

constantly aware of its effectiveness in meeting public needs for information, this aspect of its function should not develop into a form of listening post. The agency's original concept of "information in"—a continuing assessment of public attitudes and opinions regarding government programs—is unworkable and may in addition represent a by-passing of existing political institutions. While Information Canada should, as a matter of course, remain aware of issues of public concern, it is felt that a formal structure to carry out this task is unnecessary.

Canada's governments are not inclined to throw a blanket of secrecy over their operations. In some vital areas, secrecy is necessary and justifiable, in others less so, and in many, completely unjustifiable. But the Canadian public, and the news media are very often subjected to a surfeit of governmental information. Barrages of departmental press releases, ministerial statements, and press conferences constitute a sensory overload for many observers of the political process in Ottawa, to say nothing of the provincial capitals and the municipalities. Even seasoned professionals in the information field often make heavy weather of it: for the layman it is all a "buzzing, blooming confusion". It is little wonder that enquiries concerning schools are addressed to some mythical Department of Education in the Parliament Buildings, or that a demand for a municipal tax rebate turns up in Consumer and Corporate Affairs. It is not volume of information which has been lacking in Ottawa, but rationalization and efficient dissemination.

In 1969, The Task Force on Government Information handed down its Report, stating that:

"The right of Canadians to full, objective and timely information and the obligation of the State to provide such information about its programs and policies be publicly declared and stand as the foundation for the development of new government policies in this field"

To this end, the Task Force made several recommendations regarding the establishment of Information Canada:

(a) "A Council of Directors of Public Affairs (formerly Information) Divisions, from departments and agencies, serviced by Information Canada, be set up to permit a better understanding of government policies affecting all or a particular group of them, to pool knowledge on current information plans thus developing a broader view of the context in which they operate"

(b) "A central resource and services organization, to be known as Information Canada, be established in an existing Ministry. This organization would facilitate and co-ordinate the technical and operational aspects of information activities in Canada and abroad; and would be responsible for certain activities that are currently not being carried out, or are receiving inadequate attention within departments. Through its personnel and production, Information Canada should ensure that the two official languages are used as equal instruments of creativity and communication."

(c) "Offices of Information Canada be set up in stages in each of the main regions to strengthen, facilitate and co-ordinate the exchange of public information on federal programs between the regions and Ottawa".

(d) "Canada's information programs abroad be developed by the interested departments in harmony with the policies administered by the Secretary of State