

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING IN CANADA

by

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Federal Government Advertising in Canada

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ABSTRACT

The thesis investigates government advertising, its history and its place in democratic society. Government advertising is of interest in Canada for three major reasons. First, government advertising affects the democratic process because it changes the informational basis of democracy. Second, the federal government, Canada's largest advertiser, nearly doubled its advertising expenditures in 1984. Third, the government, by advertising in the mass media and using sophisticated research and polling techniques is able to supplant traditional administrative responses to problems with those which rely on conveying images of government action.

The thesis begins by identifying the universe of issues related to government advertising as various groups perceive them. The views of media personnel, politicians and the views contained in academic literature were examined. Information was also collected on the size, rate and areas of growth in government advertising. Finally, interviews were conducted with representatives of the media, government officials and advertising agencies.

Government advertising presents a series of problems. The absolute size of government advertising and the potential for propagandizing that advertising represents were identified as common concerns. The more salient problem, however, is the shift in democratic values that government advertising represents. The thesis argues that government advertising and democracy can be linked in two different ways. One can conceive of the core of the democratic impulse as being related to personal development, in which case government advertising should be used to inform the citizenry of their political options and educate them where necessary. Alternatively, one can conceive of democratic theory as public choice theory, in which case government advertising becomes a way for the government to sell itself and its programs to voters who exercise their choice within the political marketplace of the electoral process. While there has been no *explicit* choice between these two visions of democracy on the part of the government, the thesis contends that a shift towards the latter view of democracy is evident in the practices of government advertising in the past decade.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The most extensively advertised product in Canada is not toothpaste or cars or pet food, but government. Topping the list of national advertisers is the federal government, with a projected advertising expenditure of \$70 million for the fiscal year 1982-83. The federal government is not alone in its penchant for advertising. In the fiscal year 1979-80, for instance, the government of Ontario spent \$23.8 million on advertising and communications services. When all the provinces and the federal government are considered, the total for government advertising in Canada swells to an estimated \$200 million. (McDowell, 1982:29)

Although advertising is used by federal, provincial and even municipal governments, the thesis has focussed on the federal sphere. Federal government advertising was chosen primarily because its size and rapid growth has made it the source of considerable controversy within Canada. In addition, the Canadian government has a long history as an advertiser; data on expenditures is readily available for the past thirty years. Finally, the federal government seems to exhibit an explicit recognition of the power and problems associated with publicly funded advertising which is not apparent at the provincial level. Several reports, inquiries, Royal Commissions and Task Forces have dealt with the issue and published their findings. Policy statements and administrative programs which are specifically oriented towards publicity and advertising have been issued in the recent past.¹ This reflexivity suggests that current advertising practice is considered government policy. It is hoped that through an examination of that policy, developments in the area of public information and democracy will become clearer.

Other, lesser, concerns include the observation by the opposition and the press that governments (or Ministers or departments) use advertising to "polish their image" prior to an election. The direct impact of government advertising, the extent to which individual citizens are being unduly persuaded through government propaganda, is also raised as an issue although less often. The tendency in these type of articles or speeches (if in the House of Commons) is to identify something dastardly but remark that "Canadians" would never fall for that obvious poppy-cock. It is hoped that through an examination of these policy developments, trends in democracy and public information will become more apparent.

Duncan McDowell, in his description of current levels of expenditure, above, gives us part of the background to the controversy over government advertising. Government advertising incites critical commentary for other reasons. Despite the fact that we live in a so-called "technocratic" society,

¹Chapter 485 of the Treasury Board *Administrative Policy Manual* (the section which governs the administration of government advertising) has undergone 5 revisions since 1981, the most recent in the Spring of 1985.

advertising by the government continues to be allocated to agencies on the basis of patronage. Although this practice is well understood and admitted to by all those involved² it continues to be a source of on-going frustration to the press since they regard patronage, especially in commercial dealings with government, as universally "unfair" (to other firms, presumably) and morally wrong.

The other major source of indignation over government advertising, in Ottawa at least, is the tendency of the government to use advertising to "upstage" Parliament. This may take the form of advertising a program or policy before it has been heard in the House or promoting a particular aspect of government policy which the opposition finds singularly reprehensible. The publicity in support of the Liberal's efforts to patriate the constitution, publicity which was initiated prior to the resolution being approved in the House of Commons, is an example of this practice. Opposition politicians take such initiatives very seriously, and have in the past referred ads or ad campaigns to the Speaker of the House for a ruling on whether or not an ad could be considered "in contempt of Parliament," a fairly serious charge.

Expenditures are or are not controversial depending on one's perspective. In terms of the government's *overall* expenditure, its advertising bill does seem insignificant. Federal advertising expenses are estimated ^{at approx} ^{but} upwards of \$70 million annually, yet this is less than 1/10th of one per cent of a \$70 billion federal budget. The federal government, which accounts for almost 20 per cent of the Gross National Expenditure in Canada comprises only 3 per cent of total advertising expenditures. The \$200 million cited by McDowell means that all of the governments in Canada, which account for more than 45 per cent of GNP, spend less than 20 per cent of the advertising dollars in Canada. So what is the issue, one might ask?

