater significance than the people in it and the technocratic view of progress prevails.

The third school of development is, perhaps inevitably, an outgrowth of the first two. The central concept is liberation.⁸ with the rise of historical consciousness in the Third World this school sees development occurring only

7. See Walt W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.

8. One of the advocates of this school is Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, translated by Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970. Karl Marx of course also provides much of the theoretical foundation for many of those who view development as a process of liberation.

with the rejection of values imposed by industrial-colonial powers and the establishment of indigenous socio-economic Third World systems.

Communications and Development

All these schools put communications, if not at the core of their respective processes, at least as critically important to those processes. For classical and neo-classical economists and political theorists the free dissemination of information is fundamental to liberty and for economic growth. For Marxists the proletariat must know the rationalizations of the bourgeoisie in order to challenge them. For the liberationists, communication is the process of the awakening of historical consciousness and self-identity which fuels the revolution against domination and exploitation. Most of the studies on the role of communication in development have concentrated on the mass media and on its "diffusion of innovations".⁹ The innovations being diffused are often the creations of high-technology countries and are often inappropriate to developing countries. Mass media, by their nature, consider their audience to be homogenous and relatively

9. Larry Shore, "Mass Media for Development: A Reexamination of Access, Exposure and Impact" in E.G. McAnany, (ed), Communications in the Rural Third World, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980, Ch. 2.

undifferentiated; communication is deemed to be almost entirely one-way to the audience; (letters to editors, phone-in shows, programme ratings are in the reverse direction).

Nation building, modernization and politicization of people require the cooperation, even passive cooperation, of the people, and the mobilization of the nation's human resources. Communication can be a tool for these ends. The role of communication in society - all societies - is to inform, educate, animate and entertain.¹⁰ The emphasis placed on each of these functions will obviously vary enormously depending on the characteristics of national political systems and their policies. Leaders may use communication systems to increase political awareness, focus attention on national problems, develop a national identity and rally support for government programs and personalities - sometimes to the deliberate detriment of competing parties and personalities. In any political system communication plays a vital role in guiding and motivating the public in conformity with national goals.

For developing countries, having made the assumption that development is desirable in the linear sense in which it is usually considered - one can assert that communications

10. "National communications systems: some policy issues and options", Unesco Report on Mass Communications, No. 74, (1975), p. 8

systems can contribute towards that development. Having noted the important roles that communication plays in various political systems, its importance should not, however, be overemphasized. The value of communication, particularly the media, is in support of a whole range of development initiatives. There is little that such systems can do in isolation.

It would be, and has been, wrong for developing countries to simply imitate the broadcasting institutions and practices of the developed countries.¹¹ In North America and Europe television is a household good; in India it was introduced as a village facility. In the West broadcasting is done over the air (usually called "off-air") to household receivers, for radio and television, or to community-type receivers for some television reception; in China most broadcasting is done via community loud-speakers.

Jamaica, the focus of this study, possesses a relatively modern communications infrastructure, having at various times three newspapers, a national television service, two island-wide radio channels and three "community" radio stations. The major daily newspaper, The Gleaner, has been continually published for over a century.

It would be useful, therefore, to note Ilchman and Bhargava's point that the question of a nation's

11. I. de Sola Pool, "The influence of international communication on development", Media Asia, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1979, p. 151

"development" can sometimes be more appropriately rephrased as "How should a government allocate its scarce resources so as to enable it to modernize?" Modernization was defined as a process of improving the capability of a nation's institutions and value systems to meet increasing and different demands.¹² --A "modern" nation, then, is one in which the institutions and values are able to adjust to meet the changing demands placed on them by society, usually through such change agents as political parties, pressure groups, etc. The state, under a strategy of modernization, becomes the most realistic instrument for the allocation of society's resources, even, as Ilchman and Bhargava point out,¹³ when the allocation of such resources is decided in favour of the private sector.

Broadcasting and Modernization ○

An examination of the role of broadcasting in a modernization strategy reveals that theorists and policy-makers have held high hopes for its potential contribution

12. Warren F. Ilchman and Ravindra C. Bhargava, "Balanced Thought and Economic Growth", in The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment, Charles K. Wilbur, ed., (New York 1979) P. 46. This definition of "modernization" is more appropriate than the definition accepted in the 1950s which gave "modernization" as a development theory requiring Third World countries to adopt the western pattern of industrialization - to develop was to modernize. The domestic experience was turned into a universal truth. The Puerto Rico model eventually showed its weaknesses, especially to Michael Manley who became Prime Minister of Jamaica in 1972.

13. Ibid. p. 47

to modernization.¹⁴ One hope is that broadcasting would assist in the process of integration, in making one nation out of a variety of regional, tribal and ethnic loyalties. (The national motto of Jamaica is "Out of many, one people".) The other hope is that broadcasting would contribute to the motivating and teaching of the general population, particularly in the rural sector.

But, as Katz points out, broadcasting's achievements in developing countries have not matched these laudable aspirations and the record of success is uneven at best. Where a process of national integration has occurred, in concert with a process of economic development, the side effects of modernization with the assistance of the media become visible.

Modernization brings in its wake a standardization and secularization of culture such that the traditional values and arts - those that give a culture its character - are overwhelmed by the influx of Western popular culture.¹⁵

UNESCO, which has devoted much of its resources since its inception to the development of communications in the Third World, particularly broadcasting, has the same fears. UNESCO's Constitution aims to secure "the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and ... the free exchange of knowledge" for mankind. But a UNESCO Conference on "Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean", held in Costa Rica in 1976, had a word of warning:

14. Elihu Katz, "Can Authentic Cultures Survive New Media?", Journal of Communication, Spring 1977, p. 113f.

15. Ibid.

... when the mass communication media persistently purvey systems of values [that are] foreign to the countries of a given region, there is a danger that in the long run they will efface or obliterate the region's own values.¹⁶

The UNESCO Costa Rica Conference also concluded that it was essential for each Member State to formulate explicit communication policies since, obviously, UNESCO has no single, common, comprehensive policy to propose to its members. The Report noted that UNESCO's function was to state the problems, raise questions, promote exchange of views and experience and then assist, if required, in the drafting of policy that reflects each country's economic and social situation and its communication needs.

Communication policies constitute sets of principles and norms for communication organizations in individual countries. Such policies facilitate the establishment of those infrastructures that will help attain the national goals in social, cultural and economic development.

Naturally, the extent to which the state intervenes in the field of communications varies according to its political ideology. But even the most liberal democratic states have found it necessary to place far greater regulatory, policy-directed restrictions on their electronic communications systems - radio, television, telecommunications satellites - than are imposed on non-

16. UNESCO, Final Report of the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean (Costa Rica), 1976, p. 51.

electronic communication systems - the press and the publishing industries. The primary reason for this discrimination is, of course, because of the finite size of the electronic spectrum; it has to be allocated on a regional, national and international basis. But most national governments early recognized, too, the pervasive power of the electronic media and took steps to impose controls on media ownership, on the operating of broadcasting stations, and on allied systems such as cable broadcasting and satellites.¹⁷

The Canadian Experience

In his closing speech to the 1976 Costa Rica Conference the Secretary-General of UNESCO, Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, noted the leading role that Canada had played in developing communications - and communications policy:

... Canada, which perhaps more than any other country, has realized the extent to which it depends on communication. The creation of Radio-Canada [The CBC] and of the National Film Board were early manifestations of the government's determination to assert its individual identity in the field of communication ... (Canada) has adopted a communication policy the essential objective of which is to protect Canada's national culture and identity.¹⁸

17. Canada's Broadcasting Act is typical of such governmental concern, stating, in part, "the Canadian broadcasting system shall be effectively owned and controlled by Canadians so as to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada;" R.S.C. 1968, c.B.11 s.3(b). Other countries have similar legislative protection for the broadcasting industry. The Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation Act (1958) does not, however, contain any prohibitions about foreign ownership of the Corporation, nor of Radio Jamaica (RJR).

18. Ibid. p. 52.

The Secretary-General may have been granting to the Canadian government of the day a nobility of purpose that can, in large measure, be justified.¹⁹ The CBC was born fifty years ago as "a unique instrument of nationhood, an electronic cultural vehicle to serve the country as a bulwark against Americanization."²⁰ The many Royal Commissions, Task Forces and Committees that have investigated Canadian broadcasting in general, and the CBC in particular since its inception, generally concur that all elements of the Canadian broadcasting system should be pro-Canadian, rather than anti-American, in their ownership and their programming. The latest, and certainly most comprehensive, examination of the Canadian broadcasting system, the Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, submitted its report to the Federal Minister of Communications in September, 1986. The Task Force stated that:

The Canadian broadcasting system is one of the great achievements of our nation. In the face of formidable geographical, technical, political, financial and linguistic obstacles; in the face of unparalleled problems inherent in our contiguity with the United States, the greatest purveyor of entertainment (or "culture", as Canadians think of it) in human history; Canada has

19. The Royal Commission on Broadcasting, headed by Sir John Aird, was established in 1928. The Aird Commission's report led to the creation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the CBC, Canada's national public broadcaster, in 1936.
20. Michael Nolan, "CBC at 50: facing a challenge", The Globe and Mail, November 3, 1986.

evolved a radio and television system that, like the country itself, mostly works.²¹

This paper attempts to describe the appropriate role for public broadcasting in contributing to a nation's development, with particular emphasis on Jamaica. We shall see later in this chapter that there are certain principles to which public broadcasters should adhere. We shall look at the development of public broadcasting in Canada in some detail because the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canada's national public broadcaster, has had a certain, if uneven, success in its adherence to those principles and in its contribution to national development.

We shall also spend some time on Canada's broadcasting system, particularly the CBC, because the Corporation served, for reasons that are noted later, as the model for public broadcasting that Jamaica wanted to build. The similarities between Canada and Jamaica relevant to public broadcasting are more than one might expect. Both countries are former British colonies; both were struggling, at different times but through similar historical stages, to assert their national identity; both have geographical characteristics that are serious obstacles to communication and transportation; the geographic dissimilarities are in scale more than in kind; both young nations wanted to

21. Report of the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, Ottawa, 1986, p. 5. (hereinafter referred to as the Caplan-Sauvageau Report, in reference to the Task Force's co-chairmen).

develop a public broadcasting system that suited their own needs and, especially, their financial limitations and which did not copy the British system; both countries had a political legacy from the British system that gave them an acceptance of the role of public, or crown, corporations as vehicles to achieve the aims of the state; and of course both countries had a common major language.

So in this chapter we will see how Canada's public and private broadcasting system was shaped, what assumptions were made, what principles were accepted and what lessons were learned. The lessons learned in the development of Canadian broadcasting, especially public broadcasting, and the solutions found can provide valuable guidelines to any nation wishing to develop its own national broadcasting system.

It is emphasized that the Canadian experience cannot provide solutions to the development of broadcasting elsewhere. Indeed the critical issues of the Canadian system are as much of a challenge to Canadians today as they were to Canadians in the 1930s: Canadian programming versus American, public versus private broadcasting, who should produce Canadian programs (and how much), the subsidizing of cultural versus commercial interests, regulation of content versus freedom of expression, federal authority versus provincial, one-year or five-year financing of the CBC,

technology versus programming as the main engine of the system.²²

But from the beginning of Canadian broadcasting, indeed even during the introductory debates about its establishment, there emerged several fundamental and accepted assumptions about this new endeavour, and it was Prime Minister R.B. Bennett who told Parliament:

First of all this country must be assured of complete Canadian control of broadcasting from Canadian sources. Without such control ... broadcasting can never be the agency by which national consciousness may be fostered and sustained and national unity still further strengthened...

Secondly, no other scheme than that of public ownership can ensure to the people of this country ... equal enjoyment of the benefits and pleasures of radio broadcasting ...

[Thirdly] the use of the air that lies over the soil or land of Canada is a national resource over which we have complete jurisdiction ... and I cannot think that any government would be warranted in leaving the air to private exploitation and not reserving it for development for the use of the people.²³

The Broadcasting Act of 1936 had been preceded by the 1928 Royal Commission on Broadcasting headed by Sir John Aird, a bank president. The Aird Commission was created in response to growing public awareness of an invasion of American radio signals. The Government, in the early 1920s,

22. See Caplan-Sauvageau Report, p. 7 and its following pages for the historical review of the development of the Canadian system contained herein.

23. Canada, Debates of the House of Commons, May 18, 1932, pp. 3035-36.

had already taken steps to protect Canadian magazines by providing them with tax and postal concessions and imposing tariffs on American publications.²⁴ But literally hundreds of Canadian towns had established radio stations to act almost exclusively as relays for American signals and, of course, American border stations broadcast directly into Canada. The only wholly Canadian broadcasting service was provided by the Canadian National Railways. Beginning in 1923 the CNR, at the insistence of its president, Sir Henry Thornton, provided radio programmes for its train passengers (en route!) and for its hotel guests; the service used Canadian talent for most of its programming.

The Aird Commission recommended that Canada adopt the British or European model of public broadcasting rather than the American commercial system. The Commission concluded that a wholly commercial Canadian broadcasting system would be unable to generate sufficient revenues from advertising to be able to produce Canadian programming; only a national publicly-owned system would be able to develop a wholly Canadian system. The Aird Commission also noted, "There has, however, been unanimity on one fundamental question - Canadian radio listeners want Canadian broadcasting."²⁵ That

24. Caplan-Sauvageau Report, p. 6.

25. Canada, Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (Aird Commission), Ottawa, 1929, p. 6. The Report is a model of brevity, consisting of only nine pages. The Caplan-Sauvageau Report was 731 pages in its English edition.

That sentiment was to be expressed to every succeeding inquiry, but was later complicated by Canadians' fervently expressed desire for American television signals in addition to indigenous productions and "providing this service was also a major task for both an underfunded public broadcaster and a commercially-driven private sector."²⁶

Television was introduced into Canada in the early 1950s and by 1955 the broadcasting industry, both public and private, and various pressure groups were demanding that the Government review the existing system of broadcasting in order to:

- a) examine what threat to Canadian culture was posed by the inundation of American television signals,
- b) determine an appropriate role for the CBC which was, because of costs and demand, procuring some of its prime-time programming from abroad, usually from the United States.

A Royal Commission, chaired by Robert Fowler, was set up to undertake this examination and reported its findings in 1957. The Commission clearly spelled out its dilemma:

We cannot choose between a Canadian broadcasting system controlled by the state and a Canadian competitive system in private hands. The choice is between a Canadian state-controlled system ... with some Canadian content and the development of a Canadian sense of identity, at a substantial public cost, and a privately owned system which the forces of economics will

26. Caplan-Sauvageau Report, p. 9.

necessarily make predominantly dependent on imported American radio and television programmes.²⁷

But the Commission reaffirmed the importance of broadcasting in the national development of Canada:

... if the less costly method is always chosen, is it possible to have a Canadian nation at all? The Canadian answer, irrespective of party or race, has been the same for nearly a century. We are prepared by measures of assistance, financial aid and a conscious stimulation, to compensate for our disabilities of geography, sparse populations and vast distances, and we have accepted this as a legitimate role of the government in Canada.²⁸

It took a further eleven years after the Fowler Commission's Report before the Broadcasting Act of 1968 was proclaimed; the Act that, although subsequently modified, is today still the essential governing instrument for the Canadian broadcasting industry. In that eleven-year period fundamental changes occurred: Robert Fowler issued a second report; the Board of Broadcast Governors was created to regulate the private sector, removing that sector from the yoke of the CBC; the first private national television network, CTV, was licensed. Consequently the balance between public and private broadcasters had been significantly changed.

The 1968 Broadcasting Act was clearly designed, with agreement from all political parties, to re-affirm and

27. Quoted in the Caplan-Sauvageau Report pp. 11-12.

28. Ibid. p. 12.

institutionalize the principles and the objectives for broadcasting that had been first outlined by the Aird Commission nearly half a century earlier. The predominance of the public broadcaster was assured; where a conflict arose between the public and private sectors, the public sector would prevail. The CBC was, however, brought under the jurisdiction of the newly-created regulatory agency, the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (later to add telecommunications to its mandate).

The Canadian system was confirmed as a single system "owned and controlled by Canadians so as to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political and economic fabric of Canada."²⁹ What better or more noble objectives could be proscribed for any broadcasting service of any nation? The mandate of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was delineated in more explicit terms than was that of the private broadcasters. The CBC's mandate had five main aspects; the national broadcaster was:

- i) to be predominantly Canadian in character and:
- ii) be a balanced service of information, enlightenment and entertainment for people of different ages, interests and tastes in fair proportion,
- iii) be extended to all parts of Canada, as public funds become available,

29. Broadcasting Act, R.S.C. 1968, c.B.11 s.3(b).

- iv) be in English and French, serving the special needs of geographic regions and actively contributing to the flow and exchange of cultural and regional information and entertainment, and
- v) contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity.³⁰

Quite a challenge for any national broadcaster.

The endless debates about Canadian broadcasting have not been about those lofty goals but about the cost and method of achieving them and about adopting new technologies to these same ends. The 1968 Act placed the heavy burdens on the CBC; the Act relieved the private broadcasters of the burden of providing "programming that was predominantly Canadian in character" that the 1958 Act had imposed on them. The private broadcasters were, however, still required to use "predominantly Canadian creative and other resources." Those who drafted the 1968 Broadcasting Act could not have foreseen that widespread and significant changes in the broadcasting environment were occurring even as the Act became law. Social and economic changes were transforming Canada, especially through large-scale immigration; there was rapid growth in real income which, in

30. Ibid. s.3.(g). The CBC's mandate is spelled out in slightly more detail in the Broadcasting Act itself.

part, translated into more money for media advertising and media expansion; television coverage became available to most Canadians, and in colour; cable television became a major carrier of signals in urban areas, bringing carriage of all major American networks and border stations; provincially owned educational broadcasting services were licensed and given considerable latitude in their programming; the delivery of programmes via satellite became commonplace.

To cope in some measure with this changing environment, or at least to take some measure of it, the federal government began, in the early 1970s, what the Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force called "a decade of studies." The 1973 Green Paper on communications policy, developed by the federal Department of Communications, noted the need for broad policy direction from the government and the role of communications in "fostering national unity and identity in a Canada of admittedly diverse cultural and regional components."³¹

In 1978 the federal government appointed the Clyne Committee, chaired by J.V. Clyne, a former Chief Justice from the British Columbia Supreme Court, to examine the extent to which the changes in communication systems, both broadcasting and telecommunications, were affecting Canadian

31. Canada, Department of Communications, Proposals for a Communication Policy for Canada: A Position Paper of the Government of Canada, (Ottawa, 1973), p.4.

sovereignty. The Committee found, inter alia, that the CBC provided services that were "the main national instruments for the preservation of Canadian social and cultural sovereignty."

The Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee (the Applebaum-Hébert Committee) was mandated in 1981 to review cultural services and policies in Canada. They, too, concluded that the CBC was at the centre of Canadian culture and that private television broadcasters must make more Canadian television programmes available to their audiences.

The Department of Communications (DOC) produced its own ideas for a broadcasting strategy in 1983, the first such effort by the Department since it assumed responsibility for federal cultural policy from the Secretary of State's department. The Liberal government believed that the means of communication and the content of communication should be brought under one department to simplify policy-making.

The 1983 broadcasting strategy from DOC had four main thrusts.³² In summary, these were:

- a) a far greater freedom for cable operators to carry available signals, including American specialty services as well as regular American network services,
- b) creation of a Broadcast Program Development Fund of \$60 million within five years, to assist in the production

32. Canada, Department of Communications, Towards a New National Broadcasting Policy, Ottawa, 1983.

of Canadian television programs by both the CBC and independent producers; a tax on cable subscriptions would largely pay for this new fund.

- c) government to have greater control over the broadcasting regulatory agency, the CRTC, especially on general policy matters,
- d) abolition of licence requirements for satellite dishes owned by individuals for limited use.

The 1983 DOC strategy was not totally successful. The Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force said:

... this strategy left something to be desired. It overestimated the immediate effects of technological change ... It miscalculated in its expectations that DBS - direct to home broadcasting satellites - would soon be a reality.³³

Other studies and reports followed as broadcasters, regulators and federal departments tried to cope with the changing broadcasting environment. The latest, and certainly the most comprehensive, examination of Canadian broadcasting is the Task Force on Broadcasting Policy (Caplan-Sauvageau) which submitted its report to the federal government in September 1986. The Task Force was mandated

to make recommendations on an industrial and cultural strategy to govern the future evolution of the Canadian broadcasting system through the remainder of this century, recognizing the importance of broadcasting to Canadian life.³⁴

33. Caplan-Sauvageau Report, p. 19.

34. Ibid. p. 703.

Principles of Public Broadcasting

The Caplan-Sauvageau Report articulated several principles for public broadcasting,³⁵ noting that these principles or obligations had been developed over nearly six decades and are generally accepted elsewhere.³⁶ public broadcasting must begin with the fundamental assumption that public broadcasting is just that, public. It "provides radio and television broadcasting for everyone, regardless of social status, place of residence or aesthetic preference"; it is not the "narrow-casting" or format broadcasting of the commercial broadcaster.

The first principle of the public broadcaster is to provide service throughout the nation. Those citizens who live in remote areas are the more deserving of broadcasting service since their "window" outside their community is usually more restricted than that of urban residents. Commercial broadcasters cannot provide cost-effective service to remote areas.

35. Ibid. pp. 261-263: The Report notes that public broadcasting in Canada has developed with "a charming lack of ideological rigour," no doubt reflecting the pragmatic nature of Canadian society.

36. The number of countries with first-class public broadcasting systems operating at "arms-length" from their governments and with a publicly recognized journalistic independence and freedom is distressingly small: Britain, obviously, then Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and perhaps a dozen more throughout the rest of the world. The United States is alone in virtually the entire world in its lack of a public broadcasting system having national import and recognition. See The Public Service Idea in British Broadcasting: Main Principles, (London, BFI Publishing, 1985) for an excellent outline of the principles of public broadcasting.

