

6. Advise Information Canada senior Regional Officers about the area information needs.

These categories are not rigid; Information Canada admits that some departments may not use any of these services, while others may require services not listed. The aims of the Mobile Officer Scheme are summarized in another Information Canada document:

"The mobile officers are an attempt to make federal government information relevant to localized situations. There is no gimmickry, like expensive audio-visual equipment involved. It is face-to-face dialogue for the most part. On a larger scale, the mobile officers will help create links between federal departments and the communities/areas in which they work. They will try to identify community information needs. They will advise Information Canada regional staff on developments requiring special information programs. Lastly, they provide federal departments with information capability in areas previously by-passed. These officers, it is important to add, will be attempting to utilize and support existing community resources, such as libraries. Ultimately a local network should be formed and the mobile officer able to move on to a new area".

(Information Canada Regional Mobile Projects, 1973)

The program is certainly innovative and ambitious and has attracted some very dedicated and industrious people to the ranks of the Mobile Officers. Yet, if any aspect of Information Canada's operations aroused the concern of the Committee, this was it. The concern was profound and at the same time regretful. It was obvious that the Mobile Officers were sincere and hardworking, but it was felt that what they were doing was furnishing little information and performing instead social welfare tasks. This is not the purpose of Information Canada. We will resort once more to Information Canada's words. In an addendum to a report prepared by the Senior Regional Officer for the Atlantic Region, several items illustrating the activities of Mobile Officers were presented. A selection follows:

"Mobile Officers are frequently directed by municipal councillors to problem areas in their districts, as they feel the Mobile Officer is in a better position to answer questions than they are themselves".

"A Public Health nurse was overheard telling some people how valuable Information Canada is to her. She can now give more attention to medical problems, referring her clients' other problems to the mobile officer. This previously took a good deal of her time. The mobile officer frees her to devote more time to her specific area of responsibility, and also serves her clients better as he is able to speed up the process by which they receive CAS, UIC, Workmen's Compensation, Social Assistance, etc.".

"Mobile Officers are extremely active as liaison between citizens and various levels of government. For example, one mobile officer is currently involved in: setting up meeting between NFB producer interested in filming senior citizens in black community and a key person in such a community; setting up liaison between a funding agency and community needing funds; setting up meeting of school principal and Secretary of State".

*C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas l'information.* That there are real social needs to be met all over Canada is a truism, but the job of solving them is