

not the responsibility of Information Canada. There seems to be, among the Mobile Officers, a great deal of confusion over their role, which is not that of counselling people about social problems, but only the furnishing of information. Some of this confusion may be due to the educational and occupational backgrounds of these officers. Most of those in Nova Scotia have a social service background, but the Manitoba officers have a greater proportion of people with experience in communications.

Nevertheless it was strongly felt by the Committee that Information Canada is treading on dangerous ground by undertaking this kind of job. Despite the protestations of Information Canada that the mobile officer's main task is the creation of information networks which can be used on a continuing basis, and that such a process would lead to the eventual liquidation of the Mobile Officers' position, the Committee considered that the likeliest outcome of the program would be a situation of permanent dependency of clients on the Mobile Officers, and an uncontrollable proliferation of the whole scheme. With the best intentions and the best personnel in the world, self-liquidating schemes rarely turn out that way, especially if financed by the inexhaustible "Horn of Plenty" which is the taxpayer's pocket. Even in the most hopeful forecast, that of Information Canada's Director General, the dangers of excessive growth are obvious:

"We operated the mobile units in Nova Scotia and Manitoba for about \$200,000—plus, I suppose, some support from the headquarters, which might increase this to \$250,000-\$260,000; and instead of twelve man-years perhaps fourteen to sixteen man-years, if we use the back-up. We feel that to operate in the whole of the Atlantic and Prairie regions, that is, seven provinces instead of two, including Labrador, would cost in the next fiscal year, because it will be a phased-in operation, in the neighbourhood of \$550,000 and about 40 man-years in actual usage of man-years. But by the end of the fiscal year, we would have 51 mobile officers and back-up people, and the yearly cost would be, at that time, about \$750,000—that is, to service seven provinces and Labrador".

(Proceedings, 9 : 7)

Costs could be kept under control only if the self-liquidating feature of the scheme could become a reality, and the Committee sees no likelihood of bureaucratic *hara-kiri* in this case. The Director of Regional Operations has himself said that disposing of the project will be difficult to do in some areas (Proceedings 9 : 23). Again, the objection was raised that this kind of one-on-one counselling service is an inherently expensive way to convey information (if counselling is regarded as an aspect of the information function). As a means of evaluating government information programs it is, to say the least, unscientific, being prone to all the emotional and cultural bias which is an inescapable feature of close involvement in the subject. To repeat, social service is not the function of Information Canada.

The response of community organizations to the Mobile Officer scheme was very favourable, however, and the Committee is of the opinion that Information Canada should encourage the use of local groups and facilities as