PHOTO: DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

tions. The PDI displays, designed by Herb Bown and Doug O'Brien of the Department of Communications Research Centre, do not use mosaic squares but are composed of points, arcs, lines and polygons, giving fine resolution to texts and basic graphics. The pictures appear all at once. When the composition is too complex to be replicated by combinations of geometric shapes, it is done by slow scanning tv techniques, which take longer but which produce precise reproductions of paintings and photographs.

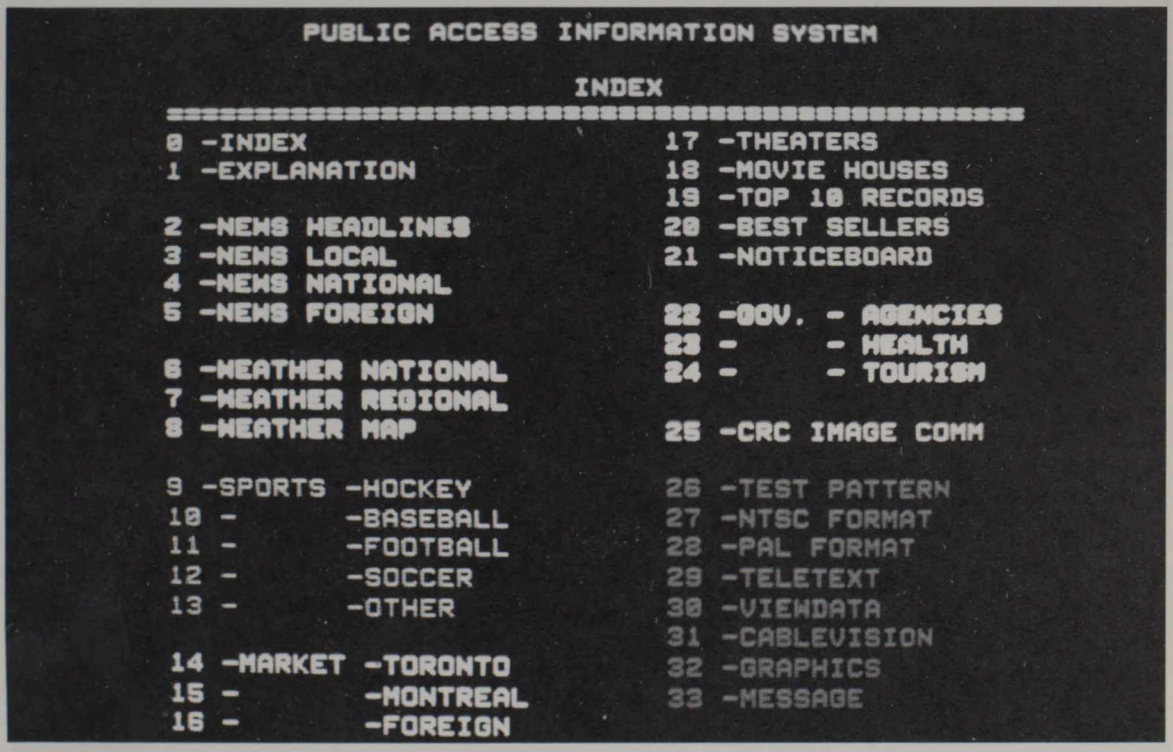
John Madden, former director general of special research projects at the Department of Communications, says **Telidon** has the edge over **Prestel** and **Antiope** in several ways:

*It can reproduce maps, charts, cartoons and engineering drawings clearly and accurately, with flowing lines.

*It can be sent over telephone lines, cables, air waves or fibre optics and bounced off satellites. Because its data base is independent of transmission and display, it will not be outmoded by technological change.

*A **Telidon** subscriber can use his terminal as a mini-computer.

Telidon's greatest potential is not in information retrieval, however, but in two-way communication. It can be used for instant exchanges between terminals—subscribers can have a private or public discussion, writing their thoughts or drawing their own supplementary images on the screen as they go along.



The Shape of Things To Come

As Herb Bown, director of data systems research and development at DOC, puts it: "**Telidon** is in its infancy and the emphasis now is solely on information retrieval. It is a message sender. It's going to move on into areas where things have traditionally been done in other ways. The whole concept of interactive visual communications is going to change our way of thinking with respect to electronic mail and message delivery and electronic information interchange. It is not just a question of technology. **Telidon** is going to have economic and social consequences which will decide the shape of things to come."

Libraries: In theory, all the information in the Library of Congress (or the British Museum or the French Bibliothèque Nationale) could be put into data banks and made available to TV watchers at home. It won't be. Bown says: "I think there will always be libraries. Of course, most people who use traditional libraries now will keep on using them but **Telidon** will bring much more information than they're accustomed to getting at home. I think they will find it valuable, particularly in letting them 'walk through' information easily. Primarily, though, the people who can benefit most from this new technology are those who currently don't go to libraries."

Universities: Telidon can put teachers and students in direct two-way contact even when they're far apart. The teacher will be able to visit the work space of each student and can direct him to research and background material that will be im-