The second responsibility of the public broadcaster is to provide programmes that appeal to all tastes. It is the most difficult and controversial proposition to achieve. The public broadcaster must not become elitist, by catering only to those who find no appeal in commercial stations. The public broadcaster should appeal to the largest possible audience, but this does not necessarily mean with each programme it presents.

The third principle is that the public broadcaster should produce, or buy and broadcast, programmes that reflect all significant groups in society including women, visible minorities, native peoples and others who may be disenfranchised for social or economic reasons.

The fourth duty of the public broadcaster is to contribute to the national consciousness - to nation building. The broadcaster should provide a rallying point for national events, from sports to elections; explain and exhibit national events and trends without espousing any specific cause; and ensure regions are reflected to each other and to the nation as a whole.

The fifth duty of the public broadcaster is to be the "showcase par excellence" for the nation's culture; this requires the broadcaster to consistently act as the developer and nurturer of many creative talents and skills.

The final and paramount duty of the public broadcaster is to maintain its unique and delicate "freedom of control

from vested interests, whether political or financial." This privilege "clearly includes the freedom to express certain opinions, especially journalistic ones, without fear of reprisal from politicians who would rather not hear themselves or their party taken to task for bad policies or acts of mischief."³⁷

This thesis will examine the public broadcasting system of Jamaica in the light of these six principles, with particular emphasis on the final principle. We have described the duty of the public broadcaster to remain free from control by vested interests as a "final" principle. But, in truth, this obligation must be the first principle of public broadcasting. Without that freedom, without the public's priceless perception of its integrity, the public broadcaster's other obligations become at best meaningless, at worst perverted.

Caplan-Sauvageau emphasize that even a mature democracy cannot give any guarantees that prevent reprisals against a public broadcaster by angered vested interests. The principle of operating at arm's length from the government is complicated by the need to ask for, and be accountable for, large amounts of public funds. A public broadcaster must be allowed freedom in its programming practices and in its programme content, subject only to the accepted

37. Caplan-Sauvageau Report, p. 263.

constraints of libel and good taste. But it must not be subject to governmental whim. "The principle must be clear." Caplan-Sauvageau note, "It is a public broadcasting system ... not a state or government system."³⁸

The Task Force notes that it is doubtful if any national public broadcaster has successfully realized all these principles. The major public broadcasters of the world all have variables in their historical and political foundations. The CBC is unique in that it has never been allowed to receive all its required revenue from one source - say government appropriations or licence fees on receivers. The CBC is a unique hybrid, "not a fully fledged public broadcaster"; it has been obliged to rely on a combination of parliamentary appropriations and commercial revenue. This competitive relationship with private broadcasters, further complicated by the CBC's need for "affiliate stations" - private broadcasting stations that are paid by the CBC to carry a signal - has profoundly affected the CBC's structure, financing and programming. That is, that the CBC is drawn into the commercial broadcasting market place and the resulting competition to deliver audiences to advertisers, rather than remaining in the pure public broadcaster model of delivering programmes to audiences.

38. Ibid.

We have, then, a reasonably clear consensus in Canada on what a public broadcaster should be and, in more general terms, what its role is vis-à-vis national development. The endless debates about the CBC revolve around the cost of its achieving the many objectives put under its mandate and about the Corporation's effectiveness in translating its mandate into reality.

The public broadcasters throughout the Commonwealth have a fairly homogenous view of broadcasting's role in national development. The criteria for public broadcasting are manifestly applicable in other countries, assuredly in countries with a liberal-democratic political system and a British colonial heritage evident in most Commonwealth countries. The subject of broadcasting and national development has been a continuing theme at the biennial meetings of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association - whose members are the public broadcasters in every Commonwealth country - since the 1968 Conference of the Association in New Zealand.³⁹

The 1968 C.B.A. Conference adopted a resolution calling upon the governments of their respective countries to acknowledge the cost of national broadcasting as a true

39. See for example: E. Hallman, "Broadcasting and National Development", COMBROAD (the quarterly publication of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association), London, Dec. 1976 and E. Katz and G. Wedell, "The Role of Broadcasting in National Development", COMBROAD, April 1973. For more recent discussions see Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), Record of Proceedings, 1984 Conference, Minutes, pp. 47-54. (London 1984)

development expenditure. The Conference declared that public service broadcasting was not simply a foil nor an amenity but an essential part of the social and economic capital that a nation should acquire like roads and schools and other such infrastructures for social development.⁴⁰

Clearly the public broadcasters' concern is partly self-serving since their failure to justify their respective roles in their country's national development lessens or at worst eliminates the priority of public broadcasting in competing for public financial support with a host of other national institutions and projects. For many public broadcasters in developing countries, however, the concept of legislated financial support from the public treasury would be a luxury they have yet to enjoy. These "public" broadcasters have been given a much simpler and harsher direction - to survive on advertising revenue alone. The consequences for such broadcasters, and the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation is one of them, can be serious and far-reaching; the consequences for their country can be equally damaging.

In Chapter II the geographic and historical characteristics of Jamaica are outlined. The geographic features of the island profoundly affect its broadcasting operations as much as they affect other means of

40. Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA), Record of Proceedings, 1968 Conference, London, 1968, p. 32.

communication. The island's history is a contributing part of the origins of the two major modern political parties, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP).

We will look, too, in the next chapter at the major media outlets on the island, especially the dominant newspaper, The Gleaner, and the dominant radio station, Radio Jamaica (RJR). We will explore more closely the origins of the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation (JBC), the nation's public broadcasting organization, including an examination of the little-known links to Canada that made the Canadian experience in public broadcasting the hoped-for model for public broadcasting in Jamaica. In examining the JBC we will note the growing problems between the JBC and the PNP Government and set them in context with the increasing economic and social crises faced by the government.

Chapter II: Jamaica - The Milieu and the Media

When the good ships Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria, carrying Christopher Columbus and his fellow mariners, first sighted Jamaica on May 5, 1495, one of the sailors reportedly observed:

... silhouetted against the evening sky arose, sheer and dark, green Xamaica, the ~~fairest~~ island that eyes have seen: so mountainous the land seems to touch the sky; very large, bigger than Sicily and full of valleys, fields and plains.⁴¹

To the tourists arriving at the northern coast resorts almost five hundred years later, Jamaica still can be described as the "fairest island"; but for the more preoccupied business traveller who arrives at Jamaica's capital, Kingston, via its Norman Manley Airport, a trip through the scabrous slums of the city en route to one's hotel raises the question, "What price progress?"

By the early 1970s Jamaica's population was close to 2 million with almost 800,000 residing in and around the capital area.⁴² Jamaica is a mountainous island, approximately 150 miles from east to west, and its greatest distance north to south is about 50 miles. The island is

41. Author unknown, quoted in "Jamaica: 'Out of many, one people'" The Courier, Commission of the European Communities, (Brussels, No. 72, March-April 1982), p. 7.

42. A Year Book of the Commonwealth, 1974, London (HMSO), p. 190f. The historical and geographical information is taken from the 1982 edition of the Commonwealth Year Book, pp. 217-223.

the third largest in the Caribbean Sea with an area of over 4,400 square miles. The island lies about 90 miles south of Cuba. It should be recognized that the Jamaican topography is a formidable obstacle to broadcast transmissions.

Mountains are great barriers to the efficient transmission of hertzian waves via ground-based systems. The main range of mountains runs from east to west with numerous smaller ranges, some parallel to the main range, others spreading out northwest and southeast from it. The highest point is Blue Mountain Peak, in the main range on the east of the island, reaching over 7,400 feet.

The mountains are significant barriers to communications and to transportation, and to the amount of tillable land. There are numerous rivers running from the mountains but only one, the Black River, is navigable and then only to small craft. The climate is tropical but with considerable variation between the coastal regions, with their high temperatures and high humidity, and the cooler uplands. Jamaica lies in the hurricane zone and, although it has not been struck directly more than once or twice a century, it suffers considerable damage from associated heavy rains every five to ten years.

The main language of Jamaica is English, a heritage of its colonial past. The Spaniards held the island for 150 years following Columbus' landing in 1494 but there was little colonization or development; the island served mainly

as a base for further exploration of the Caribbean region.

The English drove the Spaniards out by 1660 but there was only sparse development until the Treaty of Madrid in 1670 recognized English sovereignty over all American territories in English possession, removing the need for defence against Spanish attack.

During the eighteenth century, thousands of slaves were brought from West Africa to work in the sugar plantations; Jamaica began to experience the first in seemingly endless long-term cycles of good times and bad times. The relative prosperity of the plantation economy was followed by the abolition of slavery in 1834 that came at a time when the island's importance as a military and naval station was declining; the island's economy deteriorated. In 1860 the disputes between plantation owners and their workers culminated in the Morant Bay Rebellion; the island lost its right to a representative system and reverted to Crown Colony status. The weakening of the old plantation system was compensated for by a growing export market for fruit, the first such steamer service to New York beginning in 1860. By the end of the nineteenth century, small farmers were able to serve both the domestic and export markets with a variety of products.

The banana industry suffered severely from disease in the early 1920s; the rapid population growth and the economic slow-down of the Great Depression of the 1930s led

to considerable social unrest, with riots in 1938, and to the growth of trade unions - leading to the formation of rival political parties.

By the time the dust had settled in Jamaica, William Alexander Bustamante had formed a trade union that ... was to be a major vehicle of mass protest ... His cousin, Norman Washington Manley, had founded the first political organization - the People's National Party (PNP) - to the end that they win freedom and democracy for all.

Within two years the PNP was to declare itself socialist and Bustamante (whose organization eventually became the Jamaican Labour Party [JLP]) was to emerge as a union activist but political conservative - bitterly opposed to socialism.

Manley was very much the product of Fabian socialist tradition. Bustamante was like a charismatic George Meany. In the polarization of their political outlook was born the modern Jamaican political system.⁴³

Michael Manley points out an interesting characteristic of the campaigns for independence among the nations of the English Caribbean. Where imperialism has interrupted an indigenous people's sense of historical continuity and culture, the campaigns focus on the gaining or restoration of "freedom"; only later, as in Africa and India, did economic issues become paramount. "But the Caribbean is the home of the 'transplant'." Hence there is a Caribbean idiosyncrasy: nobody is indigenous in the historical sense. The Caribbean people saw their struggle

43. Michael Manley, Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery, Third World Media Limited, (London, 1982), p. 20.

as one for economic independence and it was the trade unions that became the vehicles through which progress could be made. Only later did "a sense of national and cultural identity emerge" and in Jamaica both the PNP and the JLP eventually made the transition from trade unions to fully fledged political parties.⁴⁴

This transition was consolidated in the years immediately following World War II; the PNP was chosen to form the government in 1952 and remained in office for two full terms until shortly before independence in 1962. The two full terms of the PNP government thus began the modern, and so far unchanged, Jamaican tradition of the public giving the governing party two consecutive terms in which to make good on its election promises before voting it out of office in order for the other party to have its chance at governing.⁴⁵

Jamaican economic development, during the expansionist decades that followed World War II, was the equal of many of the more developed countries, and both Jamaican political parties found little disagreement about the path that their country should take: replacement of the moribund sugar industry by rapid industrialization, and exploitation of the

44. M. Manley, Struggle in the Periphery, p. 32.

45. The PNP has held power for the periods 1955-62, and 1972-80; the JLP has been in office for the periods 1962-72 and 1980 to date, with the next general election due in 1988. The PNP did not contest the Jamaican general election of 1984 "in protest" over the timing of the election, and thus, at the moment, there are no opposition members in the Jamaican House of Representatives.

country's two other major resources - bauxite and beaches. Jamaica would emulate another Caribbean country and have its own "Puerto Rico Model."⁴⁶

This model of post-colonial economic development required that the economy diversify through the development of a manufacturing sector.⁴⁷ Foreign investors were courted, and liberal tax breaks were provided, along with cheap land and a low wage work force. More than a hundred new factories were established, many by American multi-nationals such as Kellogg, Goodyear, Colgate-Palmolive, etc. Major hotel chains such as Hilton, Ramada and Sheraton built hotels along the marvellous beaches of the North Coast and tourism became a major source of revenue, second only to bauxite, by the 1970s.

Bauxite, however, quickly became king; by the late 1960s the Canadian and American aluminum companies were shipping out nearly ten million tons of ore annually, and Jamaica had become the world's largest producer of bauxite. But only a small percentage of the ore left the island in any refined form.⁴⁸

46. The model requires that the economy be diversified by developing the manufacturing sector, initially for an import-substitution process. The capital and expertise are invited from abroad. See Struggle in the Periphery, pp. 28-38.
47. M. Manley, Struggle in the Periphery, pp. 28-30 and Michael Massing "The Jamaican Experiment" in The Atlantic Monthly, September, 1983, pp. 40-41.
48. Carl Stone, "Bauxite and National Development in Jamaica", in Essays on Power and Change in Jamaica, eds. Dr. Carl Stone and Dr. Aggrey Brown, Jamaica Publishing House, (Kingston, 1977). Dr. Stone's article clearly indicates that even in the headiest years of development, there was considerable support for the nationalization of the industry, even among bauxite workers.

public broadcasting service, looked outside the island for expert advice; it turned to Canada, to A. Davidson Dunton, then Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Canada's advice was chosen for several reasons: first, the reputation for excellence that Canadian broadcasting had already developed overseas; second, the fact that the Canadians had already had a mixed public system supported by commercial revenue and government grants; and, finally, a desire by Jamaicans to look beyond Britain for solutions.⁷¹

Dunton's report is a model of brevity and clarity. In twenty-seven pages it laid down the foundations of the Jamaican broadcasting system as it exists today, and he cannot be charged with culpability for the system's later faults. The report succinctly dealt with the establishment and financing of a proposed public broadcasting organization; with the reorganization and financing of the commercial broadcaster sector; with the domestic and international problems of frequency allocation and coverage; with the possible introduction of television service - Canada having all of four years experience with this new, and expensive, medium; with Rediffusion services; and with the arms-length relationship between broadcaster and government.

Dunton reported that his travels and discussions

71. Conversation with A.D. Dunton, Ottawa, 24 November, 1986.

Manley later recalled the importance of Marley and the Wailers to the development of his own social awareness.⁵¹

Throughout [1971 the Wailers] performed as part of a group of artists who travelled all over Jamaica with me while the party ... prepared for the general elections of 1972. Until that time my own political beliefs [were] a mutually reinforcing marriage. ... there was the political theory ... I had absorbed from my father and ... had developed into explicit socialist doctrine ... On the other hand, were some twenty years as an organizer and negotiator with the Jamaican trade union movement. To this was added a new and vital ingredient. I could never pretend that the lyrics of the protest music which were the driving motivation of reggae taught me things that I did not know ... they were the confirmation of all that I believed as a socialist ... But I had not myself been born in the ghetto and was not personally part of that experience. Reggae music influenced me profoundly by deepening the element of emotional comprehension.

While Marley's political ties to the PNP were never to be as strong nor as continuous as the PNP wished, Marley's social activism expressed through his music grew, and he (and to a lesser degree his group) became of seminal importance to the development of a modern Jamaican consciousness and national pride throughout the 1970s.

The PNP won 56 percent of the vote and increased their standing in the House of Representatives from 19 to 37 seats to form the new government; the Jamaica Labour Party, under Hugh Shearer, won the remaining 16 seats.⁵² prime Minister

51. Quoted in Stephen Davis, Bob Marley, Doubleday (New York, 1985), p. 96.

52. Jamaica National Year Book, 1972, National Library of Jamaica, Kingston.

Michael Manley believed he had been given a clear mandate by Jamaicans to make fundamental changes to their society.

Between the distortions of the Puerto-Rico Model of development, development via branch-plant industrialization, and the rigidity of the Cuban model, with its centrally managed and directed economy, both of which Manley believed had significant virtues, the new Prime Minister believed there had to be a Third Path:

a Jamaican way, rooted in our political experience and values, capable of providing an economic base to our political independence and capable of some measure of social justice for the people. We were to spend the next eight and a half years in our periphery exploring that path.⁵³

Manley moved relatively cautiously into his first term. Parliament approved the termination of an anachronistic land tenure system and the resulting "land-lease" program placed 14,000 tenants on to small holdings; unused farm land was also expropriated; labour law revisions improved the minimum wage and job security. The early PNP programs were moderate, long needed and widely supported throughout the island. There was little in the government's early actions to trouble outsiders, except for an increasing concern over the balance of payments and signs of a growing relationship between Jamaica and other socialist countries, especially Cuba.

53. M. Manley, Struggle in the Periphery, p. 38.

The Gleaner and the Government

To convey to Jamaicans the programs and intentions of his government, Manley recognized that the mass media would be essential instruments for conveying the government's message.⁵⁴ The major daily newspaper on the island, The Gleaner, could not be viewed as a likely supporter of any government with socialist leanings; it was the bastion of Jamaican conservatism. The independent radio station "Radio Jamaica" or "RJR" was less establishment oriented, but it was unequivocally part of the private sector. The third major element in the Jamaican media was the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation, the publicly owned national broadcasting service which operated a television channel, the only one on the island, and an AM and FM radio service.

The Gleaner.

The newspaper tradition in Jamaica has had a long and most varied history. Since 1834 the island has seen over one hundred newspapers be born and die.⁵⁵ Only one

54. Conversation with Mr. Dwight Whyllie, former General Manager of the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation. Mr. Whyllie, a writer, business executive and broadcaster, was an admitted activist supporter of the PNP. He was appointed General Manager of the J.B.C. on 1 October 1973. To the surprise of many of the extreme left-wing of the PNP, Whyllie fought hard and long for JBC to retain some semblance of journalistic integrity and arms-length relationship from the government. He was dismissed by Prime Minister Manley on 4 June 1976. His papers and correspondence relating to his term as General Manager of JBC are referred to hereafter as the "Whyllie Papers." He is now a journalist with the CBC in Toronto.

55. John A. Lent, "The Oldest Existing Newspaper in the Commonwealth Caribbean", in The Caribbean Quarterly, Vol. 22, No. 4, University of the West Indies, (Kingston, Ja.), December 1976, p. 90.

daily has survived, published regularly and prospered. The Gleaner, the island's major daily paper, has been published continuously since 1834. It predates the New York Times by some seventeen years. The word "Gleaner" is now a synonym for "newspaper" throughout the island and even in expatriate colonies of Jamaicans. The Gleaner "family" of publications now includes the morning Daily Gleaner with a daily circulation of about 50,000; the evening tabloid, The Star, a "down-market" publication with a daily circulation of 75,000; the Sunday Gleaner, circulation of 85,000; the Weekly Gleaner for overseas Jamaicans, circulation of 31,000; and several youth and business publications. The junior school publications are sold at cost to schools and have a circulation of over 100,000 monthly.⁵⁶

The high literacy rate of the population (one estimate places it at 87 per cent)⁵⁷ and the relative "permanence" of newspapers compared to the "perishability" of the electronic media widen the reach of newspapers beyond their official circulation figures. If it is assumed that each newspaper is read by three persons, the average middle-income family in Jamaica, then the combined circulation of The Gleaner, The Star and the Daily News, a daily paper established by

56. Information provided by Mr. Oliver Clarke, Chairman and Managing Director, the Gleaner Publishing Company Limited, during an interview on 20 April, 1984.

57. "A Survey of Jamaica", The Economist, 12 February, 1983, p. 4 of Survey.

the PNP in 1973 to compete with The Gleaner, is about 45 per cent of the literate population, or close to four hundred thousand Jamaicans out of a total population of less than 2 million.⁵⁸ The Gleaner has a virtual monopoly and dominates the "market of information"; its unique institutional position endows it with enormous influence as an opinion-maker throughout the island and indeed throughout much of the Caribbean.

Manley's social-democratic views, his interest in Cuba and the developing friendship with Fidel Castro were not likely to endear either him or his party to The Gleaner. As the process of "Jamaicanization of the economy" progressed, the opposition of The Gleaner to the government grew firmer. Manley noted,

With the Gleaner, protest and progress always cast their shadow. The shadow always led to communism and to Cuba ... By 1975 the Gleaner was on the warpath. It had not yet attained the levels of orchestrated venom which were to mark its performance later, but it was already sounding a strident cacophony of abuse and sowing the seeds of discord and suspicion wherever it could. From that time on, the Gleaner was in fact indistinguishable from the opposition, its tactics similar to that of the notorious El Mercurio in Chile.⁵⁹

There is no doubt The Gleaner and its "constituency" were anti-socialist but many of the problems between the

58. Aggrey Brown, "The Mass Media of Communications and Socialist Change in Jamaica", in Essays on Power and Change in Jamaica, 1977, p. 203. Dr. Brown is Director of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communications at the University of the West Indies.

59. Manley, Struggle in the Periphery, p. 134.

newspaper and the PNP arose because of Manley's, and his party's, extreme sensitivity to public criticism. In his own works, especially Struggle in the Periphery, Manley bitterly complains and criticizes most of the press in the western world for their coverage of events in Jamaica during the 1970s. In the Appendix to his book, Manley has written "A Destabilization Diary" for 1976 that gives a clear impression of his paranoia about external criticism of his government. The Gleaner, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Miami Herald, Toronto's Globe and Mail, Christian Science Monitor, Washington Post, and the Daily Express (London) are among those critized for their coverage. On Manley's behalf, however, regarding his battle with The Gleaner, it should be noted that the paper's Editor throughout the PNP years was Hector Wynter, a former chairman of the Jamaica Labour Party and a former Minister of Prime Minister Hugh Shearer's JLP Government.

There were frequent editorials about the government's mishandling of the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation, about the state of the economy, about the Gun Court Law (which provided for imprisonment without trial for those found in possession of hand-guns, etc.) and numerous articles about either the JLP or the PNP, depending on who was in opposition, charging JBC with distorted or biased coverage of the opposition. Unless one attends various political "events", it is difficult to assess the quality of the

reporting about them; non-coverage is, of course, somewhat easier to assess - if an event or a statement can be reasonably classified as newsworthy.