Part of the concern relates to the rapid growth in government advertising. Expenditures have grown at a rate which has outpaced inflation, growth in other 2 areas of government spending, growth in federal information expenditures and general overall growth in the economy. This, at a time when government expenditures on social programs have been frozen and restraint is supposed to be the operative word in publicly supported endeavors.

Adding further to the controversy is the fact that comparisons with the United States are not favourable. In that country, the federal government, although it does spend large sums of money on

²During interviews some members of the public service and the advertising industry attempted to make the case that one should be able to consider such a thing as "beneficial" or appropriate patronage since it would be "unthinkable" for a government to employ a firm to do its advertising if that firm were involved in the effort to unseat it.

advertising (over \$125 million in 1978), is not a major advertiser, ranking only 25th in terms of total national advertising expenditure. A large proportion of US paid advertising is commissioned by the various branches of the military; other departments tend to rely on public service announcements (PSAs). Whether this makes the U.S. a "better" government advertiser is problematic.

Concern about politics, patronage and expenditures is heightened by the perception that there has been a change in the *character* of federal government advertising:

In recent years the situation has changed dramatically. A Canadian television viewer is now just as likely to encounter a government-sponsored advertisement extolling the virtues of "being Canadian" as he is to receive a message describing changes in unemployment insurance benefits. The crucial difference lies in the fact that some government advertisements now address contentious ideas and issues in contrast to established or accepted policies. (McDowell, 1982:29)

The idea that government advertising deals with contentious issues has inspired much heated debate (the infamous "Canada geese" ads being the archetypical example) among parliamentarians and newspeople alike.³ Although this is not the primary concern with the media, this, I believe is the nut of the issue. Does the government, when it seeks to persuade its citizens of the importance or correctness of a particular issue or stand on an issue, violate certain principles of parliamentary democracy? Democratic theory would seem to suggest that citizens must be free to make their own decisions about these issues, without government interference. But democracy is not a stable, rule-bound mode of governance. Many states, from the East Germans to the USA claim to be "democratic" and a government has plenty of rationales to defend its use of advertising.

Advertising, it is claimed, is the most cost-effective way to reach all Canadians. Advertising is essential to ensure that the government fulfills its mandate to inform the public - one of their "rights". The government also advertises because of perceived deficiencies in alternative modes of communicating, especially in today's complex society: "government is too complex nowadays to rely on policy by press

³ In the summer of 1980, in support of their imminent Constitutional initiatives, the Liberal government launched a so-called "soft" media campaign aimed at fostering good feelings among Canadians about their country. (One of these ads featured silhouettes of Canada geese sweeping across golden skies.) The unspoken agenda was to impress upon the provinces that the federal government was serious about continuing its fight for constitutional reform. See Kirby Memo, 1980: 56-58. As Bob Rae put it, "I'll never be able to look at Canada geese or a beaver in the same way again. I'll see them as Liberals in disguise." Bob Rae, former NDP member of Parliament, now leader of the Ontario NDP, in "Ad critics have a go at Ottawa," by Frances Phillips, *The Financial Post*, May 15, 1982.

release."⁴ In Canada, however, the largest inspiration for government advertising is self-interest:

Never has the government of Canada been more serious about its duty to communicate with the public. Never has it been more determined to communicate better, to listen attentively to the public, *and to make visible the work and worth of national government.* (Regan, 1981:p.3, my emphasis)

Gerald Regan's statement is tied to the Liberal government's 1984 pledge to raise the visibility of federal policies and programs. Increased visibility, they claimed, would make the government "answerable" to its citizens; an irreproachably "democratic" proposal. In practical terms the federal goal is to counter the deleterious effects (in terms of publicity, at least) of a system of transfer payments whereby the federal government puts up the money for programs administered by the provinces (who then receive the political credit). Heightened visibility, not surprisingly, is seen by the opposition as an excuse to dupe the public into re-electing the government.

When the Liberal government began an advertising program for their "National Energy Program" in the summer of 1981 it included elaborate schemes which were designed to "wrest 'energy' from the minds of the public as a source of concern." Before these plans could be fully implemented, however, the marketing strategy was revealed in a leaked copy of the memorandum outlining the Liberal's plans. The infamous "Hanright memo", as it came to be known, provided the Conservatives with the political ammunition they needed to bring the issue of government advertising before the public. Here, they pointed out, is clear evidence of the government trying to mislead Canadians; propaganda of the classic sort. The Liberals, of course, saw nothing of the kind. The plans laid out in the Hanright memorandum were, in the words of Mr Hanright, "merely designed to bring the truth to Canadians."

