

another multilateral forum where the Western industrialized countries have been attempting to come to grips with the challenges posed by the new information technologies, especially the economic impacts. But let's face it. Since vital economic interests are at stake, one cannot delay national policies until that elusive day when there is a consensus subscribed to by all OECD members.

One could also mention regional organizations such as the Inter-American Telecommunications Conference (CITEL), the regional UN economic commissions, and regional broadcasting unions. There are also the international lending agencies and many other organizations and professional associations that bring together technical experts or academics. Everyone seems to be getting into the act!

To complicate the picture further, one must take into account the bilateral communications relationships which are every bit as important to any country. Canada, for example, has key relationships in the communications field with a growing number of developed and developing countries. Increasingly, co-operation between Canadian industry and companies in other countries, to supply telecommunications and space communications "hardware", is providing a solid basis for these relationships. As I said earlier, our high technology industries must export to thrive.

**Impact of
Canada-U.S. tie**

It will not, however, surprise any of you when I say that, no matter to what extent we diversify our communications relations, the Canada-U.S. relationship will remain the key one. The impact of this relationship is with us each day in our offices and in our homes. It is the most complex and sophisticated communications relationship between any two countries in the world.

The type of communications issues which arise in the context of the Canada-U.S. relationship extends from routine, technical matters to sensitive problems with political dimensions. We are all familiar with that commonplace of Canada-U.S. relations: the longest undefended border in the world. Its corollary is another cliché: good fences make good neighbours. What these expressions, in all their banality, point to is the constant need for co-ordination when Canada and the U.S. deal with each other about communications.

There are everyday needs for technical co-ordination of the use of the radio frequency spectrum on both sides of the border. Can you imagine, for example, the chaos that would result if we did not have in place reciprocal arrangements for the use of CB radio on both sides of the border?

But there are other technical issues with wider implications for Canada-U.S. relations. For example, an international conference, to be convened by the ITU in Rio de Janeiro in November, will approve a detailed frequency assignment plan to provide for the interference-free operation of all the AM broadcasting stations in North, Central and South America — there are currently about 9,000. There is already agreement on all of the technical parameters of this plan except one, the seemingly routine technical issue of the spacing between AM broadcasting stations on the radio dial. Because of different national priorities, this is becoming the most contentious issue for the conference to deal with. The basic question is: Do the benefits of