Looking back, the current Chairman and Managing Director of The Gleaner, Oliver Clarke, is fairly sanguine about the paper's treatment of the Manley Government, and conversely equally sanguine about the Manley Government's treatment of The Gleaner. Clarke was not at the head of the company until 1976, but he had been on the Board for several years before that date.⁶⁰ For only one period was The Gleaner placed under legal censorship and that was during the declared State of Emergency - imposed in June 1976, initially for thirty days but eventually kept in force for one year.

The State of Emergency was condemned by the opposition party, the JLP, as a deliberate device to prevent it from campaigning fully for the next election. The election call was not announced until the following October, and the election itself was to be held on December 15, 1976. It is evident that the JLP's accusation that the State of Emergency was designed to deliberately harass them is unjustified; the Emergency was declared after repeated urgings of the police and security forces, concerned over the appalling increase in civil violence, especially shootings. In June of 1976, the Peruvian Ambassador was shot to death in his own home by

60. Oliver Clarke interview, 20 April 1984.

unknown assailants; that event finally prompted Manley to act.⁶¹ A subsequent Commission of Inquiry into the State of Emergency, headed by the Chief Justice of Jamaica, found that the State of Emergency had been properly and justifiably declared and that, in effect, the JLP charges were without foundation.

Under the State of Emergency Regulations, all mass media operators were required to provide "competent authorities" (the Police and the Military were designated) with all copy prior to publication. Oliver Clarke stated:

We took the attitude that we were not going to comply with that ... and we did not comply. After a few amusing phone calls nothing happened. Apart from that we were not under any censorship.⁶²

The other major operators, both broadcasters, had similar experiences, but for different reasons. Similarly, neither Radio Jamaica (RJR) nor the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation (JBC) were directed to comply with the Regulations and submit copy prior to going on-air.⁶³ Radio Jamaica would find itself under greater pressures, of a different kind, during the second term of the PNP Government. As for the JBC, even before the State of Emergency was declared in June

61. Manley, Struggle in the Periphery, p. 141. For an excellent account of how and why the PNP were re-elected, and why the JLP, under their new leader, Edward Seaga, lost, see Dr. Carl Stone, "The 1976 Parliamentary Election in Jamaica", in The Journal of Comparative Politics, Vol. XV, No. 3, Nov. 1977 (Frank Cass and Co., London).

62. O. Clarke interview, 20 April 1984.

63. Information concerning Radio Jamaica (RJR) is based on an interview with the current Managing Director of RJR, Mr. Lester Spalding, on 13 April 1984 and subsequent discussions during 1984.

of 1976, it had begun to practice a more deadly type of censorship - from within.⁶⁴

Radio Jamaica (RJR)

RJR began operations in 1950, although there had been an amateur station operating on the island since 1939. This amateur operation was taken over by the colonial government for security reasons, renamed station ZQI in 1940, and operated on a schedule of a few hours per day. In 1949 the British conglomerate Rediffusion International asked the island government for permission to operate a rediffusion system in Jamaica. (Rediffusion is a wired radio service wherein the service is provided through cable to subscriber homes, offices, etc.). The Jamaican government agreed to allow the company to enter Jamaica, not to simply operate a rediffusion system, but only on condition that Rediffusion International take over and run station ZQI which the government was finding too expensive to operate.

Rediffusion agreed to the conditions and took over ZQI, under the title of a new company, Jamaica Broadcasting Company Limited, in 1950. In 1959 when the island government re-entered the broadcasting field with the start-up of radio operations under the name of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation, the "first" JBC changed its corporate name to Radio Jamaica Limited and its call letters to RJR (for Radio Jamaica and Rediffusion).

64. Discussions with Dwight Whyllie, General Manager of J.B.C.

By the 1970s RJR was a highly successful commercial radio station, by far the most popular station on the island. As with "the Gleaner" being synonymous with "newspaper" on the island, it appears that "RJR", in some areas of Jamaica, may be synonymous with "radio". The 1977 Media Survey of Jamaica originally published results of the FM-Stereo audience showing the JBC share at 40 per cent of listeners and the RJR share at 60 per cent. Later investigation revealed that in some of the survey areas RJR-FM could not be received, only JBC-FM. Survey respondents, when queried, assumed the signal was RJR because they "only" listened to that station. The subsequent adjustments to the survey for that location gave JBC-FM a 57 per cent share and RJR-FM a 43 per cent share.⁶⁵

For the more widely listened-to AM services, RJR was clearly the leader over JBC, commanding in 1973 an average of 70 per cent of the total radio audience;⁶⁶ this share even improved as JBC's problems increased throughout the decade. RJR had captured its audience - both AM and FM are included, but the emphasis herein is on AM service which covers about 80 per cent of the island - with an aggressive combination of music mix, reliable news coverage and community oriented features. Jamaicans from all walks of

65. Reported in Rafiq Khan and Ray Smith, "Towards More Effective Utilization of Broadcasting Resources in Jamaica", a UNESCO Study, (Kingston 1979), p. 50.

66. Aggrey Brown, "The Mass Media of Communications", p. 204.

life - broadcasters, politicians(!), businessmen, dock workers and cab drivers - all confirmed to this writer that RJR was reliable, that its news and features were accurate and could be trusted.

Regrettably, this could not be said for its competition over at JBC, with some notable program exceptions. Later, we shall see how RJR adjusted and where it refused to compromise as the PNP Government, in its second term in office, pressed home its concept of "Jamaicanization." At JBC the public broadcaster would not have to wait that long before coming to terms with "Jamaicanization."

The Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC)- Canadian Roots

The JBC was established in 1958, as the national public radio service, under the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation Act (1958) to provide "broadcasting services of high quality both as to the transmission and as to the matter transmitted."⁶⁷ JBC operated only an AM Radio service until 1963 when television (monochrome) was introduced. JBC-FM (Stereo) began service in 1972.⁶⁸

67. The 1958 Act was proclaimed on 19 December, 1958, and JBC did not begin operations until early in January of 1959.

68. Information provided by Mr. Tino Barovier who has been with JBC since 1961 in various executive capacities, including Deputy General Manager and Acting General Manager during several "inter-regnums" of General Managers. See also JBC Master Project Profile, 1977, (JBC Files), for some historical information; the Project is properly a planning document advising the Government of JBC's desperate need for capital funds; the cry went unheeded.

The Jamaican government had watched Radio Jamaica (RJR) turn into a thriving operation since it had been developed by Rediffusion International of London. But, with independence coming within the foreseeable future, there was a feeling in government that a public broadcasting service, perhaps in the tradition of the BBC, should be established. As successful as RJR was, it provided a commercial service of mostly recorded music "from abroad, largely from the United States."⁶⁹ RJR's license, under its then name of the Jamaica Broadcasting Company, ran for a ten-year period, until November 1961. The license granted the company exclusive broadcasting and rediffusion rights on the island. The Company (hereinafter referred to as RJR or Radio Jamaica to avoid confusion) was obliged, under its license, to provide ten per cent of its broadcasting time for Government programs, and to carry ten hours per week of BBC programming, particularly the BBC News.

In 1956, Radio Jamaica had asked the government to extend its exclusive license period for twenty-five years from its expected renewal period in 1961.⁷⁰ The island government was concerned about granting such long-term exclusivity and, coupled with its desire to establish a

69. A. Davidson Duntori, "Broadcasting in Jamaica", a Report to the Government on Broadcasting Matters in Jamaica, 28 December, 1956, (JBC Files); p. 3.

70. Ibid. p.2

public broadcasting service, looked outside the island for expert advice; it turned to Canada, to A. Davidson Dunton, then Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Canada's advice was chosen for several reasons: first, the reputation for excellence that Canadian broadcasting had already developed overseas; second, the fact that the Canadians had already had a mixed public system supported by commercial revenue and government grants; and, finally, a desire by Jamaicans to look beyond Britain for solutions.⁷¹

Dunton's report is a model of brevity and clarity. In twenty-seven pages it laid down the foundations of the Jamaican broadcasting system as it exists today, and he cannot be charged with culpability for the system's later faults. The report succinctly dealt with the establishment and financing of a proposed public broadcasting organization; with the reorganization and financing of the commercial broadcaster sector; with the domestic and international problems of frequency allocation and coverage; with the possible introduction of television service - Canada having all of four years experience with this new, and expensive, medium; with Rediffusion services; and with the arms-length relationship between broadcaster and government.

Dunton reported that his travels and discussions

71. Conversation with A.D. Dunton, Ottawa, 24 November, 1986.

with a wide variety of Jamaicans indicated that the current system of broadcasting was not meeting the needs of the nation, particularly those outside the (Kingston) Corporate Area where reception in many areas, especially at night, was poor or non-existent:

The kind of national development to which Jamaica is aspiring requires good communication among the minds of its people ... The airwaves can provide a vivid and effective way of nourishing and stimulating the minds of the people.⁷²

The report suggested much more programming should be originated in Jamaica:

[T]here should be more broadcasting by Jamaicans for Jamaicans :.. there is much latent talent which would be greatly appreciated by other Jamaicans if it had an opportunity to develop ... Jamaica could effectively provide considerably more broadcasting for itself, and so stimulate and enrich its national life.⁷³

The report suggested other areas for which, and from which, programmes could be developed and broadcast:

programming for the people of the country areas ... for housewives, ...

... more information on and discussion of public affairs of all kinds on the air. In a developing democracy, such as Jamaica, broadcasting provides an excellent medium for the fair and free expression of different opinions that helps so much to make an informed public, composed of individuals able to make up their own minds ... I think there is a need for wider gathering and broadcasting of Jamaican news.⁷⁴

72. A.D. Dunton, "Broadcasting in Jamaica", p. 6.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid. p. 7.

Dunton recommended that Radio Jamaica's request for an extension of its exclusive license be denied. He noted that Rediffusion International was making very healthy profits and that many island businesses were unable to obtain advertising time on RJR due to lack of available times. He recommended that the license for RJR be extended for ten years after its expiry date of 1961 but, in return for that ten-year license, the company would lose its exclusivity even before 1961. This, the Report noted, would permit the setting up of a part-commercial public organization without waiting until 1961 for it to go into operation. It was, then, not to be a miniature "Jamaican BBC" because, Dunton argued, "this would mean a public financial burden of a size which would probably not be acceptable, and ... would not be necessary."⁷⁵ Dunton argued, perhaps inevitably, for the Canadian approach to public broadcasting, with one difference in its financing. As with the CBC the Jamaican public broadcaster was to be a hybrid - financed partly from commercial revenue and partly from another source. In the CBC's case the other source was government appropriations on an annual basis. For Jamaica's public broadcaster, Dunton recommended that the other source of revenue be from license fees, levied on each set owner:

The funds coming from the public would make possible kinds of broadcasting which Jamaica badly needs and which would not come from a purely commercial operation. Commercial

75. Ibid. p. 10.

activities could supply part of the necessary revenues for the service (i.e. provide general revenue) and also support some of its programming (i.e. provide financing for specific programs), particularly the lighter kind which should form part of a sensibly balanced service.⁷⁶

The report suggested that, with close to 90,000 radio sets in use in Jamaica, an annual license fee of 10 shillings (Jamaican) would bring in something in excess of 40,000 pounds per year, about the minimum level of support from public funds needed, in addition to commercial revenue, to sustain a viable public broadcasting operation. Dunton recommended, however, that this amount be doubled, to a fee of one pound annually, to generate about 80,000 pounds per year, enabling "a real attack on the difficult problems of coverage."

The report went on to note the difficulty in estimating exact operating costs in advance of knowing the program burdens of the public service:

The practical approach, in my view, is to set a rate of income from public sources, and then expect the corporation to supply the best service it can with the means at its disposal. At too low a rate ... it would not be worthwhile to start a service; too high a rate would not be acceptable. The income ... between these two levels will determine the expenditures of the service, and therefore its quality over a period. Under this concept the broadcasting organization has to work within the means provided for it, but the limits on what it is able to do are set by those who decide the level of its public income; who decide what the public is willing to pay for a service of its own.⁷⁷

76. Ibid. p. 10.

77. Ibid. p. 11.

All that the report said about financing the JBC turned out to be accurate, particularly in its negative aspects. The Jamaican government was never able to make the commitment to allocate public funds to broadcasting on a sustained and continuous basis. The report's proposal for license fees was the only major recommendation that was not accepted. Public broadcasting in Jamaica was to be funded by the commercial revenue it could earn. When it could not earn enough to meet operating costs, costs that were frequently increased by government-imposed demands on "its" broadcasting company, the government subsidized the operating deficit with annual but ad hoc subsidies, subsidies that were to get larger and larger each year. The capital requirements of the Corporation were never to be addressed in any systematic way, as the JBC Master Project Profile so clearly pointed out in its 1977 appeal to the government for some desperately needed capital funding.

As to the critical relationship between the public broadcaster and the government, the Report was true to its Canadian (and even deeper British) roots:

The Corporation ... should be independently responsible for carrying on its broadcasting service, and not subject to government direction regarding its programmes, detailed expenditure, staff or commercial business, apart from general regulations which might be laid down. Its books should be subject to audit by public authority. It should, of course, report to the Legislature through a

minister ... and be subject to enquiry by or on behalf of the Legislature. Large capital commitments should require prior approval by the Executive Government."⁷⁸

The report emphasized that public broadcasting needs the large degree of independence and freedom from cumbersome government administration and pointed out that a public broadcasting system has essentially the same methods of operation as a commercial broadcaster. The public broadcaster, Dunton emphasized, must be seen to be independent from the government in its day-to-day operations and programming decisions:

broadcasting that has carried out its proper function communicates information, ideas and opinions to the public, as well as entertainment. Impartiality in such matters is better assured, or at least is more apparent, if the decisions are not in the hands of an Executive Government whose members naturally have strong views of their own on many matters; that are under the responsibility of a Board (of Directors), the members of which are sworn to be impartial to the best of their judgement. Much, of course, would depend on the composition of the Board of Directors, who would be responsible for developing and carrying on the broadcasting service in the interests of the people of Jamaica.⁷⁹

The Jamaican Government accepted, as noted earlier, virtually all of Dunton's recommendations, except those relating to a license fee, regarding which the government believed that the recommended fee was too high and the

78. Ibid. p. 12.

79. Dunton Report, p. 12.

difficulties of collection would be prohibitive.⁸⁰ With regard to the crucial relationship between the public broadcaster and the government, the island's then Chief Minister and Minister of Development, Norman Manley, had this to say in his Ministry Paper introducing the enabling legislation:

(c) The most important point made by the Committee relates to what they describe as 'Government control'. Drafting instructions will provide for the Minister to give directions of a general character as to the exercise and performance of the Corporation's functions. The Committee takes the view that the Corporation should be answerable to Parliament but should not be answerable to any government that may happen to be in power. (Emphasis added) They cite the position in Canada and England as it applies to the Broadcasting Corporations of these countries.

... the answer to this matter lies in the fact that the Broadcasting Authority will be established and that Authority will not be subject to Government and will ... ensure standards of democratic impartiality.

No Minister will have the power to over-rule these regulations which will depend upon the authority of Parliament. That being so, directions to the Corporation could not trespass upon the integrity of its functions. They will have to relate largely, if not exclusively, to business matters.⁸¹

The PNP government of the day duly passed the legislation, and JBC came into operation early in 1959. The Jamaica

80. Discussions with Gloria Lannaman, General Manager, JBC, April 15, 1984. A.D. Dunton confirmed her recollection of events. (Conversation with A.D. Dunton 24 November 1986).

81. N.W. Manley, "Ministry Paper No. 5, 31 January 1958": Reference MD231/48/01, Ministry of Development, quoted in the Wylie Papers; (Letter from General Manager, JBC, to Chairman of the Board, JBC, 16 February 1976).

Broadcasting Corporation Law 1958, however, made no mention of JBC's relationship to the "Broadcasting Authority" that had been referred to by N.W. Manley. The Broadcasting Authority was already in existence at that time and acted mainly with regard to licensing of broadcasters, frequency allocations, representation at international conferences on frequency problems, etc. The Authority never was, and never became, what Manley had suggested, a "shield" protecting JBC from the pressures of politics and politicians. The JBC Law also stated:

It shall be the duty of the Corporation as far as practicable in the conduct of their affairs to seek to secure that their revenues become, at the earliest possible date and thereafter continue, at least sufficient to meet all sums properly chargeable to revenue account (including sums required for the payment of loans and interest thereon, for provision of depreciation and for the establishment and maintenance of their reserve fund).⁸²

Section 13(3) of the Act did make provision for the Government to be able to pay off loans that the JBC was unable to pay off; such payments would come out of the General Revenue fund.

In effect, then, the JBC was cast adrift on the sea of commercial broadcasting from its early days, yet still saddled with some generally assumed, rather than articulated, responsibilities for national development. The JBC Act

82. Revised Statutes of Jamaica, Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation Law, 1958, Part III, Section 10, National Library of Jamaica, (Kingston).

makes no mention of any requirement for the JBC to promote national development, foster national consciousness or any similar goal. The JBC would have to pay its own way in terms of its daily operation, and the government could pay off its loans if JBC proved unable to do so.

In its first decade of operation the JBC, assisted by several production specialists from the BBC and the CBC, pursued Lord Reith's admonition for the BBC, that it "should inform, educate and entertain." The JBC, during 1959-69, one report noted,

was socially concerned, pursued an objective of balance and fair play in its coverage of news and current affairs, provided ... creative expression for a wide range of creative people, and aimed at standards of excellence in its output.

Jamaica then had the beginnings of a broadcasting organization that could make a real contribution to the development of society. Indeed the phenomenal growth of the local popular music industry, based on indigenous cultural forms, can be traced back to that first flush of JBC radio.⁸³

Marriott's paper, however, goes on to note that the deficit from radio's first year of operation was greater than projected, and JBC management abandoned the BBC-CBC programming concepts and ceased the production of drama, variety, classical music, much of local music, current affairs and features. "The original dream was shattered. JBC went totally commercial, and never really recovered..."

83. Louis Marriott, "Public-Sector Communication in Jamaica," a paper prepared by PNP Research Staff, for the Prime Minister, (JBC Files), July 1973. p. 11.

Marriott's criticism of JBC Radio is somewhat harsh. By 1973 JBC had moved away from the repetitive playing of American music to a mix of indigenous and foreign music that, to some neutral observers, "is satisfactorily Jamaican."⁸⁴ Even much earlier, when the JLP came into power in 1962, the new government decided that JBC should become fully commercial and pay its way. As a result the original terms of reference for JBC (to help shape, enrich and reflect Jamaican life) were abandoned, and JBC entered into full-scale competition with Radio Jamaica for its own share of the commercial market.

When television was introduced in 1962 the Corporation, in addition to its debts incurred by its radio operation, was burdened with full responsibility for the one million dollar loan that was required to set up the TV operation.

By the time the People's National Party assumed power in February, 1972, JBC had managed to earn an operating surplus in the preceding six years, but the radio operations were running at a deficit, increasing each year, and these losses were covered by the profits from JBC television which held a monopoly position.⁸⁵ The Corporation's Annual Reports began, well before the PNP came to power, to show the Board's increasing concern about the reluctance, and frequent refusal, of the government to provide adequate

84. R. Khan and R. Smith, "Broadcasting Resources in Jamaica," p. 17.

85. JBC Annual Reports, years 1967 to 1980 inclusive, JBC, Kingston.

capital, and both plant and equipment began to gradually deteriorate. The introduction of the vastly more complex, more expensive and more capital-hungry medium of television greatly exacerbated the problem of capital acquisition.⁸⁶ By the early 1970s, while JBC Radio was "satisfactorily Jamaican", the government-owned television station had 72 per cent foreign program content; excluding news and government information programs, JBC-TV had only 18 per cent of prime time for local production.⁸⁷ With the JBC as the only broadcasting operation under government ownership, and with the newly elected Prime Minister's well known commitment to "Jamaican socialism" built around a mobilization of society to effect change, the media's product - information - would be of critical importance to such mobilization. The media managers, especially at JBC, awaited with both anticipation and anxiety for the changes that were inevitably to come.⁸⁸

The Economic Situation

To properly understand the milieu within which the media of Jamaica functioned in the 1970s, it is essential

86. Discussions with Dwight Wylie, General Manager JBC 1973-1976, (Toronto, July 1984 and subsequently).

87. Dr. Marlene Outhbert, "Some Observations on the Role of Mass Media in the Recent Socio-Political Development of Jamaica", Caribbean Quarterly, Volume 22, No. 4, December 1976 (Kingston) p. 53.

88. Discussions with Tino Barovier and other JBC Management from those days, April 1984.

that some attention be paid to the economy during this period. Economic problems dominated throughout both terms of the PNP Government. For the first term, 1972-76, the PNP's political fortunes seemed to vary inversely to the island's economic health. But after the election in December 1976, the Government's popularity and the island's economy declined steadily.

By 1975 the world-wide recession had sharply cut revenue from tourism.⁸⁹ The growing flight of Jamaicans skilled in management and engineering was causing serious declines in the production of bauxite, sugar and bananas. As productivity lagged the Government found it increasingly difficult to pay for the wide array of social programs already launched, including food subsidies, school uniforms, free secondary and university education, subsidized bus services, state care of the handicapped, subsidized housing, etc.⁹⁰

Manley was faced with the dilemma of reducing his social development programs or continuing in the hope that the international, and thus the domestic, economy would improve; he lost the gamble, particularly on the domestic scene. Inflammatory rhetoric of PNP members and creation of thousands of new jobs, most handed out to PNP members,

89. "Tourism down in Jamaica," The Financial Times, 8 December 1975.

