

Interview with Marshall McLuhan

Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian-born scholar and author widely acclaimed for his works on the influence and effects of communications on society, was the original Canadian delegate to the UNESCO International Commission on the Study of Communications Problems.

Although he withdrew because of other commitments before the commission began its first meeting last December and has since been replaced by Betty Zimmerman of the CBC (see *Canada Weekly*, dated July 5, 1978), he did attend a week-long preparatory session in Paris with the other 15 commissioners.

The author of *Understanding Media*, *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, and *War and Peace in the Global Village* says the Third World seems anxious to adopt the discarded nineteenth-century communications technology of the First World.

By doing so, he warns, they are joining the super-charged pace of the electronic age that is overwhelming the rest of the so-called developed world.

"Every decade, our society is changing faster than it used to in a hundred years," he says, and notes the ironic fact that while the West is losing its ability to read and write through the influence of radio and television, the Third World is still struggling to attain literacy for large numbers of its peoples.

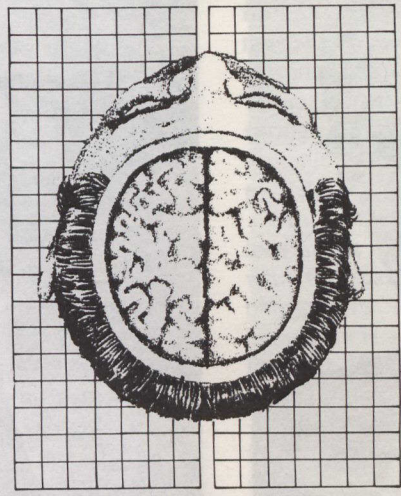
The winner of Canada's Governor-General's award for critical prose who has also been named a Companion of the Order of Canada said that electronic technology — telephone, telegraph, radio and television — has speeded up communications to such a point that an acoustic pattern has developed among those influenced by it.

He explained some of his communications theories in terms of recent scientific discoveries about the hemispheres of the human brain which influence specific human perceptions. He suggests that most Third World oral cultures tend to be dominated by the right side of the brain, which largely controls the auditory functions, while the developed countries have tended to be dominated by the left side, which is visually-oriented.

He refers to a large chart showing the hemispheres of the brain with his now-famous "hot" and "cool" designations for the perceptual functions they control. Professor McLuhan says the disturbing

FUNCTIONS OF THE HUMAN BRAIN

**Hot**  
**Eye**  
**Left Hemisphere**  
**Right Side Body Controls**  
**Visual ■ Speech ■ Verbal**  
Logical, Mathematical  
Linear, Detailed  
Sequential  
Controlled  
Intellectual  
Dominant  
Worldly  
**Quantitative**  
Active  
Analytic  
Reading, Writing, Naming  
Sequential Ordering  
Perception of Significant Order  
Complex Motor Sequences



**Cool**  
**Ear**  
**Right Hemisphere**  
**Left Side Body Controls**  
**Spatial ■ Musical ■ Acoustic**  
Holistic  
Artistic, Symbolic  
Simultaneous  
Emotional  
Intuitive, Creative  
Minor — Quiet  
Spiritual  
**Qualitative**  
Receptive  
Synthetic, Gestalt  
Facial Recognition  
Simultaneous Comprehension  
Perception of Abstract Patterns  
Recognition of Complex Figures

trend towards a communications collision between the developed and developing world has led to alienation; the Third World is losing its group identity while the First World is losing its sense of order.

The originator of the now famous phrase "the medium is the message" says "We must pull the plug and slow down because we don't have long to go at these speeds."

Head of the University of Toronto Communications and Technology Centre, he says we are "mad" to use our elec-

tronic technology for information, and that improved news exchange between South and North is futile. Radio and television have changed our perceptions of reality. "All news is fantasy at the speed of light," he says.

He also asked a rhetorical question about whether brief electronic images conveying news is better than no news at all. He admitted he doesn't have an answer.

(The foregoing item is reprinted from Development Directions, October 1978.)

African visitors to Ottawa

President of the Republic of Mali and Chairman of the "Organisation de mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal" (the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River), Colonel Moussa Traore; President of the Republic of Senegal Léopold Sedar Senghor, and Minister of Planning and Mines of Mauritania and representative of the President of Mauritania, Mohammed El Mocktar Ould Samel, were in Ottawa November 1 and 2.

They discussed with Prime Minister Trudeau international co-operative efforts to rehabilitate the Sahelian region, particularly the integrated development program for the Senegal River basin which is to enter its implementation phase at the end of this year. The Canadian Government is already participating in a number of development assistance operations in the countries of the Sahel region.

PM pledges help for amateur sport

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau promised continued government support for amateur sports as he kicked off the 1979 Canada Winter Games during a ceremony on Parliament Hill recently.

Mr. Trudeau said the Government would not allow its budget restraints to affect its sports program because "sports brings young people together and makes them more aware of each other".

Also introduced at the ceremony was Brandy the Brandon buffalo, which will be the Games' official mascot. Brandon, Manitoba, will be the host city for the 1979 event, which will be held from February 12 to 24. Some 2,700 youngsters are expected to take part in 18 sports.

The Games, which started in Halifax in 1967, are held every second year alternating between winter and summer formats.