

The question of whether or not Information Canada is carrying out the job as defined will be dealt with in succeeding chapters. At this point it would be instructive to note the authority under which Information Canada was established. It was, in effect, created through an Appropriations Act (June 26, 1970) giving approval to the program of Information Canada. It was designated a department by Order-in-Council on March 26, 1970 (PC 1970-559):

- (a) pursuant to Section 2 of the Financial Administration Act, to designate Information Canada as a department for the purpose of that Act;
- (b) pursuant to Appropriation Act No. 2 1970, to designate the Honourable Robert Stanbury as the member of the Queen's Privy Council of Canada under which the Director of Information Canada shall administer all matters assigned to the Director by the Minister of Supply and Services; and
- (c) pursuant to Section 2 of the Public Service Employment Act, to designate Information Canada as a department for the purpose of that Act.

To say that Information Canada's status in the governmental panoply of departments and agencies is unclear would not overstate the case. Promoting co-operation among government information offices, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of said offices, and advising and servicing them on request; all require a strong hand at the helm, or at the very least a strong sense of direction if the government's information vessel is not to founder on the shoals of unrestricted growth and irrelevant projects. At present, this is not the case. We would hasten to add that this is not because of any lack of competence in the senior personnel of Information Canada. We have found them, as a whole, to be competent and thoroughly dedicated to their difficult and very often thankless task. The fault lies, we repeat, in the vagueness of its establishing authority, and the difficulties inherent in operating under it.

Something more than a vote in the yearly Estimates is required. It is felt that Information Canada would be more appropriately established by the authority of an Act of Parliament. Such an Act would define the duties, activities and responsibilities of Information Canada as a government department, and establish its relationship to information services in other government departments, to Treasury Board and to Parliament.

The Standing Senate Committee on National Finance considers Information Canada's uncertain status to be a prime area for clarification, preferably by legislative enactment as mentioned above. Other areas will be considered in the course of this Report, and it will be shown that many of the criticisms of Information Canada made during the course of the Committee's hearings, and indeed in Press and Parliament, are due to the lack of clear guidelines.

Without clear terms of reference, no organization and in particular no governmental organization, can avoid straying into areas of activity where it does not belong, nor can it escape the bureaucratic snare of unregulated, unlimited growth. On both counts, Information Canada has been judged and found wanting by critics in the Press and in Parliament. The critics are not