90. N. Girvan, R. Bernal, W. Hughes, "The IMF and the Third World: The Case of Jamaica, 1974-80," Development Dialogue, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 130.

fostered growing social divisions and escalated political violence. For the first time in Jamaica's history the public service sector became the largest single employer. Thirty thousand public service jobs, mostly menial but still jobs, were created between 1974 and 1976.⁹¹ The six-month period leading up to the elections of December 1976 ushered in a period of unprecedented violence, plummeting tourism revenues, followed by a cessation of all lending from the international commercial banks. The PNP made social stabilization, anti-imperialism and reduction of the local oligarchy the main theme of its election campaign. That theme, and the declaration of a state of emergency to give the police increased power to combat crime, attracted enough Jamaicans to give the PNP 57 per cent of the vote and 48 out of the 60 seats. (The emergency, declared to last one month, remained in effect for exactly one year.)⁹²

Faced with no visible improvement in its economic health the Government reluctantly turned, in the Spring of 1977, to the IMF for help. The Fund, dominated by the "imperialists" Manley had so publicly spurned, agreed to lend US\$74 million over two years, with US\$44 million available immediately and the balance tied to strict controls over incomes and fiscal policy, balance of payments

91. J.S. Bradshaw, "Manley's Mistakes in Jamaica," The New Leader, 23 October, 1978, p. 10.

92. "Between Castro and the CIA?", The Economist, 23 December 1975.

and exchange rate policy. Manley publicly expressed anger at

the unfair conditions being asked by the IMF. These were reduced government expenditure on domestic social programs and devaluation of the dollar. The Government has not acceded to these requests.⁹³

But Jamaica was forced to cede to the Fund on most major points. The two-tier exchange system was abolished, new taxes introduced, the dollar was again devalued by about 32 per cent.⁹⁴ Rigid controls were imposed on public expenditure; public subsidies on food were cut; controls were imposed on wages but not on prices. The terms were harsh. Prices on many basic and essential goods climbed. Even with fitful support from the unions, the wage guidelines were difficult to enforce. The year had already brought strikes by teachers, bank clerks, sugar workers, bus drivers, dockers and cement workers (public employees all).

It was now evident that the success or failure of the Jamaican program was as important to the IMF as it was to Jamaica. The Fund, faced with growing criticism of its policies from the Third World, had already committed even more funds to Jamaica, from the Supplementary Financing Facility, for the second and third years of the program.⁹⁵ Jamaica was eligible for US\$419 million compared to the

93. "IMF Loan to Jamaica" Financial Times, 14 July 1977.

94. International Monetary Fund, Press Release on Jamaica, 12 July 1978. (Washington).

95. G.R. Kincaid, "Conditionality and the use of Fund resources: Jamaica," Finance and Development, June 1981, p. 20.

original US\$240 million approved in the initial 1978 agreement. Jamaica was now the highest per capita recipient of IMF funds. The commercial banks' subsequent rejection of the IMF lure meant that their seal of approval was not yet forthcoming, in spite of the IMF's efforts.

The crumbling economy was paralleled by increasing social strife during the "winter" of 1979-80. Political gun-fights and pure criminal action became blurred; the flight of the middle class continued. By the end of 1979, Jamaica had only 13 dentists with specialized training, including one orthodontist and one periodontist. According to Government figures, The New York Times reported, the numbers of trained professionals remaining on the island were fewer than the numbers of those who were leaving.⁹⁶

Although the Government continued to negotiate with the IMF throughout the winter of 1979-80, a hardening of attitude was occurring in the governing Party, notably in the PNP's left-wing. In spite of numerous "trade missions" over the past two years that had openly sought markets and financial assistance from socialist countries, especially East European, no such help had been forthcoming.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the PNP were convinced they had to cut ties

96. "Emigration spurred by economy," New York Times, 25 November 1979.

97. M. Manley, Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery, pp. 187-188, states that the PNP National Executive Committee, meeting in March, 1980, to decide on the time of the next General Election "correctly predicted that a number of progressive European countries would continue to support us even in the new context of a break with the IMF," but the writer was unable to discover any evidence of significant financial support for Jamaica from any sources other than those noted.

with the IMF and seek financial aid elsewhere. The Government was under harsh criticism from all business sectors, large and small, throughout the island. More troubling was the evident weakening of support among the rural and urban poor. One can recall two graffiti items appearing throughout the slums of east-end Kingston during this period: "IMF - It's Manley's Fault!" and, more pathetically, "The poor can't take no more."

As we shall see later, the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation, throughout the period of economic and social difficulties, made its own growing demands on the ever-shrinking public purse.

In Chapter III we take a closer look at the JBC and find that the PNP inherited a public broadcasting corporation with serious financial problems that clearly impaired the corporation's ability to operate.

We will also examine the Government's increasing intervention in the day-to-day operations of the JBC and management's reaction to it. Eventually the true intentions of the Government towards the JBC become evident.

In the following chapters it will be evident that much of the evidence concerning the problems between the Manley Government and the JBC come from sources other than that of the Government. It proved to be difficult to contact many members of the former PNP Government when interviews were conducted at various times in 1984. Although Mr. Manley was

agreeable to an interview, it could not be arranged. Nevertheless, from the material and interviews collected, such as the Prime Minister's replies to various correspondence from the JBC, it is hoped that an adequate, balanced view of Mr. Manley's position has been presented; he deserves nothing less.

Chapter III: Quo Vadis J.B.C.?

On 1 March 1972, the day after the PNP victory in the General Election, the Chairman of the Board of the JBC tendered his resignation to the Prime Minister; his initiative was followed within a few days by those of the other eight members of the Board. The Chairman stated in his letter⁹⁸ that "it was his belief that the new Prime Minister should have the opportunity of appointing his own Statutory Boards." Such action was not a statutory requirement but similar action by the PNP-appointed Board had occurred when the Jamaica Labour Party won the 1962 election.

The General Manager of the JBC, Mr. Corey Robinson, remained on staff. A new Board was appointed that same month, representing a fair cross-section of Jamaican society but clearly with fewer members from the business sector and a majority of the members having known PNP sympathies. This was not out of the ordinary in Jamaica, where the pool of talent for such vacancies is limited and where much of the energy and talent in society can best and more easily be found in the ranks of political supporters, as opposed to coming from some large, uncommitted pool of "concerned citizens."

98. J.B.C. Annual Report, 1972, p.12

The new Board held its first meeting on 5 April 1972 and was joined by the Prime Minister (presumably in his other capacity as Minister Responsible for Broadcasting). The Prime Minister "outlined for the guidance of Members, the policy within which the Board would be expected to operate."⁹⁹

The Prime Minister advised the Board that his visit was for the purpose of defining the areas of particular interest for the future of the JBC. He said he would like to see:¹⁰⁰

1. JBC become one of the critical cultural outlets for the artistic world and so be less dependent on canned [i.e. imported] programmes.
2. JBC become a great center for the dissemination of impartial news within the laws of libel, codes of decency and the principles of impartiality.
3. JBC become a focus for intellectual ferment where controversial matters were discussed without fear or favour.
4. the development of programmes to help listeners and viewers with simple, every-day problems.

The Prime Minister also stated "that he did not intend to pursue a policy of interference with the work of the Board or of the JBC." He said he attached great importance to staff relationships, particularly "as the spirit of confidence, involvement and enthusiasm which once existed was no longer apparent in staff." He asked the Board to advise him of JBC's short-term and long-term needs.

99. Ibid. (No further information about the Prime Minister's visit was noted in the 1972 Annual Report of JBC)

100. Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, JBC, 5 April 1972.
(Whyllie Papers)

Although the 1972 JBC Annual Report made only a procedural reference to the Prime Minister's attendance at the first meeting of the new JBC Board, the Report made several other observations: The staff of the Corporation, at year's end, had increased from 213 to 230; the operating deficit was \$43,000,¹⁰¹ both radio and television operations having lost money, a first for the television operation; the staff had negotiated a 20 per cent increase in wages at the beginning of 1972; and, with a note of pride, the Annual Report stated:

JBC Television's schedule of Foreign Programmes for 1972 compared more than favourably with many of the big networks. Because of our ability to purchase freely from any distributor, on many occasions our schedule carried more of the winning shows than any single network in the USA or Britain. In addition, JBC on more than one occasion was the first station outside the US to transmit premiere films made especially for television.¹⁰²

The Annual Report made no mention of the Prime Minister's four points from his April visit, but the 1972 Report also noted that "there was an average of eleven Jamaican [non-news television] programmes each week on our schedule including an average of five on Sunday" (emphasis added; Sunday is not, of course, a prime viewing period).

It was, as usual, in radio that the more indigenous and more creative programming could be found. On Radio One (AM

101. All figures are in Jamaican currency unless otherwise noted. In 1972 the Jamaican dollar was worth approximately US\$1.20.

102. JBC Annual Report, 1972, p.7.

Service) the "most important development was an increase in programme time devoted to rural Jamaica and to urban areas outside the [Kingston] Corporate Area." A series initially entitled "Calling Western Jamaica" was subsequently expanded into "Island Wide," a series of regional and local news, opinions and items of cultural and human interest. The year also saw a six-month presentation of a radio drama series, but it was not replaced by anything similar. The show wound down because of a lack of funds and a dearth of script ideas; the Annual Report commented that "much more needs to be done in the field of Jamaican radio drama."

In December, 1972 the Board of Directors issued a press release in response to

the fact that various news media have been accused of bias or partizanship (sic) in news reporting by various leaders in the community. [The leaders were not named]. The Board restates its dedication to complete impartiality in handling all matters of news and public affairs ... and will not be deterred from its duty by fear or favour.¹⁰³

Three days later, in a long and detailed article, The Gleaner reported on a letter the Central Executive of the Jamaica Labour Party had sent to the Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority charging JBC with "slanting the news for PNP propaganda purposes."¹⁰⁴ These charges were part of a well-established pattern by whatever Party happened to be in Opposition. In 1970, for example, the PNP, as the

103. The Gleaner, 6 December, 1972.

104. The Gleaner, 9 December 1972.

Opposition, charged the JBC with political bias in its news coverage;¹⁰⁵ two months later a group of a dozen or more PNP MPs staged a "noisy demonstration" outside the JBC gates repeating the charge of bias and of JBC's ignoring the PNP in its news coverage.¹⁰⁶ To the professional broadcasters at the Corporation these charges over the years were to bring anguish, anger and frustration. As the PNP brought increasing political pressure on JBC; as the number of admitted PNP activists were added to the staff; as the number and legitimacy of the charges increased, so the number of dedicated professional broadcasters - committed to the arms-length principle of public broadcasting - were reduced by resignations.¹⁰⁷

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman resigned early in January 1973 and the remaining members asked the Minister in Charge of Broadcasting (Prime Minister Manley) to revoke all appointments "to facilitate the appointment of a Board ... able to serve the best interests of the Corporation."¹⁰⁸ A new Board, under the chairmanship of A.B. Foreman - a pragmatic, no-nonsense businessman, he was President of Jamaica's largest life insurance company - was appointed by

105. The Daily Gleaner, 31 December 1970 "PNP Accuses JBC of Bias."

106. Ibid, 21 February 1971, "MP's and others demonstrate at JBC."

107. The writer was personally aware of several such cases of resignation at JBC during the PNP period.

108. "Financial Condition of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation", Report of the Executive Committee, JBC Board of Directors, June, 1973 (Whylie Papers).

mid-January, 1973. Four of the members were from the original Board appointed by the PNP government. The new Board soon received a paper from the General Manager outlining the JBC's precarious financial condition and the unfairness of the Government's refusal to pay for air time, etc. The General Manager also compared the JBC to the then thirty-six other national public broadcasters who were members of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA). Only four of the thirty-six other members were obliged to operate with commercial revenue as their sole source of funds (Bahamas, Guyana, Mauritius and Trinidad-Tobago) but none of the four had any other competitors for commercial revenue. Only the JBC was in the seemingly impossible position of being a national broadcaster, dependent solely on commercial revenue and faced with an entrenched, competent private broadcaster competing for audiences and revenue.¹⁰⁹ By mid-1973 the Board of Directors was sufficiently concerned about the financial health of the JBC to have the Corporation's external auditors, Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Co., prepare, in cooperation with the Executive Committee of the Board, a statement on the JBC's financial position.

The JBC Board Takes Stock

The Report (referred to hereafter as the Executive

109. C. Robinson, Paper to JBC Board, "Charging Government for Time", January 1973, (JBC Files).

Committee Report or EC Report) noted that the Dunton Report had rejected a JBC supported entirely by public funds (like the BBC) or supported entirely by commercial revenue (like RJR). Dunton, the EC Report noted, had proposed the Canadian solution, a JBC supported by both commercial revenue and public funds. The EC Report also noted that this concept of government support for the JBC could be found in the Cabinet submission of October 22, 1958, which explicitly stated that one of JBC's duties would be:

To prepare and present to the Minister an annual budget showing the anticipated expenditure and income of the Corporation, which if need should arise will be the basis on which the Minister shall put forward any claim on the Estimates of Government for the appropriate year.¹¹⁰

The government's intentions to support the Corporation were further strengthened by the addition of section (18) to the JBC Law, 1958. The EC Report noted that the clause, added after the initial drafting of the bill, directs the Corporation to submit, every third year, its capital requirements to the Government.

The EC Report went on to state that the Corporation was being starved of this direct assistance from government revenue and, even worse, the Government was not even paying its own bills for services that the JBC was required to provide. Under the JBC's license terms for radio and for television, there were stipulated rates established for

110. Quoted in "Financial Condition of the JBC", JBC Board, June 1973, p.1.

government time for which "JBC may charge and the Government will pay." At that time, the EC Report noted "the Government has not paid the amounts due under these contracts." The JBC was obliged, for example, to provide half an hour daily for school broadcasts, the total time amounting to 90 hours annually. The JBC was, in fact, providing over 1,000 hours annually to the Educational Television department of the government. "If the licence terms had been adhered to," the EC Report argued, "the Government owed JBC over \$100,000 annually or \$466,584 for the period 1968-71 alone."¹¹¹

The introduction of television in 1963 was financed by a loan of \$1 million from the Thomson Television Company, who were given a management contract by the JBC to develop and operate the fledgling service for a ten-year period. Thomson was also guaranteed a fee of 7.5 per cent of all net advertising revenue from television.¹¹² The contract was terminated by mutual agreement of both parties after six years in operation (1969) when it became apparent that "Thomson's commercial posture and philosophies were incompatible with the JBC's service and social objectives."¹¹³ As a result the Thomson loan of \$1 million ~~was~~ paid off and

111. "Financial Condition of the JBC", pp. 2-3.

112. "Terms of Agreement between the Government of Jamaica and the Scottish Television Consortium", 28 January 1963 (JBC Files). (It is interesting to note that Edward Seaga, as Minister of Development, signed the Agreement on behalf of the Government. Thomson Television owned 65 per cent of the Scottish Television Consortium; Granada Television UK, NBC (New York) and TV International (London) split the other 35 per cent evenly.)

113. "Financial Condition of the JBC", p. 3.

the replacement capital was provided by way of a bank loan to the JBC of \$900,000. By 1973 the bank loan still stood at \$887,000 and the only security for it was that legislated Government guarantee which the Government seemed most reluctant to activate.

A review of the JBC's Annual Reports in the five years before the PNP Government took office in 1972 reveals: (i) radio ~~losses~~ were eroding TV profits each year; (ii) in 1972 TV had its first deficit year and there was thus an overall JBC deficit; (iii) losses were financed almost exclusively by loans.

The decreasing profitability, and the refusal of the Government to pay for transmission time, rehearsal and recording time in the JBC studios had impaired the cash flow of the JBC to the point where it could not service its loan commitments. The EC Report noted the consequences.

In turn, this results in continuing high interest charges; the loan balance is therefore increased by the amount of interest; the next interest is thus calculated on an increased outstanding balance. This becomes a self-perpetuating vicious circle.¹¹⁴

In addition to these financial problems, the JBC was under cost pressures from inflation, increasing labour costs (20 percent increase in 1972, by direction of the Ministry of Labour) and, by 1973, increasing failure rates of most of its equipment. The Corporation was operating with most of

114. "Financial Condition of the JBC," p. 5.

its original equipment in radio (fifteen years old) and in television (ten to eleven years old); parts were becoming increasingly costly and difficult to obtain. Capital equipment, such as transmitters, were financially impossible to obtain and JBC covered, at this time, about seventy per cent of the island in both radio and television; the quality and extent of coverage were unable to be improved.¹¹⁵

In what proved to be a prophetic statement, the EC Report said:

The implications of the present condition of JBC's equipment and facilities are self-evident. Audiences are only too well aware of transmission lapses; poor transmission quality, and false [program] starts ... if existing facilities are not upgraded in the near future ... the Corporation will become even more of a target for criticism than it is today, and could result in a total loss of credibility.¹¹⁶

In summing up, the Board of Directors described the Corporation as:

- undercapitalized
- excessively loan leveraged
- unable to fully service its debt
- theoretically insolvent
- operating with out-dated facilities and equipment
- unable to upgrade facilities and equipment
- devoid of appreciating assets (JBC did not even own the land it was on, but leased the property from the Commissioner of Lands)
- deprived of urgently needed revenue by free Government use of facilities
- unable to embark on its development program.¹¹⁷

115. Discussions with JBC Engineering staff in October 1982. At that point the early seventies were remembered as the good old days!

116. "Financial Condition of the JBC", p. 6.

117. Ibid. p. 8.

The Board made a number of recommendations to the Government:

1. convert into a grant the outstanding Government loans (totalling \$823,000) that had been made to JBC to cover operating deficits of the past several years;
2. radio deficits to be subsidized hereafter by Government grants;
3. JBC to be assigned ownership of the land on which it was situated (as assets for loans);
4. Government to pay for the services provided it by JBC;
5. Government to approve JBC's five-year development plan (submitted in 1971 without, up to June 1973, any response from the Government of the day);
6. Government to underwrite long-term financing for JBC's development;
7. Government to provide JBC with an annual cultural grant to enable JBC to provide a wider range of locally produced programmes of national interest.

The Government reacted to this alarming report the same way as it reacted to a more muted cry for help made by the Corporation in 1971; it did nothing. In September of 1973, the JBC's General Manager, Corey Robinson, resigned in frustration.¹¹⁸ The new General Manager, Dwight Whyllie, was appointed the following month. Whyllie was an admitted activist supporter of the PNP; he was president of a Jamaican advertising agency and an experienced broadcaster and journalist. There were many PNP members at the highest level of the Government who were delighted that "one of their own" was at the head of the JBC. They were to be surprised and in some cases angered to find that, although

118. Discussions with Dwight Whyllie, Robinson's successor at the J.B.C. at various times.

Whyllie was prepared to make JBC a vehicle for effecting social change and for promoting "Jamaicanization" of the island's economy, he was not prepared to turn the JBC into an out- and-out propaganda outlet for the Government. He believed that he, and the JBC, could tread the very thin line of journalistic integrity, reporting accurately and fairly on all elements of the Jamaican society and at the same time making programmes that reflected the island's social problems and the solutions that the PNP Government offered for them.¹¹⁹

More Economic Troubles

But the battle between the Government and the JBC was to come. With regard to the Government's inaction about the JBC's condition, the Government had other, larger, problems to face. By late 1972, the Balance of Payments problem had become sufficiently troubling to push the Government into declaring import restrictions on fifty-six items,¹²⁰ including many luxury items, such as automobiles; a price freeze was also imposed on all products except local farm produce.

By early 1973 the Government had broken its traditional currency link to sterling and had pegged the Jamaican dollar

119. Discussions with Dwight Whyllie at various periods in 1984 and later.

120. "Jamaica Curbs Imports", Latin America Weekly Review, 17 Nov. 1972.

to the American dollar with the Jamaican dollar set at \$1.10 American. By the middle of the year, with no improvement in the Balance of Payments problem, the International Monetary Fund, under its "Stand-By" arrangements, authorized Jamaica to purchase Special Drawing Rights of \$26.5 million over one year to help with the Balance of Payments.¹²¹ The island's precarious economic health received another blow in November, 1973 when the United States, faced with its own sugar glut, reduced sugar imports under the Commonwealth sugar imports quota by sixty per cent - reducing sugar imports, virtually all from Jamaica, from 200,000 tons to 60,000 tons annually.¹²² Although the reductions were nominally restored in March, 1974, the United States agreed to take more than the new minimums only at prices below the already depressed world price.

Even before the Jamaican Government could come to grips with the tightening of the sugar market they, and all other oil importing nations, were hit by the dramatic rise in oil prices early in 1974; OPEC "raised the price of crude oil from \$3.00 to \$11.00 a barrel in a single shot."¹²³ Jamaica's oil bill would jump by \$110 million annually, and it was obvious that the prices that Jamaica received for her

121. "IMF to provide BOP Assistance", The Gleaner, 17 June 1973.

122. "US to cut sugar imports", Wall Street Journal, 13 November 1973. See also Grant Cameron, "Jamaica: The social impact of the sugar industry," The Courier, Journal of the Commission of the European Communities, Volume No. 75, September - October 1982, pp. 71-72. (Brussels).

123. Michael Manley, Struggle in the Periphery, p. 97.

four major exports - bauxite, alumina, sugar and bananas - would need to be re-examined. Of the four resource items, only bauxite provided the market strength, and Jamaican dominance of supply, for some adjustment in price to be even contemplated.

By 1972 Jamaica was mining 12 million tons of bauxite a year and using more than 5 million tons of this to produce some 2.5 million tons of alumina a year. This US\$550 million investment¹²⁴ provided employment for 9,719 people. As a point of comparison, sugar and its allied cane farming activities were providing employment for some 60,000 people at this time. Apart from the employment and the capital inflow ... during construction, together with the paltry revenue of US\$25 million a year, Jamaica had little to show for all this.¹²⁴

By August, 1973, the Jamaican Parliament had approved a levy of 7.5 per cent, indexed to the price of aluminum on the American market, and Jamaica's income multiplied four-fold in two years.¹²⁵ In September the Government announced that as part of its "Jamaicanization" of the economy, the Government would acquire 51 per cent equity in all mining operations over the next five to ten years.¹²⁶ The first

124. Ibid. p. 44.

125. "Importing Oil to Exporting Bauxite", The Courier, Commission of the European Communities, No. 72, March-April 1982, p. 20. The levy boosted Jamaica's earnings from US\$23 million in 1974 to US\$195 million in 1979 and this in spite of a drop in production of about 50 per cent in the same period - due to a combination of weaker world markets, 30 per cent loss of trained technical and management staff and deliberate production cut-backs by the aluminum companies. See Winston Van Horne, "Jamaica, Why Manley Lost," in Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Vol. 37 (London), November 1981, pp. 430-431.

