
The spread of information/communications technology entails change, some new ground rules, and co-ordination among countries as our respective economies become more interwoven than ever before. One of the basic themes, which I know will be running through your discussions tomorrow, is whether there are adequate mechanisms in place at the international level for co-ordinating communications and communications activities in a period of compressed technological change. There is certainly an increasing level of international activity – both at the multilateral and bilateral levels – but is it keeping pace with the technology?

Multilateral activity

Looking first at multilateral activity, I would have to conclude that the international telecommunications operating organizations, to which Canada is linked *via* Teleglobe Canada, our international telecommunications carrier, are providing a satisfactory level of service. I refer to the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (INTELSAT), the recently-formed International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT) which will begin its operational phase in 1982, and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO). Moreover, the integrated North American telecommunications network, which includes not just Canada and the U.S.A. but also Mexico and the Caribbean, is continuing to function effectively.

But is it really necessary to have separate operating organizations for individual space services? One recognizes that INMARSAT was set up as a separate organization because the U.S.S.R. is not a member of INTELSAT, and because some countries considered that the U.S. was too influential in INTELSAT. But, surely, it wouldn't take too much ingenuity to rationalize current and future operating systems, to a greater extent, to avoid costs and increase efficiency.

When one looks at the multilateral organizations dealing with various policy and regulatory issues, it becomes more difficult to measure effectiveness. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN Specialized Agency in Geneva which co-ordinates the use of the radio frequency spectrum, has so far been able to adapt its international regulations to meet new technological requirements. But its plenipotentiary conference in 1982, and the series of important specialized world and regional administrative radio conference scheduled for the 1980s, will challenge the members of the ITU in their efforts to accommodate the reasonable requirements of developing countries with the technological appetites of developed countries. All countries are concerned about the impact of sophisticated new technologies on their economies. But some are more concerned about how they are going to introduce even the most basic services.

Conference decisions

Decisions will be taken at these ITU conferences which will decide the operations of future telecommunications systems. At a regional conference in 1983 to plan the use of Direct Broadcast Satellites in the Americas, and at a world conference in 1984 to decide how to guarantee equitable access to the geostationary-satellite orbit, it will be necessary to obtain international recognition and accommodation of Canada's future space requirements. Many developing countries claim that the "first-come, first-served" principle governing orbital spots and space frequencies, is not in their national interest. The U.S., following its "open skies" space policy, is introducing, or has plans for, an impressive number of communications satellites. The interests