126. "Jamaica to acquire mining companies," Washington Post, 4 September 1974.

company to "sell 51 per cent of its equity to the Government was the Kaiser Aluminum Company in November.¹²⁷ As 1973 came to an end, the mood in Jamaica had changed; the euphoria over the PNP victory of almost two years before had long since evaporated. There was still a wide acceptance of the PNP policy of Jamaicanization. The JLP opposition to the Government was still muted and essentially a ritualistic claim that the Government was becoming communist. (That claim would not change, but the JLP would become increasingly vocal and effective under its new leader, Edward Seaga, following his elevation to leader of that post in November of 1974.)

JBC's Modernization and Development Plan

At the JBC the frustrations over the lack of response from the Government in 1973 gave way to a more positive atmosphere in early 1974; the new Board and the new General Manager provided much needed leadership. The seriousness of the oil price increases was obvious to anyone in an island dependent on imported fuel for 85 per cent of its energy needs. The Corporation engaged Japanese and British consultants (from NHK and BBC, the respective and respected national broadcasters in each country) to assist JBC in formulating a comprehensive modernization and development

127. "Fifty-one percent of Kaiser acquired by Jamaica," Financial Times, 22 November 1974.

plan. The plan was presented to the Government in July, 1974.¹²⁸

The plan envisaged total expenditure of \$17 million for a complete new complex of studios on a new site capable of producing a majority of Jamaican radio and television programmes; also recommended was the establishment of a second television channel. Both channels were to transmit in colour, with one channel being the outlet for JBC programmes in News, Public Affairs, light entertainment, drama and foreign programmes. The second channel would be a more obvious and unashamed outlet for government information and educational programming. There were three agencies that were already taking a large slice of JBC air-time, without remuneration: the Educational Broadcasting Service, the Agency for Public Information (soon to be renamed the Jamaica Information Service) and JAMAL, the effective Jamaican Agency for the Advancement of Literacy; these agencies would have use of the second channel, allowing JBC to put revenue-earning programmes on air in their stead.¹²⁹

The Board of Directors at the JBC had good reason to make their case before Cabinet. The Board had been aware since July that the Cabinet was debating the role that the JBC should play in national development, and indeed the

128. Annual Report, JBC, 1974, p. 3.

129. "Proposals for Modernization and Expansion of JBC", memo from the General Manager, JBC, to the Office of the Prime Minister, 25 July 1974. (Whyllie Papers).

Modernization-Expansion Plan was the Corporation's response to a request from the Prime Minister for the JBC to state what role it should play and "why it should continue along the policy set rather than become a government station or a private company."¹³⁰

The Corporation had to wait for the Cabinet's response until October and, as might have been realistically expected in the economic climate of the day, there were higher national priorities than broadcasting. The Cabinet, in reply, asked the JBC to scale down its plans for modernization and advised the Corporation that the question of the introduction of colour television and of a second channel was deferred for four years to 1978-79.¹³¹ The Corporation was instructed to provide cost estimates for adequate radio and television coverage for the whole island (television in black and white). Cabinet also requested cost estimates for more programmes in arts, local entertainment and local theater, and directed the JBC to improve the quality of the advertising on-air, especially on television (this referred to the airing of foreign commercials judged to be violent, inappropriate, offensive or exploitive of Jamaicans). Cabinet did approve a new site for the JBC studios (nothing came of it, however) and approved the purchase of some desperately needed outside

130. "Notes of an Executive Committee Meeting, JBC," 30 July 1974 (Whyllie Papers).

131. Memo from the Prime Minister's Office (L.F. Harris, Permanent Secretary) to General Manager, JBC, 15 October 1974 (Whyllie Papers).

broadcast units (mobiles). It was clear, though, that Cabinet had serious doubts about the JBC's role in national development and, whatever JBC's ideas were of its role, they were not going to get the "tools to do the job" from the Government.

The future of the Corporation was uncertain to the extent that Dwight Whyllie, the General Manager, had several private meetings with the Prime Minister to attempt to clarify issues. Towards the end of 1974, Whyllie put his thoughts and understanding in writing to the Prime Minister in a hand-written note ("Dear Michael") that was not copied to any of his Board members nor anyone else.¹³²

Whyllie reiterated the four challenges that Manley had given to the JBC when he had first visited the Board in April 1972 (see page 67). Whyllie expanded on point 4 - "the development of programmes to help listeners/viewers with problems" - to read:

The development of programmes to be a vital part of creative national development, mobilising our people to effort and achievement, giving them the information, techniques, confidence and self-knowledge essential to personal and national progress.

Whyllie stated he had taken the job of General Manager as "a committed patriot accepting an opportunity to serve my country, and supporting the PNP as a result of rational appraisal of and agreement with its policies." The General

132. Private and Confidential Note, Dwight Whyllie to Prime Minister, 9 December 1974 (Whyllie Papers).

Manager pointed out, however, that he was not a member of the PNP, even though he had "supported the Party in cash and kind" before he joined the JBC. As head of that organization he believed it would be a clear conflict of interest to be a PNP member.

Whyllie argued in his letter that JBC must remain an independent public corporation because, as a Government station, it could not satisfy the Prime Minister's second and third "challenges" to JBC - "to disseminate impartial news" and to provide a "focus ... where controversial matters [be] discussed without fear or favour."

On the questions of public credibility and consequent public receptivity to what the station transmits, a government station is suspect. It is suspect as being essentially propagandist, saying what the government wants the people to hear, suppressing criticism and adverse comments, and ignoring areas of need ... where the government is not active.

On the same questions a public corporation run by patriotic people, free from political manipulation, commercial pressure and financial constraints becomes the people's station, serving the needs of society, mirroring its culture and identity. It constructively and constantly examines, on behalf of the people, all the institutions of the society, including the government. Such a public corporation would be one of the greatest instruments for building the very democratic socialism you and the Party are committed to.¹³³

The General Manager went on to argue that an independent and healthy JBC could be the Government's most impartial and

133. Ibid. p. 3.

accurate index of its performance - coming from an organization representing the entire society, not merely a sectional interest.

Whyllie also commented to Manley that, as a result of their several private meetings, he clearly understood he had the support of the Prime Minister concerning the resources that the JBC needed to meet the four challenges. But there were also indications that some Cabinet members had other views about the Corporation. Whyllie went on to list by name several Cabinet members: one "curses me ... for not behaving like a friend of the PNP"; another, whose firm owed the JBC \$15,000 for technical services for a World Cup Promotion, "virtually refuses to pay us" and, when the JBC tried to obtain the money and the films, "we are threatened and cursed as being uncooperative and obstructive... The word is we are a government station so we can absorb the loss." Finally, the General Manager urged

that if JBC is to be a frankly government station, then please say so openly and publicly; remove the facade of independent corporate status and let the staff know unequivocally that they are there to serve the interests of the Government and the Party.

A week later the Prime Minister briefly and graciously replied:

Dear Dwight,

I read yours of December 9 with deep interest. I think we are still together in our understanding of the position. The

problem is really one of judgement and interpretation.¹³⁴

The Prime Minister also suggested that Whyllie come to see him one evening early in the new year "so we can talk some more"; he also noted that he was looking forward to receiving the revised (and scaled-down) JBC plans for the future.

The General Manager and the Prime Minister did have their private evening talks early in the New Year - and later. But the results were always inconclusive.¹³⁵ There was never any disagreement in these meetings, but neither was anything accomplished. Perhaps the reason lies, in part, in what The Economist calls Mr. Manley's "rhetorical style":

Again like Tony Benn, Mr. Manley presents a seamless web of arguments and evidence which though internally inconsistent and freighted with innuendo and evasion, are so skilfully interwoven and self-deprecatingly delivered that it is immensely difficult, and somehow unfair, to unpick them.¹³⁶

One thing was achieved in those private one-on-one meetings between Manley and Whyllie: the JBC began to broadcast a

134. Letter from the Prime Minister to Dwight Whyllie, 16 December 1974 (Whyllie Papers).

135. Discussions with Dwight Whyllie during various occasions in 1984 and subsequently. Clearly it would have been preferable to also present Manley's side of these meetings. It was not possible for the writer to meet the former Prime Minister, but we do have access to his correspondence with members of the JBC Board and JBC management, so his position can be reasonably presented.

136. "A Survey of Jamaica", The Economist, February 12, 1983, p. 8.

then very popular American detective series called Mannix; the Prime Minister had asked the General Manager if the JBC could purchase it for telecasting because he "liked to watch it to relax"; JBC did so.¹³⁷

The Corporation presented its revised and truncated plan for its future to the Prime Minister's Office at the end of February, 1975. The cost of their proposals had been reduced from \$17 million to \$9 million spread over a period longer than the originally suggested three years. The Government had requested figures for an annual cultural subsidy. The JBC suggested that the subsidy be more broadly applied to Jamaican programming than merely to "culture".¹³⁸ The Corporation pointed out that because of its dependence only on commercial revenue, foreign programmes dominated television by a ratio of 3 to 1 over local productions:

As the whole range of programmes is culture forming and culture sustaining, we need as an absolute priority to produce and transmit a majority of Jamaican programmes. These Jamaican programmes should not only be in the Arts, Entertainment and the Theater ... but ... Sport, News, Childrens' and Young People's Programmes ... Public Affairs programmes ... from all areas of Jamaica. [S]uch programmes ... would give JBC and Jamaica a pool of material reflecting the culture ... of Jamaican life with which to consolidate our position of leadership and influence in the Caribbean and the Third World.¹³⁹

137. Conversations with Dwight Whyllie, August 1984.

138. "Future of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation", submission from JBC to the Office of the Prime Minister, 28 February 1975, p. 3. (Whyllie Papers).

139. Ibid., p. 4.

In spite of the lofty and laudable aims for the JBC plan, the Government did not respond for several months and, by that time, a number of events had occurred in 1975 to irreparably damage relations between the Corporation and the Government and to make hollow the Prime Minister's "four challenges" to the JBC and the JBC's hopes for a noble and assured place in the national development of Jamaica.

A Question of Independence

The initial skirmish was over a minor event but about a major principle, and its resolution, or lack of one, set the tone for the protracted and harsh events that followed throughout the remainder of 1975, and that were to deeply wound JBC's attempts to remain an independent and trusted public broadcaster.

During the first weekend in April 1975, two people were killed by gunshots in Kingston; at first glance they were part of the regrettable pattern of violence that has been part of the Jamaican Corporate Area for many years. But this incident was different; the two men were long-time workers of the governing PNP. On Monday, 8 April 1975, the PNP Headquarters issued a press release expressing regret about the incident and adding:

The Executive of the People's National Party deplores the continuing incidents [sic] of political violence...¹⁴⁰ (emphasis added)

140. Press Release from PNP Headquarters, signed by Dr. D.K. Duncan, Party Secretary, 8 April 1975. (Whyllie Papers).

The editor for JBC's radio news editions left the press release virtually unchanged, except to correct "incidents" to "incidence". The television news editor on duty at JBC made the same correction but also deleted the word "political" since there was no evidence the killings had any political connotation or connection. The evening (8 April) television news carried the edited copy.¹⁴¹

At 7:50 p.m. that evening Dwight Whyllie received a call from the Prime Minister complaining about the poor editing of the release with regard to the deletion of "political". The PM's telephone call, Whyllie wrote to himself, was "not an official complaint, private comment, but [PM] wished it discretely re-instated." Whyllie, being unaware of the incident, merely agreed to investigate, without making any commitment.

The following day, 9 April, Whyllie sent a hand-written note to the Prime Minister supporting the editorial action taken by the TV news editor. Whyllie's short note pointedly stated:

I do not think that the evidence of Mr. Chin and Mr. Walsh [the two victims] being PNP supporters allows the conclusion that their deaths resulted from political violence which is implied in the phrase deploring the incidence. I believe the editor was prudent to take out the word political. I do not think the message was weakened by this ...

141. Notes about the incident were made at the time by the General Manager, JBC. (Whyllie Papers).

Whyllie's note did not sit well with the Prime Minister. Later that day Whyllie, as General Manager of JBC, was summoned to the Prime Minister's office. Along with him were also summoned the JBC Chairman of the Board, Adrian Foreman; the Deputy Chairman of the JBC, Henry Fowler; and the Deputy General Manager of the JBC, Hector Bernard. The JBC team was met at the Prime Minister's office by the Prime Minister, his Private Secretary and his Press Secretary. The Prime Minister suggested to Whyllie that the General Manager's comments and viewpoint were professionally wrong and out of place. Whyllie recorded in his note, later, about the meeting: "I was nearly carpeted. We eventually agreed to disagree."

The stand-off did not satisfy the Prime Minister. The next day he sent Whyllie a "Dear Dwight" letter that by its tone, inference and assertion dismissed any attempt by JBC to continue as an independent public broadcaster. In part, the Prime Minister stated:¹⁴²

I totally repudiate your views expressed concerning the PNP Release. You will forgive my saying that your team must have gone completely mad to think that it is in your place to draw conclusions for the Executive of the People's National Party. Your place is to make such comment as you wish by whatever means are lawful and reasonable. You do not have the right to stop the PNP Executive from expressing its conclusion that

142. Personal letter from the Prime Minister to Dwight Whyllie, dated 10 April 1975. The Security Classification on the letter is "For Your Eyes Only", (Whyllie Papers).

the killings were examples of political violence. It so happens that the PNP Executive knows this is true because I know it is true through my Security Forces ...

I'm afraid this is going to have to be ... an intellectual confrontation because I will not accept the interpretation that you suggest which is that you can editorialize the opinions of the People's National Party.

You can only stop a statement of the PNP Executive if it is libellous, defamatory or seditious. You cannot, consistent with your public responsibilities, refuse to allow the PNP to publish its opinions because you may happen to disagree with conclusions that they have reached.

For the first time in my relationship with you, I wish to have your confirmation that you accept my view or I am going to force the matter to the level of the Board and Ministerial direction.

For his reply, the General Manager of JBC sent a clear signal back to the Prime Minister.

Dear Michael,

I do not accept your view. It would be dishonest of me to say that I do, but I will not argue further.

As Minister in Charge of Broadcasting you have the lawful right to instruct the Board to direct me to put out the Release in its original form. This is a perfectly rational procedure and relieves both you and I of the intellectual confrontation.¹⁴³

The gauntlet had been thrown down by the Prime Minister and the General Manager of JBC had picked it up. Curiously, the Prime Minister did not immediately react. No directive came to the Corporation requiring them to broadcast the original version of the PNP Press Release. But subsequent events in 1975 and later were to soon demonstrate that the Prime

143. Hand-written note, Dwight Whyllie to Prime Minister Manley, 10 April 1975. (Whyllie Papers).

Minister had not forgotten JBC's fight for its independence, and the Corporation's position would eventually be seen as being incompatible with the Government's intended use of the instruments of the state to transform Jamaican society.

In the next chapter we examine the growing rift between the J.B.C. management and the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister makes a secret and unwarranted intrusion into J.B.C. affairs and the secret is soon out. The General Manager of the Corporation is eventually dismissed and as the first term of the PNP Government ends, the "arms-length" relationship between the JBC and the Government is gravely impaired.

Chapter IV: A Different Set of Rules

During the summer of 1975 the JBC's General Manager met privately with the Prime Minister on at least three occasions, usually for an hour or two in the evening, to try to bring some clarification to JBC's role. The General Manager summed up these meetings in a "Personal and Confidential" hand-written letter to the Prime Minister. Both Whyllie and Adrian Foreman, Chairman of the JBC Board, felt it necessary to make written, if very confidential, notes of all meetings with the Prime Minister "for the sake of clarity - among other reasons," as Foreman commented.¹⁴⁴

Whyllie's five-page letter to Prime Minister Manley, hand-written and dated 8 September 1975, provides the clearest evidence of what the Government had decided to do with the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation.¹⁴⁵ Whyllie noted that he and Manley had met on July 23 and 31 and on August 4; he recapitulated each meeting separately in his letter.

144. Comment by Adrian Foreman during an interview with the writer, 25 April 1984. Mr. Foreman also made available extensive notes and correspondence on the issues and events that arose during his tenure as Chairman of the JBC Board, (January 1973 to January 1976 inclusive). These notes and correspondence will hereinafter be referred to as the Foreman Papers. Mr. Foreman, then and now, is President of the Life of Jamaica Insurance Corporation.

145. Letter from Dwight Whyllie to Michael Manley, 8 September, 1975. The letter is marked "Personal and Confidential." (Whyllie Papers). It also is included in the Foreman Papers.

At their first meeting Manley had spoken of the Government's difficulty in reaching the people with their message of Democratic Socialism due to several factors, including

the active hostility and dishonesty of the Gleaner; the lowest common denominator programming of RJR coupled with its foreign ownership, the inconsistency of the Daily News, and the JBC's policy of impartiality...

The JBC, the Prime Minister had confirmed, was consistently and properly following its original terms of reference as outlined by Norman Manley - terms that required the Government of the day to keep at arms-length from the Corporation, and for the Corporation to be impartial and unbiased in its programming. But the Prime Minister had now indicated, so Whyllie wrote, that things had to change:

However, the JBC as the public corporation under Government control, would now have to operate to new terms of reference, adopt the Government's ideology of Democratic Socialism and positively project it to society.¹⁴⁶
(emphasis added)

The second meeting between Whyllie and the Prime Minister, held about a week after the first, prompted Whyllie to confirm in the same letter that Cabinet had fully debated the whole question of the JBC and that Cabinet had also decided not to buy RJR - Radio Jamaica. (Manley had earlier told Whyllie that RJR might be purchased by the Government and amalgamated with JBC under the new terms of reference).¹⁴⁷

146. Letter, D. Whyllie to Michael Manley, 8 September 1975, p. 1 (Whyllie Papers).

147. Ibid.

Whyllie was instructed at the 31 August meeting

not to interpret what [Manley] had said as a directive to the JBC to totally abandon its old policy, but a clear injunction to adopt a more positive and supportive attitude to Democratic Socialism.¹⁴⁸

Whyllie's letter went on to note the discussions that he and the Prime Minister had at their third meeting on 4 August, 1975. The Prime Minister was evidently disturbed to hear that Whyllie had discussed the verbal directives received from him with some senior JBC staff. Whyllie noted he had indeed held such discussions, in confidence, and had told his senior executives the issue was an "exploratory dialogue" between the JBC and the Government. At this third meeting in as many weeks the Prime Minister "made it clear that the JBC was to positively and favourably project Democratic Socialism."¹⁴⁹

Manley had asked Whyllie to think over all their recent discussions and indicated he would welcome Whyllie's comments. The General Manager, in his letter of 8 September 1975, presented his rebuttal to Manley's directives concerning the JBC's programming. The General Manager argued that what Manley had directed would not achieve the goals of the Government and would seriously damage, if not destroy, the integrity of the Corporation.¹⁵⁰

148. Ibid. p. 2.

149. Ibid. p. 3.

150. Ibid. p. 4.

A Primer for Public Broadcasting

What the General Manager of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation advised his Prime Minister (and Minister in Charge of Broadcasting) could be described as a basic primer in public broadcasting. Whyllie made five major points:

1. If JBC were to adopt Democratic Socialism as its corporate ideology it would soon be seen as another Agency for Public Information (the Government's unabashed public relations department) and "therefore not very effective."
2. It would be impossible for JBC to retain its other roles (to inform, enlighten and entertain in accord with Lord Reith's dicta). Democratic Socialism "would be exempt from unprejudiced examination, and the double standard would soon become apparent."
3. The policy would, therefore become self-defeating.
4. The JBC is neither hostile nor friendly towards the Government. Whyllie argued that the fact that JBC's comments were more often favourable to the Government should be read by the Government as an indicator of the basic soundness of the Government's actions.
5. When the JBC fails, Whyllie noted, it was usually because of inexperienced staff, lack of facilities and the "absence of an unequivocal public commitment by the Government to its [JBC's] Modernization and Expansion Programme."

What Whyllie had realized, following his second meeting with Manley, on 31 July, was that the Corporation was being placed in what he saw as a totally invidious position by the Prime Minister. On the same day as Whyllie wrote to Manley he also wrote to his Chairman of the Board with his suspicions. Adrian Foreman, the Chairman, had had similar recent meetings with the Prime Minister and, indeed, Manley had asked Whyllie to keep Foreman apprised of their

discussion. Whyllie summarized his thoughts for the Board Chairman: Whyllie was firmly against the Corporation making any changes in policy simply on the basis of verbal exchanges between himself, Foreman and the Prime Minister. It was essential, he wrote, that any movement by the Corporation should logically be preceded by some positive official directive from the Government.

As described by the Prime Minister, the J.B.C.'s policy should now be to adopt 'Democratic Socialism' as its own ideology, and positively promote it to the society. If this is the firm and honest decision of the Government, then the Corporation should be given a formal Ministerial Directive by the Prime Minister as Minister in Charge of Broadcasting. I also believe that this Directive should be made public, and the clauses of ... [the JBC Act] under which it is issued clearly identified. Once this Directive has been issued it is up to you and the Board to take what action you consider correct and instruct me accordingly."¹⁵¹

The General Manager then clearly pointed out to his Chairman the central problem in the matter:

It appears that the PM and the Government want the JBC to publicly retain its current policy but privately adopt the policy as described above. I remain convinced that the Corporation on the N.W. Manley formula ... is the proper and effective public broadcasting instrument for Jamaica.¹⁵²

The General Manager went on to ask that the entire matter be discussed by the full Board of Directors and that the Prime

151. Letter, "Strictly Confidential," and hand-written, from D. Whyllie to Adrian Foreman, 8 September, 1975. (Whyllie Papers).

152. Ibid.

Minister be requested to make a clear official statement if the policy regarding the JBC was to be changed.

The General Manager was to be disappointed in his request; the Board was perhaps to be less so. The Board did discuss the JBC's role and government policy at their October, 1975 meeting. But the meeting would note only that a recent meeting had occurred between the Prime Minister and the General Manager, and Whyllie reported that the Prime Minister

assured him that JBC's role as a channel for free expression and the presentation of news with fairness and accuracy would continue but JBC would have to get closer to the needs of society and that fundamental changes in the types of programming produced would have to be made.¹⁵³

There appeared to be a clear division between what the Prime Minister was prepared to say in private and what he was prepared to say for public consumption - of even for the semi-public consumption of a Board of Directors meeting. The issue of the political direction of the JBC was never to be officially resolved. No directive giving the JBC clear and public instructions to "positively promote Democratic Socialism" was ever issued by the Government. But, spasmodically, and often embarrassingly to the Corporation, the JBC was brought wholly within the arms of the PNP Government. The next step in the gradual surrender of the

153. Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting, 28 October 1975, JBC, p. 2. (Whyllie Papers).

JBC's independence was, in retrospect, probably an inadvertent one by the Prime Minister, but its effects on the Corporation were to be fundamentally negative and long lasting. The event became known as "The Public Eye Affair."

"The Public Eye" Affair

In keeping with its mandate the JBC had attempted a number of daytime phone-in radio shows, most of them with varying degrees of success. In early 1974 a new public affairs show was launched on Radio One - the AM service. Called "The Public Eye", the show went on the air at 12 noon for one hour, later extended to two hours.¹⁵⁴ The program began with the explicit aim of "raising the national consciousness about a variety of issues" as its original host, John Maxwell, explained. Within a few months the program had upset many politicians, most of the "Establishment" on the island, including the police, the armed forces and various other targets at which the program had taken aim. One politician who was neither upset about The Public Eye, nor a target for it, was Prime Minister Manley. Perhaps that was because John Maxwell was well recognized, and self-admitted, as an intimate friend of both the PNP and the Prime Minister.¹⁵⁵ According to Maxwell,

154. JBC program schedules, 1974. Most of the historical information about Public Eye's objectives and early operations were obtained in an interview with the original program host, John Maxwell, on 24 April, 1984.

155. This friendship was confirmed in the interview with John Maxwell and by a number of others, including D. Whyllie and Adrian Foreman. Maxwell later ran as a PNP candidate in the 1976 General Election, but lost.

Manley saw the program in much the same way as did its host, who was also the major producer of the program. The program, as Manley and Maxwell saw it, was a vehicle to effect social change and to act as a warning signal to politicians about domestic events and issues that the general public deemed to be of significant importance.

Once you are aware you start being able to understand why things are working that way. A lot of people weren't aware of what was going on in society ... the middle class was not really aware of what was going on ...¹⁵⁶

The program tackled issues such as the poor treatment of domestic workers and police brutality. The programs on the wages of domestic servants, for example, lead Prime Minister Manley to pick up the idea and, in his Budget speech to the House in 1974, he announced a minimum wage for domestics of \$20 weekly (he had not consulted a single other person about this announcement, according to John Maxwell). The Chairman of the Jamaican Manufacturers Association, Donald Vars, had proposed \$10 as the weekly wage.

By the middle of 1974 The Public Eye had become the number one radio show in the country, in spite of its midday broadcast time, and the ratings continued at that level into 1975.¹⁵⁷ By the time that the program became internally self-destructive, late in 1975, it was earning 19 per cent

156. Interview with John Maxwell, 24 April 1984.

157. Media Survey of Jamaica, 1974.

of JBC's total radio revenue.¹⁵⁸

On 20 October 1975, National Heroes Day in Jamaica, John Maxwell was informed, just as the program was going on-air, that about 30 minutes of Public Eye would be pre-empted to provide live coverage of several horse races. Maxwell objected to the arbitrary alteration of his program, particularly since he had made special program arrangements for the national holiday; unable to get the decision rescinded, he walked off the show.

All subsequent attempts at reconciliation failed, including efforts by several members of the JBC's Board. Maxwell was, by his own admission, a difficult man to deal with at any time, and on several occasions his program commentary had brought libel suits against the JBC. But JBC, in this instance, was clearly wrong in the way it provoked Maxwell. Relations between Maxwell and the Corporation were already strained since both parties had been unable to come to terms about Maxwell's new contract in spite of some acrimonious negotiations over the previous seven months.¹⁵⁹

The Corporation, after several days of being unable to resolve problems with Maxwell, decided to put two temporary

¹⁵⁸. Maxwell interview, 24 April 1984. The earnings level for The Public Eye was later put at 17 per cent by Tino Barovier, then Director of Sales at JBC (Barovier interview 26 April 1984, at JBC).

¹⁵⁹. The Maxwell incident is first referred to in Minutes of the Meeting of the JBC Board, 28 October 1975, p. 2 (a regular monthly meeting), and again in the Minutes of a Special Board Meeting, 10 November 1975, pp. 2-3.

hosts on the program, Ken Maxwell (no relation to John) and Hugh Gentles, both experienced freelance broadcasters. The General Manager advised the Board that the JBC had decided that temporary hosts would be preferable since the Corporation wanted to re-examine the program concept before making any long-term contractual commitments. The Board, in the 28 October meeting, indicated no disagreement with this action by management.

The incident would perhaps have rested there, a patched-up solution to the typically difficult problems that face the management of any corporation, had not outside forces, and inside forces at the JBC, decided to escalate the issue. To the consternation of some Jamaicans the Prime Minister entered the fray and every facet of it became magnified.

The "temporary" Public Eye, with its two new hosts, was scheduled to go on-air at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, 3 November 1975. On Friday morning, 31 October, the Chairman of the Board of the JBC, Adrian Foreman, received a telephone call from Gordon Wells, the Permanent Secretary to the Prime Minister.¹⁶⁰ Mr. Wells advised Foreman that Ken Maxwell, one of the new hosts for Public Eye, was a broadcaster whose views and expressions were hostile to the Government and as such the Prime Minister did not want him on that program.

160. Private and Confidential letter from the Chairman of the JBC Board to the Prime Minister, 5 November 1975. The seven page, single-spaced letter recapitulates the incident from Adrian Foreman's perspective. (Foreman Papers).

The Permanent Secretary (the Senior Civil Servant in the Jamaican Public Service) also advised Foreman that a verbal instruction had been issued from the Prime Minister's Office to the JBC General Manager instructing him that Public Eye should not be broadcast with either of the two proposed hosts. The General Manager had insisted that such an instruction must go, in writing, to the Chairman of the JBC Board. That letter duly arrived, signed by the Prime Minister, and stated:

Dear Mr. Foreman,

I would appreciate if in accordance with Subsection (2) of Section 13 of the Jamaica Broadcasting License, 1959, further broadcast of the programme "Public Eye" cease immediately in the public interest until further notice.

It would also be appreciated if this instruction not be published.

Yours sincerely,
Michael Manley¹⁶¹

The suspicions that Dwight Whyllie had expressed in the previous summer about the private versus public intentions of the Government towards the JBC were now confirmed as fact - by the Prime Minister's own hand. Adrian Foreman was appalled at the letter and "outraged" by the final sentence.¹⁶² As he later told the Prime Minister in his letter of 5 November, Foreman believed he could not accept the directive

161. Letter from Prime Minister Manley to Adrian Foreman, 31 October 1975, (Foreman Papers).

162. Interview with Adrian Foreman, 25 April 1984.

as long as that paragraph was allowed to remain, because to give the order and not be free to publish it would jeopardize the integrity of myself, the Board and the General Manager of the JBC.

Foreman immediately tried to contact the Prime Minister but the best that could be arranged by Manley's office was an appointment at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, 3 November, which was after the intended air-time of the renewed Public Eye with its two new, and apparently unacceptable, hosts.

Foreman, on Sunday, managed to contact one of his Board members who was perhaps best placed to help resolve the issue, Senator Arnold Bertram. A long-time senior member of the PNP Executive, Bertram had joined the Board in January 1973, along with Adrian Foreman. Bertram had untrammelled access to the Prime Minister. Both Whyllie and Foreman knew that Bertram was "Manley's man" and the chief activist on the JBC Board for turning the Corporation into the unashamed agent for disseminating the PNP's gospel of "Democratic Socialism."¹⁶³

163. Whyllie, Foreman and Lester Spaulding (Managing Director of Radio Jamaica) confirm Bertram's open commitment to turning JBC into a PNP "loudspeaker". PNP Headquarters provided the factual information on Bertram: he had been an active trade unionist for many years and a long-time President of the Jamaican Workers Council. He was appointed to the JBC Board in January, 1973 and appointed to the Jamaican Senate in 1974. In 1974 he was further rewarded, along with the Senate appointment, by being made Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister with responsibility for "the JBC portfolio." The conflict between his two JBC "responsibilities" had become another irritant between Adrian Foreman and Michael Manley. Bertram remained on the JBC Board until his term ended in January, 1976; he remained as Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister throughout both terms of the PNP Government.

Senator Bertram, unlike Foreman, was able to make contact with the Prime Minister and advised the JBC Board Chairman that the Prime Minister had suggested, late on Sunday, 2 November 1975, that the JBC Board hold an emergency meeting on the matter. That meeting was held the following morning at 9:00 a.m. Foreman's letter to Manley recapitulating events states:

The Meeting unanimously agreed that as a first step we should ask you to withdraw the last paragraph of your letter. Senator Bertram indicated that there would be no problem in having this paragraph removed. The substantive issue - the ministerial direction - was then considered. All the members present ..., with the exception of Senator Bertram, decided that we should recommend to you to withdraw the ministerial directive and to allow the Public Eye program to proceed as scheduled with Hu Gentles being the host until the issue with John Maxwell was settled.¹⁶⁴

With the 12:30 p.m. air time for Public Eye getting ever closer, the Board agreed that their Chairman should seek an immediate meeting with the Prime Minister. Both Adrian Foreman and Senator Bertram went to the Prime Minister's residence.

Then unfolded what could be described as a comedy of errors, except that the attendant consequences were of great significance. At Jamaica House, the official residence of the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Board of the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation, desperately trying to see

164. Private and Confidential letter, from Chairman of the Board of JBC to the Prime Minister, 5 November, 1975, p. 3 (Foreman Papers).

his Prime Minister on a matter of fundamental importance to "his" Corporation, was forced to wait for twenty-five minutes whilst another member of "his" Board spoke privately to the Prime Minister.

Senator Bertram finally reappeared and advised his Chairman that the Prime Minister had agreed to remove the last paragraph of the letter but that the Prime Minister had directed that the program should not go back on the air until the matter with John Maxwell had been settled.

Adrian Foreman's letter to the Prime Minister noted:

I was furious at the way in which the whole thing was handled and I told Sen. Bertram that ... I, as Chairman of the Board, should have conveyed that recommendation to you and not ... Bertram, whose views were totally different to the other five members of the Board who were present ... I told Sen. Bertram quite bluntly that unless I saw you then and there, I would be quite prepared to resign from the Board of the JBC.¹⁶⁵

Foreman was kept waiting for a further ten minutes and finally got to see his Prime Minister. But it was now about 12:17 p.m. and during Foreman's forced second wait following his outburst at Senator Bertram, and in view of the Senator's assurance that the last paragraph of the letter would be removed, Foreman had telephoned Dwight Whyllie to officially give him the instruction to cease the broadcast in accordance with the Prime Minister's modified directive.

165. Letter, A. Foreman to M. Manley, 5 November 1975, p.4. (Foreman Papers).

As the Board Chairman explained in his letter to Manley:

When we met I was of the impression (perhaps mistakenly) that you would have yielded your position and adopted the recommendation of the Board ... However, you will recall that by the time that you and I agreed that I should call Dwight with new or varied instructions, it was then only about a minute before 12.30 pm, and by the time I had contacted the JBC Dwight was already on the air making the announcement that the JBC had received a ministerial direction in respect of the program.¹⁶⁶

Adrian Foreman, still angry at the entire incident, also raised in his letter the related issue of Senator Bertram's divided loyalties.

I also raised [at the meeting Foreman had with Manley on Tuesday, 4 November, 1975, immediately after the crisis broke], the question of Senator Bertram being a member of the JBC Board while ... being the Parliamentary Secretary in your office with responsibility for the JBC portfolio. I feel there is a fundamental conflict between these two positions and would ask you to make an urgent decision concerning his continued presence on the JBC Board.

Another concern of mine is the intimate 'grass roots' contact that Sen. Bertram has with workers at the JBC. My opinion is that this contact is improper ... and it is clear that as long as it continues the whole management structure of the JBC will be seriously undermined because of the political influence which the 'grass roots' of the JBC is able to exert through that contact. I raised the question of political intervention creating a situation within the JBC that could possibly in a short time lead to anarchy. I can only ask, Mr. Prime Minister,

166. Ibid. p. 5.

that you yourself give serious thought to that question.¹⁶⁷

As polite as the tone of Foreman's letter was, it was clearly not designed to smooth the very ruffled feathers of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister had been hoisted by his own petard. The Gleaner had a three-column spread on the front page announcing the Prime Minister's involvement in the cancellation of the program, the very thing that the Prime Minister had wished to avoid happen.¹⁶⁸ The Gleaner's editorial on the following day commented negatively about the Prime Minister's intervention in the affairs of the JBC. The editorial noted:

The act of cancelling the programme ... does not seem to be within the Prime Minister's rights as Minister responsible for the JBC...

The Minister is empowered under the JBC license to require JBC to 'refrain from transmitting any matter or class of matter which in the opinion of the Minister ought not in the public interest to be transmitted.'¹⁶⁹

The paper pointed out that since the Public Eye had been on-air for the past 18 months it was difficult to understand

167. Ibid, pp. 6-7. Foreman's concern about Senator Bertram and his influence on JBC's "grass roots" had been quickly confirmed. On 4 November approximately half of the JBC staff wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister - not in protest over his directive to cancel Public Eye but condemning management's running of the Corporation, the firing of John Maxwell and asking the Prime Minister to investigate the operation of JBC. Both Whyllie and Foreman remain convinced this action, and several similar instances that preceded it, were instigated by Senator Bertram through the recently established JBC Worker's Councils. (Foreman Papers).

168. "PM Orders 'Public Eye' Cancelled", The Daily Gleaner, 4 November, 1975.

169. Editorial, "The Public Interest", The Daily Gleaner, Kingston, 5 November 1975.

why the program had now become a matter which it was not in the public interest to broadcast. Nowhere in the licence, The Gleaner argued, is the Minister given the power to decide who is or who is not to host programmes. The paper's concern was valid; the licence clause in question reads:

14.(2). The Minister may by notice in writing require the Licensee to refrain from transmitting any matter or any class of matters which in the opinion of the Minister ought not in the public interest to be transmitted from such station.¹⁷⁰

The Minister's power is clearly limited to content and to what is not in the public interest. The Minister cannot even give a directive to what is in the public interest.

The Gleaner's editorial also mused that:

It is interesting to note that this development has arisen soon after Senator Bertram was put in charge of the JBC and the API [Agency for Public Information].

The Prime Minister quickly responded to Adrian Foreman's letter of 5 November, replying in writing the next day. His anger and frustration are evident. The Prime Minister blamed the entire affair on Dwight Whyllie, the General Manager, and on Foreman himself. Manley retorted that JBC management had "behaved in a manner that fell substantially short of the honourable, the prudent or even the intelligent in the handling of the affair."¹⁷¹

170. Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation, Licence, 1959 as amended to 1963. p. 4. (JBC Files).

171. "Personal and Confidential" letter, Michael Manley to Adrian Foreman, 6 November 1975. (Foreman Papers).

Manley went on to argue that:

the General Manager inveigled my Permanent Secretary into writing the letter which causes you such offense and which I signed because I completely misunderstood the circumstances in which the letter was being written. I notice not the slightest bit of concern in your letter about the hundreds of thousands of listeners to 'Public Eye' and what would have happened to JBC credibility if the General Manager had been allowed to pursue his course of action with respect to the Programme unchallenged and unchecked by me.

After casting himself in the role of saviour, Manley went on in some detail to castigate the conduct of Whyllie and Foreman again. He then concluded with an obviously deliberate distortion of events and a transparent threat that was inappropriate from a Prime Minister:

Finally, I will not quickly forget the fact that you and the General Manager were so anxious to give publicity to my original letter. The significance of this fact did not escape me then and does not escape me now.¹⁷²

It took another two weeks before JBC and John Maxwell were able to come to terms on a contract; ironically, or perhaps inevitably, a contract that was virtually identical to terms which the Prime Minister had suggested in another of his letters to the Chairman of the JBC during the affair.¹⁷³ On 14 November 1975 the Prime Minister issued a second written

172. Ibid. p. 2.

173. Letter, Michael Manley to Adrian Foreman, 5 November 1975, the letter contained only specific suggestions for contractual terms between JBC and John Maxwell and made no reference to the merits or otherwise of either Party, except to hope for a prompt resolution. (Foreman Papers).

directive to the JBC Chairman withdrawing the directive of 31 October that had suspended the "Public Eye" programme.¹⁷⁴

The affair was over, officially at least, but a bitter residue remained. Public Eye, with John Maxwell back as host, went on air once again on 15 November 1975, but on 20 November a dispute erupted between the General Manager and the Deputy Chairman of JBC's Board, Henry Fowler, concerning a press release which the JBC Board had decided to release to contradict articles that The Gleaner had written about the resolution of the Public Eye Affair. The General Manager had resisted the Deputy Chairman's directive to issue the press release believing it was unnecessary, misleading and incorrect in the figure it stated for John Maxwell's salary, and that no release should be made in the absence of the Chairman of the Board; Adrian Foreman was out of the country.¹⁷⁵

The Press Release was finally issued and stated, in part:

The Board of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation has refrained from any public statement concerning the interruption of the programme 'Public Eye' until the fullest investigation had been made. Those investigations having now been concluded the Board wished to state:

174. Letter, Michael Manley to Adrian Foreman, 14 November 1975. (Foreman Papers).

175. The Press Release, related correspondence between Fowler and Whyllie, and marginal notes by both Whyllie and Foreman are contained in the Whyllie Papers and in the Foreman Papers.

- 1) The Board is satisfied that the Prime Minister's intervention was to avoid the possibility of an industrial dispute resulting from contracts being entered into with new employees before the issue of the termination of an existing contract had been resolved, in keeping with Government policy.¹⁷⁶

The acrimony and the mistrust that had been developing amongst the JBC management, the JBC Board members and the JBC workers reached a climax with the Public Eye affair. The three-year term of Adrian Foreman as Chairman of the JBC's Board was coming to an end in January, 1976. Neither he nor anyone else in the JBC expected he would be asked to serve for another term. Foreman admits that it would have been unlikely he would have agreed to a second term.¹⁷⁷ He had been appointed by the Manley Government as someone politically neutral, representing Jamaican business but, more important, as one who was, in general terms at least, supportive of the PNP aims of improving the lives of the have-nots of Jamaican society. His experiences with the JBC Board and with the Prime Minister turned him into an outspoken critic of the PNP Government after his JBC term expired.

176. JBC Press Release, 20 November 1975. (Foreman Papers). Equally as interesting as the Press Release are Adrian Foreman's marginal notes on it, written upon his return. Foreman wrote, "I was in Nicaragua at the time this was issued. I disagree totally with what is stated at 1) above." signed A.B. Foreman, Chairman. (Foreman Papers). Technically, the Board's explanation appears valid. John Maxwell's status with the Corporation was still not resolved. But neither Foreman nor Whyllie were later able to recall any concern of the Prime Minister about a potential industrial dispute. To them it appeared Manley interfered to a) protect a friend and b) to assert his authority over the JBC.

177. Interview with A. Foreman, 25 April 1984.

The JBC Board Assesses the Corporation

With the term of Foreman and his Board coming to an end, and with most members not likely to be renewed, the Board of Directors of the JBC reviewed their stewardship in a report that Adrian Foreman sent to Michael Manley on 15 January, 1976, the final day of his Chairmanship.¹⁷⁸ The thirteen-page report covered a variety of topics, noting initially that the Modernization and Expansion Plan which the Board had submitted to Cabinet in July 1974 had been discussed by Cabinet in October of that year and had received verbal approval from Cabinet in March, 1975. The approved plan provided for:

- Approximately \$9 million in additional equity for the JBC, phased in over three years with most of the money being allocated to transmitters and outside broadcast equipment.
- An assured annual subvention from the Government to be made to JBC. For 1975/76 this would be of the order of \$250,000.
- A new studio and office complex on the site already approved.
- A National (Broadcasting) Regulatory Commission to be established.

The Board's Review noted that although formal Cabinet approval had been made in June, 1975, the Ministry of Finance had advised the Corporation that no money was

178. Board of Directors Review 1973-76, 15 January 1976, (Foreman Papers).

available for the Corporation for 1975/76, and that the Corporation was still awaiting receipt of \$400,000 from the 1974/75 fiscal year; it had been promised for delivery in 1975/76 but so far no such funds had been made available.¹⁷⁹ The Report also noted that the site selected for the new studio had been claimed by the Ministry of Youth and Community Development.

With regard to staff morale, the Board advised the Prime Minister that staff morale at the JBC had been seriously affected by the deferment and delays in the Modernization Plan and by the "still unresolved conflict of financial and programme objectives that is an integral part of the JBC as currently constituted." The Board reported that the JBC, since its inception, had been held to the narrow interpretation of its enabling statute of 1958 - that commercial revenue should meet operating expenses including depreciation, loan interest charges and loan payments:

With the constraints of limited finance, worn out equipment, the continuing lack of facilities and sheer lack of basic space, the net result is a mood of cynicism, despair and uncertainty ...¹⁸⁰

Concerning the integrity of the JBC, some members of staff, the Board reported, were convinced that the true management and Board authority

resides outside the Corporation. The Board wishes to reiterate that effective management now and in the future, even when worker

179. Board of Directors Review, 1973-76, p. 2. (Foreman Papers).

180. Ibid. p. 4.

participation is fully established, becomes impossible if dissident groups feel that they can ignore the existing management ... by making direct approaches to the Minister in Charge, [i.e. Manley] thereby making an internal matter into a public issue.¹⁸¹

The Board Review went on to note that two-thirds of the JBC television programmes were of foreign origin. In radio the percentage was less but still virtually all foreign in music, drama and features. The Board asserted that since the whole range of programmes is "culture forming and culture sustaining" the JBC needed as an "absolute priority" to substantially increase its output of Jamaican programmes, especially in music and other creative areas. The Board Review concluded, however, that this priority was impossible to attain with the JBC's financial situation being unresolved.

The Board Review went back to Davidson Dunton's Report of 1957 to reiterate Dunton's recommendation, and the Board's belief, in the paramount need for the JBC to be at arms-length from the Government of the day; two full pages of Dunton's Report are quoted in the 1973-76 Board Review. The Board also quoted Manley's mandate that he had set out to the JBC Board during his first visit to them as Prime Minister on 5 April 1972.¹⁸² The Board noted that the Prime Minister had asked them to suggest changes to the 1972

181. Ibid. p. 6.

182. See page 67.

mandate he had given them, requesting that the Board accept the need for a change in policy as "Constructive Redress." The JBC Board had summarized the Prime Minister's thoughts into a draft policy and included it in their three-year Review for his comments. The draft statement on "JBC Role and Policy" is a delicate dance between the cry for an independent public broadcasting organization and the pressure and threat from the PNP Government for a service broadcasting agency. The draft policy contains the seeds of the JBC's future under four more years of PNP Government:

Jamaica as a nation has accepted as an agent of change the democratic way of life based on universal suffrage, but the media still tends to present predominantly the views and attitudes not of the population as a whole, but of a small privileged minority, who in a variety of ways, retain their control of the media. JBC aims at the constructive policy of redressing the balance, and giving fuller expression to the outlook, aspirations and cultural values of all sections of society. This does not involve suppression of the views of any minority, but it does involve a conscious effort to reach a balanced position which fosters the clear articulation of the new ideas and policies of change...¹⁸³

There was no response to the Board's three-year Review from the Prime Minister. The new Board came into office on 16 January 1976; they were virtually all PNP supporters or PNP activists. It was clear, following the Public Eye

183. Board of Directors Review, 1973-76, pp. 11-12. (Foreman Papers). The surprising thing is that Adrian Foreman signed the Board Review that included such a draft policy, but there was no doubt that by this time he wished to have done with JBC, and perhaps saw this policy development as inevitable. More likely, he saw the draft policy as merely a reiteration of Manley's thoughts, as the Review so stated.

affair, that Dwight Whyllie's days as General Manager were numbered, especially since the term of office of the Board Chairman who supported him had come to an end; there were few friends of Whyllie on the new Board - not outright enemies, but they were clearly people who accepted the Prime Minister's view of JBC's role.¹⁸⁴ The Corporation was to become the counterbalance to the views expressed by the other media (except of course the Daily News, the newspaper owned by the People's National Party).

Dismissal of the General Manager

In a letter to a fellow broadcaster in Trinidad, who had accepted a job offer from the JBC but who had been denied a work permit by the Jamaican Government, the JBC General Manager unburdened himself:

The events of the past three months have a clear purpose; to get rid of Hector Bernard, Jeremy Verity and myself as the main supporters of the JBC concept of an independent public corporation free of political manipulation or control ...

Both Hector and myself are fighting for as long as there is a modicum of hope, but we are not at all optimistic. The whole thing is compounded by a Board of which half the members are disillusioned ... and half dishonest, destructive or just plain stupid. In any event the Board's three year term ... ends in a fortnight, and a replacement packed with party hacks is likely.¹⁸⁵

184. Discussions with Dwight Whyllie, August 1984.

185. Letter, Dwight Whyllie to Leo de Leon, 5 January 1976 (Whyllie Papers). Hector Bernard was then Deputy General Manager of JBC and Jeremy Verity was Director of Programming. Whyllie, Bernard and Verity were the three most senior members of JBC management and the three most outspoken defenders of the Corporation's independence and integrity.

Whyllie was prescient. In June, 1976, after a tumultuous five-month relationship with his new Board of Directors, Whyllie was dismissed without notice. Hector Bernard was removed from the JBC and given a new position in the Jamaican Ministry of External Affairs and Jeremy Verity asked to be removed from his position as Director of Programmes to take on less onerous responsibilities.¹⁸⁶

During those five months of tumult, Public Eye was again in the news. Several cases of libel were brought against JBC for remarks made by the programme's host, John Maxwell, or by participants on the programme. One of the aggrieved parties was the Leader of the JLP, Edward Seaga; the suit was eventually settled out of court,¹⁸⁷ but even the new JBC Board had gradually determined that John Maxwell was a luxury the Corporation could not afford. Whyllie had advised the Board that

the Board has persisted in accommodating him [Maxwell] to the point where ... the JBC's legal and financial position has been jeopardized.¹⁸⁸

186. "Squeeze Play at the JBC", Daily Gleaner, 30 July 1976. The article refers to both Whyllie's and Bernard's situation. The article noted that Bernard has a justified reputation as an independent journalist "and has insisted on independence for his station"; it was also noted by the Gleaner that Bernard "has had a rocky time at JBC with whatever Government is in charge." Jeremy Verity's request for change had been made earlier to Dwight Whyllie; see Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, JBC, 10 November 1975 (JBC Files).
187. "Seaga gets Apology from JBC", Daily Gleaner, 28 February 1976.
188. Letter from Dwight Whyllie to Henry Fowler, the new Chairman of the JBC Board, 16 February 1976. (Whyllie Papers). See also "Maxwell Fired From JBC: Seaga Libelled," Daily Gleaner, 28 January 1976.

Maxwell was dismissed by the Corporation at the end of January 1976 and the Board, with seeming reluctance, agreed to support Management's action. This time, the Prime Minister did not intervene. The programme resumed almost immediately with a series of temporary, and apparently acceptable, hosts. Public Eye's popularity did not wane in any measurable fashion and, indeed, it today is still one of the more popular radio programmes on the island, albeit somewhat less confrontational, but still having a "social conscience."¹⁸⁹

Whyllie was never personally given any reasons for his dismissal. Eventually, after much comment in The Gleaner about the shabby manner in which Whyllie had been treated, the JBC Board issued a statement through the Prime Minister in the House of Representatives.¹⁹⁰ Ostensibly Whyllie was dismissed for three reasons - tardiness in presenting the annual budget to the Board for approval; failure to provide the Board with a new approach for a revised Modernization and Expansion-Plan; and failure to provide the Board with a

189. The incident did lead to more charges by Whyllie that the Board was still trying to protect Maxwell. Letter from Whyllie to Henry Fowler, 5 March 1976, p. 6. (Whyllie Papers). John Maxwell, within a year, began doing occasional free-lance hosting and writing jobs for the JBC; he returned to the JBC full-time in 1979 as Director of Current Affairs, and stayed until shortly after the Seaga Government assumed office in late 1980.

190. "Non-confidence: Reason for Whyllie's Sacking," Daily Gleaner, 16 June 1976. The letter Whyllie received that advised him of his dismissal merely informed him of his immediate dismissal and of some information about final cheques and Income Tax payment - all which later proved to be incorrect. Letter from N. Bramwell, Acting Chairman, JBC Board to D. Whyllie, 4 June 1975 (Whyllie Papers).

new organization plan. There then followed several letters from Whyllie to the Acting Chairman of the JBC refuting the grounds and rejecting the terms of his dismissal. Nothing of substance was altered by this correspondence except to correct the financial statements made in the original letter of dismissal. Whyllie's letters of rebuttal to the JBC Board unequivocally demolished the Board's grounds for his dismissal.¹⁹¹ But Whyllie's jousting with his Board prior to his dismissal and much of it in writing, however noble in defence of his Corporation's independence, was perilously close on some occasions to insubordination. The Board was undoubtedly sympathetic to the Prime Minister's desire that JBC take a more active role in promoting Democratic Socialism. Whyllie had to go. He was succeeded, four months later, by Wycliffe Bennett who had previously served as General Manager of the JBC from 1968 to 1971, under the JLP Government.¹⁹²

Bennett's second term as General Manager was to confirm the opinion of many Jamaicans that he was picked, from his

191. Letter from D. Whyllie to N. Bramwell, Acting Chairman of the JBC Board, 11 June 1976, and follow-up notes of 18 June 1976 (Whyllie Papers). The Gleaner was, naturally, firmly on Whyllie's side. See "Nine Down," Daily Gleaner, 9 June 1976; "A Most High-Handed Action," Harvey Da Costa, Daily Gleaner, 11 June 1976, and various other articles in similar vein. A month or two before his dismissal, Whyllie had been offered the post of Chief of Information at the Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM). The CARICOM Secretariat had asked the Government of Jamaica to allow Whyllie to be seconded to CARICOM. In what can only be described as an act of spite, the Prime Minister refused the secondment. See "Nine Down," Daily Gleaner, 9 June 1976.

192. "Dwight Whyllie Fired," Daily Gleaner, 5 June 1976.

job as General Manager of the Caribbean Festival of the Arts, precisely because he would offer no resistance to any actions or involvement that the Board or the Government would take at the JBC. One observer called Bennett's re-appointment "absolutely unconscionable and intentional, [the Government] knew he would roll over."¹⁹³ When Wycliffe Bennett rejoined the JBC in September 1976, he remarked, in his reply to a welcome from the Board, that

no one, regardless of who they were, whether from within or outside of the JBC, would ever be allowed to use the facilities of the Corporation to subvert the Government in office.¹⁹⁴

Perhaps it is just a matter of one's perspective; one month later the Chairman of Radio Jamaica, Douglas Judah, declared in a speech that

he would never allow the station to be dictated to by any government or any other authority ... He said Housing Minister, the Hon. Anthony Spaulding, had accused him of breaching the right of freedom of speech for [RJR's] stand on the [ex CIA agent William] Agee flare-up.

[The RJR Chairman said] When I am attacked by people like Mr. Spaulding I feel I am right.¹⁹⁵

Mr. Judah was as prescient as Dwight Whyllie had been. The PNP Government, with the JBC acquiescent, soon turned its attention to its independent competitor - Radio Jamaica.

193. Interview with Wilmot Perkins, 25 April 1984. Perkins, a writer and broadcaster, is heartily disliked by both the JLP and the PNP, so perhaps he can be regarded as reasonably objective.

194. "Bennett Back at JBC," Daily Gleaner, 20 September 1976.

195. "Will never allow RJR to be dictated to," Daily Gleaner, 20 October 1976.

The Prime Minister had made no secret of his desire to have all elements of Jamaican society contribute to the improvement of the island's social equality. He had brought JBC into the fold of "Democratic Socialism." Manley had long felt that the independent media (RJR and, especially, The Gleaner) were out to prevent his program for social change, just as they had tried to prevent anything that threatened their interests.

Early in 1975, the Prime Minister addressed the annual banquet of the Press Association of Jamaica:

In the years since 1938, and particularly ... since Independence the Press has initiated very little discussion, anticipated very few possibilities of social development, analysed in depth very few of the major evolutions in socio-political policy. It has been very largely a passive and isolated organism: ... whose response to changing conditions is too often an involuntary twitch or a dull moan of distress.

Why is this so? Is it ideological hostility? Is it dependence on a minority establishment concerned only with its economic survival? Or is it a conscious resentment of change.¹⁹⁶

The answers to the Prime Minister's questions would require a long and likely inconclusive debate. Yes, there was ideological hostility to the PNP, but that came from close to half of the electorate at any one point. Yes, The Gleaner (and it was undoubtedly the major target of the

196. "The Press in Jamaica," Daily Gleaner, 4 January 1976. The Gleaner reported the full text of the Prime Minister's speech, without comment.

speech) did advocate a liberal-democratic, capitalistic oriented viewpoint, but it also was the paper of record and acceptance throughout all levels of Jamaican society. The Daily News, the newspaper founded by the PNP in 1973 to compete with The Gleaner, never found a wide acceptance by Jamaican readers. Although the Daily News eventually benefitted by being the sole recipient of all Government print advertising, it was shunned by readers because of its strident advocacy of Democratic Socialism and poor overall quality. The paper eventually was purchased by the Government through the Jamaica Development Bank in 1977. It was placed in receivership by the Bank in 1978 and was closed in 1981 after several years of declining circulation.

"Yes," too, in response to the question of a conscious resentment of change. The economic uncertainty that the PNP quickly engendered, and the economic decline that soon followed, particularly during the PNP's second term, caused Jamaicans of all political persuasions and economic levels to question, if not the Government's objectives, then its ability to achieve them and the cost of that achievement. The Government's campaign for the "Jamaicanization" of the island's economy and its infrastructure increased in intensity as the General Election of 1976 neared. It was now Radio Jamaica's turn to feel the weight of the Government's desires.

In the final chapter the consequences of the JBC becoming a PNP dominated broadcaster is explored. The cost in dollars, in morale, in public acceptance and rejection, is noted. A comparison is made between the JBC and Radio Jamaica (RJR) during the second term of the government, and we note how RJR managed to maintain its independence.

The JBC's and the Government's adherence to the generally accepted principles of public broadcasting are evaluated and some conclusions drawn.

Chapter V: Disillusionment and Dénouement

A week before the General Election of 1976, The Gleaner reported that progress in the talks between the Government and the British owners of Radio Jamaica - Broadcast Relays Limited, a subsidiary of British Rediffusion - had reached an impasse.¹⁹⁷ Broadcast Relays owned ninety-eight per cent of the RJR shares. The Government, at the time of the renewal of RJR's license in 1974, had instructed the owners that 51 per cent of all shares must be held by Jamaicans before the end of 1977. The company was also required to ensure that a proportion of that 51 per cent be offered for sale to employees of RJR and the remainder be offered to a wide range of Jamaican institutions, not including the Government.

Before the RJR issue was resolved, the General Election was held on 15 December 1976. The governing PNP won handily, taking 47 out of 60 seats and 56.8 per cent of the popular vote; 85 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballot.¹⁹⁸ In spite of the difficulty which Jamaica's economy was in, in spite of the increased social unrest and

197. "Stalemate over move to Jamaicanize RJR," The Gleaner, 8 December 1976. (Mr. Lester Spaulding, currently Managing Director of Radio Jamaica, provided many of the details concerning this period in RJR's history. Interview, 13 April 1984).

198. Dr. Carl Stone, "The 1976 Parliamentary Election in Jamaica," The Journal of Comparative Politics, Vol XV, no. 3, November 1977, p. 250.

instability, the PNP increased their number of seats from 36 to 47, although their percentage of the popular vote was virtually the same in both elections. Dr. Stone points out that it is the opposition party which determines the main election issues. In the 1976 election the PNP were able to successfully deflect or defend themselves against the main charges levelled at them by Edward Seaga and the Jamaica Labour Party.

The JLP charged that the Government's socialist and anti-capitalist ideology was frightening away foreign capital and local investment and creating unemployment. The PNP were criticized for over-spending, corruption and, following the imposition of the State of Emergency in 1976, of beginning to establish a one-party totalitarian state.

The PNP response was to blame the island's economic problems on ten years of capitalist mismanagement by the JLP between 1962 and 1972, and on economic sabotage by local capitalists. It responded to charges of mismanagement by pointing out the wide range of social and economic policies introduced to ease the lot of the poor. The PNP said that inflation and foreign exchange problems were caused by international commodity price fluctuations that were controlled by the imperialists.¹⁹⁹

With the voters assailed by such charges and counter-charges, it was clear that the credibility of the two

199. Ibid. p. 252.

leaders was the major factor in the 1976 election. Prime Minister Manley won this contest - and thus the election:

Manley strode the podium with the charm, eloquence and ... conviction of a confident populist leader championing the cause of the oppressed, while Seaga projected an image of bureaucratic efficiency. Additionally, Seaga was tainted with allegations of connections with political violence, and there was a questioning of his national and racial origins.²⁰⁰

The year 1976 ended with the PNP firmly in power, convinced of the righteousness of its policies, and more determined than ever to press ahead with Jamaicanization of society and with a renewed commitment to Democratic Socialism. One comment that most Jamaicans made to the writer was repeated so frequently that it appears to have become conventional wisdom on the island - "After the 1976 election, the PNP got religion."²⁰¹ The Government and, just as important, the Party at all levels, felt it could do no wrong.

The Government buys Radio Jamaica (RJR)

Negotiations over the purchase of RJR were to drag on for nearly a year, following the initial announcement of the Government's intentions. Following its election victory of

200. Ibid. pp. 253-254. Edward Seaga was not born on the island and is of Lebanese extraction. Both the PNP and the JLP were guilty of condoning and even instigating acts of violence during the campaign, according to many Jamaicans I spoke to, and it is difficult to determine who was "more" guilty. The violence in the 1980 campaign was to be far worse.

201. Both Adrian Foreman and Willmot Perkins made the identical comment in interviews with the writer as did several other Jamaicans interviewed at about the same period in 1984.

1976, the Government had declared that it would purchase 80 per cent of the RJR shares, rather than the 51 per cent it had deemed necessary to be owned by Jamaicans at the time RJR's license was renewed in 1974. The increase in percentage of ownership by the Government, not just by Jamaicans, reflected the growing leftward movement of the PNP government in its second term. The final terms of agreement with the Rediffusion Group, concluded on 1 October 1977, allowed the Jamaican Government to buy ninety-eight per cent of the shares, the remaining two per cent already being owned by Jamaicans.

Rediffusion had refused several earlier offers from Jamaican investors to allow some Jamaican participation in the firm, including offers from the Jamaican Management at RJR.²⁰² The station was making significant profits and all went to the United Kingdom parent firm. The large majority of staff at RJR were supportive of "Jamaicanization" but, looking at the fortunes of their radio competitor up the road, the JBC, they were hostile to government ownership.

It was with mixed emotions, then, that RJR staff heard of the sale of their station to the Jamaican Government. The RJR management were more than disturbed, they were incredulous, when the price paid for the RJR shares was disclosed - over US\$2 million in scarce foreign exchange, a

202. Interview with Lester Spaulding, Managing Director of RJR, 13 April 1984.

price considered by both Jamaican and American broadcasting consultants to be well above the fair market worth of the shares. Independent evaluation of RJR's worth was about US\$1.5 million at a maximum. According to Lester Spaulding,²⁰³ Managing Director of RJR, the station's management was not given any opportunity to advise the Government about a more appropriate price for the transaction.

The process of "Jamaicanization" of RJR took another year to complete. Shortly after the Government's purchase of all the outstanding shares in RJR, the Government appointed a new Board of Directors, heavily weighted with PNP supporters. Lester Spaulding noted that the Board soon tried to exert pressure on management to make the station more sympathetic towards the Government in its news and public affairs programming. Management resisted and made clear to the Board that if the station was to remain solvent, the operating managers must be given freedom to make day-to-day programming decisions and long-term decisions affecting capital investment. To the surprise of most staff at RJR, the Board soon accepted that point of view, "acutely aware that RJR was one of the very few Government enterprises that was making money."²⁰⁴

In June 1978 the Government allocated the shares - 51 per cent to 23 institutions representing "mass organizations"

203. Ibid.

204. Ibid.

such as trade unions, agricultural societies, and teachers associations; 25 per cent to the staff at RJR and 24 per cent retained by the Government. The Government appointed two members to the RJR Board to represent the Government as shareholders, and the Government had given its assurance that the mass organizations and RJR workers would also have representation on the Board. These representatives were finally allowed seats on the Board in 1979, the mass organizations having seven directors, the RJR staff having two directors and, for the first time, the station's Managing Director becoming the twelfth member of the Board.

There were many in Jamaica, though, who were deeply troubled by the Government's ownership of yet another media outlet, whether in part or in whole. Editorials in The Gleaner and columnists in the newspaper thundered consistently against the Government's threat to freedom of the press.²⁰⁵ The JLP Opposition Party did little to calm the debate; indeed they exacerbated tensions by accusing the PNP Government of an organized campaign to destroy press

205. The Gleaner and other opponents of the Government were helped considerably by the Government's tendency to shoot itself in the foot. The Government's Five-Year Plan for 1979-1984 stated that the media are to provide "psychological reorientation to society to socialize them into becoming active agents of change." In similar fashion Dr. D.K. Duncan, a member of the PNP Executive Committee and the PNP "theologian", stated in a Panel Discussion that "when the time comes, the people will take into their own hands the present ownership of the Gleaner and those who control it." ("Is Economic Growth Compatible with Political Progress?", The Gleaner, 28 July 1979). The PNP Executive Committee disowned Duncan's statement on the following day. ("Duncan on press: Totally Inconsistent with PNP Policy," The Sunday Gleaner, 29 July 1979).

freedom on the island. Opposition Leader Seaga stated:

This master plan is the standard Communist strategy to seize control of the free press ... the four steps [are]:

- acquisition of control of RJR
- withdrawal of Government economic support for The Daily Gleaner
- transformation of JBC into a propaganda mouthpiece of the Government
- establishment of a Government newspaper.²⁰⁶

The Opposition's case was helped by the Prime Minister's statement, a few days earlier, that "a certain newspaper" which he said persisted in promoting capitalism and trying to defeat democratic socialism would not receive "economic or other support" from the Government.²⁰⁷ The Government's refusal to put its advertisements in The Gleaner, combined with other unusual expenses, cost the paper dearly.

"Unusual expenses," as Oliver Clarke called them, included legal fees against the many law-suits launched by Government Ministers and Government Ministries and increased security costs at its plant. There were several law suits for libel launched personally by the Prime Minister against the paper. All were eventually won by the newspaper, including two of the Manley suits that dragged on into 1984. There were no mechanisms, however, to protect many of the Gleaner staff, at all levels, from threatening and harassing phone calls.²⁰⁸

206. "Critical Move to Strangle Criticism, says Seaga," The Gleaner, 7 September 1977.

207. "PM: No Govt. support for a 'certain paper'," The Gleaner, 3 September 1977.

208. Interview with Oliver Clarke, 20 April 1984.

The Gleaner lost \$297,000 in the fiscal year ending in December 1977. The loss was attributed to the loss of all government advertising, including statutory and regulatory notices, and especially to a general drop in advertising by the commercial sector due to the severe curbs on imports. The paper doubled its sale price to 10 cents without any loss in circulation.²⁰⁹ Other major factors in the newspaper's cash squeeze were a large increase in the world price of newsprint and several devaluations of the Jamaican dollar, the most recent devaluation being a 40 per cent reduction against the American dollar. The paper had been forced to lay off 110 persons in 1977 and a similar number in 1978. These actions alone did not help the paper's relations with the Government which had continued to add employees to the payroll of the JBC.

The Government exerted pressure in other, less subtle, ways. Between 1977 and 1979 there were several mass demonstrations outside the gates of The Gleaner's plant; one of the demonstrations was led by the Prime Minister himself, who adjourned a Cabinet meeting to lead his colleagues and several thousand supporters to the paper's gates. The paper's Managing Editor noted that "it was a fairly disastrous blow for his [Manley's] international image,"²¹⁰

209. Oliver Clarke interview, 20 April 1984. See also "'Old lady' in severe trouble," The Sunday Gleaner, 12 March 1978; and "Gleaner loses \$297,000," The Gleaner, 12 February 1978.

210. O. Clarke interview, 20 April 1984. See also, for example, "Marchers Demand Takeover of newspapers and RJR," The Gleaner, 30 September 1977.

but there is no evidence the incident had any effect on Manley's reputation, at least outside of Jamaica. There was, too, an increasing amount of grist for The Gleaner's mill as the 1970s progressed. The Government's economic fortunes, up to the 1976 election victory, seemed to vary inversely as their political fortune. After the 1976 December election both the Government's popularity and the island's economic health declined steadily. As we noted earlier, in Chapter II, the economic conditions and the social instability worsened in the PNP's second term, understandably reducing the time, energy and money that the PNP Government was prepared to devote to the problems of Jamaican broadcasting.

The JBC's Problems Worsen

Throughout this turbulent period the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation matched the Government's financial problems with its own ever increasing drain on the public purse. The Corporation's operating deficit for 1976 was \$441,300, a staggering increase of 1305 per cent above the previous year's deficit of \$31,414. The following year, 1977, the operating deficit increased by over 200 per cent again to \$1,678,605.²¹¹

The 1977 JBC Annual Report noted that the "Corporation was called upon to devise and produce programs more

211. All figures from JBC Annual Reports, 1976 and 1977.

consistently relevant to the socio-economic structure of the society." Attempts to fill this public need by

providing programs on such subjects as health, legal affairs and child care were often frustrated by limited resources (namely unreliable equipment, lack of trained personnel and finances).

The JBC, with expenses soaring to unimaginable levels, was still unable to make the programs that would promote democratic socialism. If the money was not being spent on equipment, nor on program production, where was it going? A large amount of it was going on payroll costs; a 28 per cent wage increase was awarded all public sector employees in 1976. The staff at JBC now totalled over 280 by the end of 1977, a 20 per cent increase over that of early 1976. Considerable sums were spent on training since staff turnover was high and many of the new staff had no experience in any broadcasting operation.²¹²

In 1978 the Corporation reported that a

lack of funds and trained personnel kept the development of programmes at a slow pace and efforts seem to have been more concentrated on observing the institutionalized annual events than on initiating programmes geared toward national development.²¹³

But there were more graphic signs of malaise in the Corporation as evidenced by its Annual Report for 1978. The feather-bedding, the incompetence, the blatant politicization of the station that were the charges of many

212. JBC Annual Report, 1977, pp. 2-3.

213. JBC Annual Report, 1978, p. 5.

Jamaicans, including several still within the JBC, found surprising confirmation from the Corporation's own Board of Directors.

Where it appears that leave facilities, (especially sick leave ...) are abused; where employees will not scruple to abandon their posts (which includes programmes in transmission); where employees will simply set aside a prescribed programme and presume to do their 'own thing' on the air; where members of staff have proven ignorant of the requirements of their jobs, and do not accept the fact that they are ignorant; and where there is a tendency to create public alienation in a number of programmes [a truly astonishing admission] - where all these things can and do happen, then the strongest measures will have to be taken in the national interest ...²¹⁴

In most Corporations, such an admission in the Annual Report would have justified the termination of the General Manager and likely most of the Board. But the JBC was anything but typical and Wycliffe Bennett and the Board stayed on.

It would have perhaps been difficult for the Prime Minister to fire a General Manager who could declare, when addressing a local service club

that it was high time when everyone should realize that the activities of the Prime Minister as head of this country, as well as other Ministers of Government, would receive priority treatment by JBC at all times from all other persons.²¹⁵

As if the confessions regarding personnel were not enough, the 1978 Annual Report also noted some problems

214. Ibid. p. 4.

215. "Air play of reggae a 'stupid mistake', says JBC." The Gleaner, 23 June 1977.

about foreign programming supplied to the Corporation. The JBC had virtually no funds for American, British or similar Western television programmes. JBC had several willing suppliers of cheap or free films from Third World countries and from the Socialist bloc, but these sources brought other problems:

An attempt had been made ... to show an increasing number of programmes from the Third World... The truth of the matter was that good films from this source were few and far between, and that often stock footage from one film appeared with a relentless monotony in a spate of others. When to this situation was added the removal of most of the popular shows from the North American market, the result was that sets were turned off and there was a disastrous flight of advertising from the screen.²¹⁶

The 1978 operating deficit for the Corporation was \$2,413,672, a 44 per cent increase over 1977. Staff were awarded pay increases ranging from 15 to 30 per cent.

The sad litany of failure is reflected again in 1979 and 1980. Although the number of permanent staff dropped to around 250 in these years, there were uncounted temporary staff and large numbers of contract workers, ostensibly hired for specific programs or specific projects, many of which never seemed to take place.²¹⁷

In November 1978 the Prime Minister, as Minister in Charge of Broadcasting, directed the Corporation to

216. JBC Annual Report, 1978, p. 8.

217. This situation continued until the new Government "cleaned house" in 1981, shortly after assuming power. The housecleaning however, according to what the writer saw on several visits to the JBC, could not be described as thorough.

restructure the Corporation with a view to a) improving its efficiency, and b) achieving an immediate and significant reduction in operating costs ("including retrenchment of staff").²¹⁸

The Corporation responded to the Government that the JBC could be operated as a purely commercial "exercise" and show a profit, but

this would mean the disappearance of most of its people-oriented programmes and ... the drastic retrenchment of its staff, thus further debasing the quality of the remaining programmes and reducing operations to the lowest common denominator. The Corporation took the view that such an exercise would prove to be socially unacceptable, counter-productive, and be in direct opposition to the policy of the Government...²¹⁹

The Corporation's point of view must have been persuasive, because the 1979 Annual Report then concluded, "Thus the spectre of retrenchment which opened the year was soon diffused."

The Annual Report also noted (p. 16) that John Maxwell, of "Public Eye" fame, had re-joined the Corporation in mid-1979 as Director of Current Affairs. He had been a free-lance host for a number of JBC programs since his firing from "The Public Eye" in early 1977.

The 1980 Annual Report of the JBC, with the JLP Government in power since October, continued the recital of woes that other Boards had been compelled to tell. The

218. JBC Annual Report, 1979, p. 4.

219. Ibid. p. 5.

Report noted that the Corporation for the past four years had not been able to fill, either from within or from outside the Corporation, three key positions of Financial Controller, Director of Television and Human Resources Officer.

The operating deficit for 1980 was \$3,988,538, an increase of 50 per cent over the deficit from 1979. Staff had been granted wage increases of 30 per cent early in the year. The PNP elements in the Corporation certainly believed in going out in style if not in substance. There has never been a full accounting as to where much of the operating funds were spent in the late 1970s, up to the 1980 election. There was a very high incidence of overseas travel, ostensibly for training programs, and the recipients frequently left the Corporation's employ at the completion of such training. There were significant numbers of JBC staff away on full-time university studies at full salary.²²⁰

A Jamaican Comments about the JBC

The point perhaps need no longer be belaboured about the state of the JBC. It was bleeding financially and failing to provide the programmes which it had been directed to produce by the Manley Government. Dr. Carl Stone of the

220. The various Annual Reports for the period indicate such leave was a valid JBC policy; based on conversations with present and former JBC management it was a policy clearly abused.

University of the West Indies had been on the Corporation's Board of Directors in the mid-1970s. He has also been one of the many avowed PNP supporters in the early years of the Manley Government who had become alarmed at the factionalism and uncontrolled rhetoric of PNP extremists - many of whom had gravitated to jobs in the JBC. Stone resigned from the JBC Board in 1976 and, still a committed democratic socialist, became an incisive, measured critic of the Manley government, particularly of the more extreme elements of the PNP that came to dominate the Party's philosophy under the Party Secretary, Dr. D.K. Duncan - and to dominate the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation.

It is appropriate, then, that the last word on JBC come from a Jamaican who had been both on the JBC Board and a PNP supporter. Dr. Stone's measured prose, commenting on one of his recent polls, still conveys the anguish and frustration that many Jamaicans expressed over what had happened to their national public broadcasting corporation. Writing shortly after the 1980 General Election, Dr. Stone commented:

The credibility of JBC could hardly be lower. Most voters view the institution as a campaign tool controlled by communists and leftists. The Daily News is viewed as very partisan paper that echoes PNP propaganda. The Gleaner has been caught in the web of politics also. Most JLP and PNP voters see the paper as partisan.

Only RJR among the country's media organisms has a clean non-partisan image. That image has been built up on the basis of professional journalism that places national

responsibility for informing and enlightening the public as top priority.²²¹

Stone went on to note that he resigned from the JBC Board because it became clear to him that "the PNP and key staff members had decided to make the station into the political tool it has become." The PNP took this course, Stone argued, because they were convinced that the 1972 General Election was won on the basis of a superior media and propaganda campaign. PNP leadership became convinced that the road to staying in power was to be paved by manipulating the media.

What the PNP leadership never understood was that the Jamaican people have minds of their own and that media manipulation could work for a time but failed once the people developed doubts about the credibility of PNP leadership and their spokesmen.

Indeed, the more that credibility gap has developed the more JBC and the Daily News tried to promote an unconvincing and one-sided propaganda line. It fell on deaf ears (outside of party circles) and ended up hurting the PNP in the long run.²²²

Conclusions

We noted earlier that the concept of public broadcasting is based on some assumptions and on six principles or obligations.²²³ The basic assumption is that public broadcasting is just that - public. The service

221. Dr. Carl Stone, "Liberating the Media," The Gleaner, 3 November 1980.

222. Ibid.

223. See pp. 23-25.

should provide radio and television programmes for all its many "audiences"; it is not the "narrow-casting" or format broadcasting of the commercial broadcaster.

We noted also that a public broadcaster's six obligations were to

- provide service throughout the nation
- provide programmes that appeal to all tastes
- broadcast programmes that reflect all significant groups in society
- contribute to the national consciousness, to nation-building
- be the showcase for the nation's talent
- maintain its freedom of control from vested interests.

This thesis, as we stated in Chapter I, has concentrated on the sixth principle, on the successes and failures of the J.B.C. in maintaining freedom of control from vested interests. Some of these obligations, these duties, stand alone; the provision of adequate services for example. Other obligations blend into each other. The broadcasting of programmes that reflect all significant groups in society would likely also be programming that contributed to national consciousness. Programmes that are a showcase for the nation's talent, such as national sporting events, also contribute to the development of a national identity.

Measured against these six principal obligations the record of the Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation is mixed. The Corporation had some success in meeting some of the obligations and failed miserably or even ignored other obligations.

In spite of little or no funds of its own, the physical distribution of the JBC's radio and television signals did improve during the period 1972-1980. Additional television transmitters were installed throughout these years to widen television distribution in an island whose geography provided severe obstacles to the terrestrial distribution of signals. Transmitters were supplied either on credit or free by the United States, the Soviet Union and France.²²⁴ By 1979 "an acceptable signal reached at least 90 per cent of Jamaica's populated land area."²²⁵ This was a considerable improvement from the coverage level of just over seventy per cent that the Board of Directors had reported on in 1973.²²⁶ Such an improvement in coverage is all the more commendable when one is reminded of the severe financial problems facing the JBC throughout these years. Even if foreign capital funds were made available, the Corporation still had to operate and maintain the equipment.

224. JBC Annual Report, 1979, pp. 12-13.

225. JBC Annual Report, 1980, p. 1.

226. See pp. 74-75.

Interestingly it was during the late 1970s, when JBC was financially hemorrhaging, that some of the more interesting initiatives were taken in radio. Three local JBC radio stations began operations. Radio West, in Montego Bay in 1977, Radio North-East in Ocho Rios in 1979 and Radio Central also in 1979. Radio West was a pure JBC initiative made in an effort to counteract Radio Jamaica's dominance in the area. Using cast-off equipment, it provided local programming for ninety minutes per day, inserted in the place of the usual Kingston-originated JBC programmes. It never won the full support of JBC management, and it has never managed to dent RJR's dominance.²²⁷

Radio North-west and Radio Central were financially underwritten by 'Unesco and the United States' Agency for International Development (US/AID) respectively. Unesco contributed US\$600,000 and US/AID about US\$1 million.²²⁸ Both projects were termed "development-support communications facilities". The Corporation's Annual Report for 1979 noted that "JBC, as the national broadcasting service, feels that a concept of national development must form [part of] all its programming." Both projects were intended "to improve the standard of living and quality of life of small hillside farmers and their families."²²⁹

227. The writer conducted a study of the three radio operations for JBC management in 1984.

228. JBC Annual Report, 1979, pp. 7-8.

229. Ibid. p. 7.

For the first two or three years these projects produced and broadcast programs for about an hour daily on agricultural techniques, health information, weather reports, etc. and most were well received. However, within a year or so, as soon as the foreign funds stopped, and the foreign producers left, the financial pressures on JBC inevitably resulted in the regional stations being starved of resources and resorting to being little more than repeater stations for the main JBC service.

The success or failure of the JBC in meeting the four objectives dealing with programmes are more difficult to measure in terms of their popularity and even more difficult to assess in terms of their contribution to the national consciousness. All such judgements about "quality" and "worth" of a programme are subjective. The popularity of programmes can be measured through audience measurement surveys. Most audience survey reports during the 1970s show JBC programmes consistently trailing Radio Jamaica's radio competitive offerings,²³⁰ except for the Corporation's always popular mid-day phone-in program The Public Eye. In television, with JBC holding a monopoly, it would be difficult to see what the Corporation could do wrong to have any negative impact on its audiences. But even as early as 1973 the Corporation's Annual Report noted that the annual media survey "showed a drop in the television audience

230. Media Survey of Jamaica, various years 1973 to 1980 inclusive.

although there was a 25 per cent increase in set count over the four year period ... preceding." The Annual Report concluded that the survey's conclusions "were suspect."²³¹

Through the years in question the Corporation's Annual Reports contain vivid evidence of JBC's problems and of the inability of the government and the Corporation to come to grips with them. The 1973 Annual Report states that

The JBC continues to suffer from a fundamental conflict of objectives that makes it impossible for it to be a viable organization ... The operational and financial objectives have been in conflict from the JBC's inception. Concentration has shifted several times from one to the other ... Each shift has produced precipitate changes in management, financial, programme and development policy. None has met the financial operation objectives.²³²

By 1977 the situation in the JBC's television operations had deteriorated to the point that the Annual Report observed that

It was not possible to maintain a regular schedule of weekly local programmes for several reasons: the break-down of cameras, VTR machines ... the inadequate supply of film stock. The purchase of foreign programmes was restricted by (1) the Corporation's financial position and (2) the lack of foreign exchange.²³³

The Corporation's efforts to produce "outside broadcasts" covering events of national importance were usually thwarted by unreliable equipment.

231. JBC Annual Report, 1973, p. 5.

232. Ibid. p. 10.

233. JBC Annual Report 1977, p. 6.

There were numerous camera failures during the Budget Debate ... [during] Fidel Castro's visit and the Christmas Eve programme from Hope Gardens.²³⁴

By the following year the Report noted that "Outside broadcasts were virtually non-existent during 1978. This was caused by the lack of cameras and a deteriorating O.B. unit."²³⁵ But the Corporation was not able to compensate for the lack of outside production by increasing television studio production. Instead, that too almost stopped completely because of repeated failures in the studio air-conditioning.

The collapse of studio facilities meant that, apart from the major newscasts at 7:30 p.m. there was a conspicuous drop in the volume of programs of local origination ... It was not possible to give more than minimal coverage by means of film to such major events as Festival and Independence. Even the Budget Debate could not be given the usual live presentation.²³⁶

By its own annual admissions it is clear that the Corporation failed to provide programmes that appealed to all tastes; failed to broadcast (from whatever source) programmes that reflected various groups in society; and, most emphatically, failed to produce programmes that contributed to the national consciousness.

But, as we have demonstrated, it was the J.B.C.'s failure to maintain the unique and delicate freedom of

234. Ibid. p. 7.

235. Ibid. 1978, p. 7.

236. JBC Annual Report, 1978, p. 8.

control from vested interests that remains its most lasting legacy. Can and should blame be attributed to the management of the Corporation?

One would reasonably conclude that JBC management, at least up to the end of 1976, by which time General Manager Dwight Whyllie and his Board of Directors had departed, had battled long and hard, and in vain, to preserve the independence and integrity of the Corporation. After 1976 the Corporation's financial problems multiplied, its operating difficulties became obvious to all who would see or hear its programmes; and its image both from within and without became more and more a caricature of a respected public broadcasting organization.

If blame is to be levied then it should rightly be levied initially against the PNP Government and against the Prime Minister and Minister-in-charge of Broadcasting, Michael Manley. We have seen how he deliberately imposed his will on the J.B.C. and, when those who opposed him in the organization had been removed, how he appeared to lose interest in the Corporation, leaving it in the hands of the PNP activists and acolytes.

But is it fair to hand this charge to Manley and his government? In the Jamaican scheme of things - indeed in the general scheme of things - is public broadcasting, as currently conceived, a vital institution of the state? Can it be dispensed with, without undue harm to the national good?

The answer has to be that public broadcasting is not vital to the development of any liberal-democratic state. But without it we would be that much poorer for information, for enlightenment and for entertainment. Without public broadcasting "audiences lose a basic freedom - freedom of choice."²³⁷ public broadcasting institutions, in Britain, in Canada, in Jamaica and elsewhere are creations of the parliamentary process. They are products of, as Ostry calls it, "a long-term representative democratic process and, as such, cannot be simply dismissed as elitist or as removed from the popular will." Once overthrown the principle of public broadcasting will be hard to restore, for reasons of the enormous capital investment required if nothing else. Public broadcasting differs fundamentally from commercial broadcasting in that it delivers programmes to audiences, not audiences to advertisers. It is the failure of public broadcasters to emphasize this fundamental difference in their operation that, in Ostry's opinion, places public broadcasters on the defensive.

Each on its own national turf tries to preserve the means by which it can serve the public good, while making compromises in the face of competition from the private sector and hostility from governments compelled by ideology.

Public broadcasting, at its best, stimulates curiosity, provides us with knowledge, with

237. Bernard Ostry, "In Defense of Public Broadcasting", text of speech to the Canadian Club, Hamilton, Ontario, 23 March 1987. (Mr. Ostry is Chairman of TV Ontario, the provincial education broadcasting authority) p. 3.

equality of educational opportunity, universal and free access and, away from the tyranny of the market place, with a freedom of choice so necessary in a medium so pervasive in the life of a community. Public broadcasting is a public good - like education, like our highways, like proper medical care.²³⁸

So perhaps we should at least understand the dilemmas of Prime Minister Manley and his Government as they wrestled with the enormous problems of inflation, social inequality, oil prices, public health, etc. and appreciate the less than sympathetic response that they gave to the continued problems of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation. What is regrettable is the failure to appreciate that a properly functioning, adequately financed JBC might well have produced a more cohesive, more supportive society for what the PNP Government was trying to accomplish in Jamaica.

What was lost between the JBC and the people was trust, and the consequence of such a loss of trust is inevitable.

Without credibility among its audience a broadcasting system is at best a bulletin board for notices and a conduit for entertainment trivia. If a broadcasting system is to activate a people it must be trusted.²³⁹

238. B. Ostry, Speech to the International Institute of Communications, Edinburgh, September, 1986.

239. Ithiel de Sola Pool, "The Governance of Mass Communication," in M. Teheranian, F. Hakimzadeh and M.L. Vidale, eds. Communications Policy for National Development, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, Ltd., 1977, pp. 136-137.

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INTERVIEWS

Major interviews, some of several sessions, were made during 1984, and occasionally later, with the following.

Tino Barovier, in various senior management positions at JBC during the 1970s.

Dr. Aggrey Brown, Director of the Caribbean Institute of Mass Communications at the University of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica, and a long serving host and moderator of the JBC radio programme The Public Eye.

Oliver Clarke, Managing Editor, the Gleaner Publishing Company, Kingston, Jamaica.

A. Davidson Dunton, late president of Carleton University, journalist and broadcaster, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in the 1950s and latterly Director, Institute of Canadian Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa.

Adrian Foreman, President, Life of Jamaica Insurance Company and Chairman, JBC Board of Directors, 1973-76.

Gloria Lannaman, writer, journalist, broadcaster, and late General Manager of the JBC, 1983-86.

John Maxwell, journalist, broadcaster and one-time host of the JBC radio programme, The Public Eye.

Wilmot Perkins, Jamaican journalist and broadcaster.

Lester Spaulding, Managing Director, Radio Jamaica (RJR).

Dwight Whyllie, writer, journalist, broadcaster and formerly General Manager of the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation, 1973-76.

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