The contrast between opposition claims of "propaganda" and government resolution to inform the public provides a striking illustration of the issues which inspire this thesis. What is really happening when the government advertises? What is also apparent in any review of the debate surrounding government advertising is the extent to which the superficial and controversial aspects are the ones which get the most attention. It is the contention of this thesis that much of this concern misses the mark in the sense that it is overly critical of the the superficial aspects of government advertising, including the supposed "effects" that it may be having, and too little concerned with the underlying process that is reflected in these ads. There is little possibility that Canadians will be overwhelmed by the propaganda efforts of the federal government. If the character of government advertising has really changed, however, this may be

⁴J.-J. Blais, Address to the Association of Canadian Advertisers, Toronto, May 25, 1981, p.9

reflective of deeper changes going on in the way this country is governed. For several reasons, advertising offers a unique window onto the process of government.

Beyond the controversy, there are practical reasons for looking at advertising. Some scholars have suggested that advertising is a useful avenue to explore if one is looking at social change. In a review of the upheavals which wrought Quebec in the 1960s, Frederick Elkin turned to advertising as a source of insight. He argued that advertising was uniquely placed to reflect the impact of the social and economic changes that occurred during the Quiet Revolution. Government advertising is interesting because it is not only communication from the state to the people but it is also communication *about* the state to the people. Analyses which look for the "effects" of government propaganda or the implications of certain sets of advertisements will have difficulty accounting for "extraneous" variables; the unknowns and unknowables. If we turn the problem on its head, however, and see advertising as a symptom of the set of values which govern the government, a study of advertising takes on new possibilities.

There are some very good reasons to suppose that advertising is a phenomenon which will reflect "what is going on in Ottawa". The very fact that advertising by the government has continued to grow and spread in the face of widespread press and parliamentary opposition, is indicative of the high esteem in which it is held in Ottawa. This dedication is not merely the result of minor bureaucrats carrying out program objectives, either. The devotion to the use of advertising extends into the most senior levels including Ministers and the Cabinet. Departmental decisions on advertising are reviewed by the Ministers and by a special Cabinet Committee on Communications (CCC). A study of advertising also gives us the opportunity to see the widespread influence of the modern carpetbagger, the advertising professional, on politics and on democracy.

In order for an investigation of government practices to rise above the level of gossip, it should be possible to generalize its observations. In this instance, advertising is particularly well suited to discussions of democracy and democratic politics because of the strong ties such forms of governance have to information. It is proposed that, given the changes observed in the amount and character of federal government advertising, there may be changes afoot in the nature of participation and the informational basis of democracy. Advertising is the public face of the state. If citizens are to have any input into changes in the informational relationship between them and the state they must be aware that change is underway. The study of government advertising offers us the opportunity to achieve this awareness.

CHAPTER 2

ADVERTISING AND THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Advertising is broadly defined as paid promotion in some sort of mass media. Radio, television, billboards and newspapers are the typical carriers of promotional messages although skywriting, balloons and T-shirts, to name just a few, can also carry advertising. As most textbooks on the subject are quick to point out, advertising is almost as old as the mass media themselves.

Sut Jhally, in his recent work on advertising and the role of commodity fetishism in the consumption of goods (1984), noted that there are few modern institutions which can rival advertising in terms of the number and diversity of attacks directed towards it. Defences of advertising are also numerous and, as we shall see, use many of the same concepts as the critics. The criticism and defence of advertising can put in perspective by a brief history of the phenomenon of advertising. There is broad agreement that advertising, as we know it, is linked to changes in the world economy associated with industrialization.

The rise of the advertising and public relations industries in the twentieth-century capitalist economy has been one of its more noteworthy structural changes. The saturation of existing markets, the shift of emphasis from production to consumption, the concentration of ownership in huge monopolistic corporations, and the intensive development of the mass media, have all contributed to an increasingly important role for what has been termed 'marginal product differentiation' – a type of economic activity which contributes neither to higher product quality nor to lower prices (which perhaps is more likely to contribute to higher prices and lower product quality) but which serves to allocate an increasing proportion of resources to non-productive use: at best, the creation of a cultural milieu of images, sounds, and phrases appropriate to a corporate capitalist civilization. (Whitaker, 1980:216)

Even those within the advertising industry agree that advertising was instrumental in alleviating the initial problems in distribution and consumption that mass production caused. However, the use of advertising as a tool to sell excess consumption has declined in recent years, they would argue, and evolved into what is called "the marketing concept." This is defined in Jhally (1984:4): "The marketing concept starts with the firm's target customers and their needs and wants; it plans a co-ordinated set of products and programs to serve their needs and wants; and it derives profits through creating customer satisfaction."

2.1 The Critics

Jhally has pointed out that "The most trenchant attacks on advertising have come from those who can be labelled the 'liberals' and the 'Marxists'." (1984:6) Liberals attack advertising on two fronts (Jhally is speaking here of what he calls "neo-liberals" like J.K. Galbraith and "liberals" like Colston Warne): the "real" liberals are upset with advertising for interfering in the "efficient allocation of resources" while the "neo" liberals worry that advertising allows the producers to determine demand (what Galbraith calls "the squirrel wheel"). The Marxists, for their part, (Jhally cites Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy, Stuart Ewen and Ernest Mandel) see advertising as a systemic, indeed necessary, "response to the needs of monopoly capital in the realisation of surplus value." (Jhally, 1984:13-14) Jhally also notes that the character of modern advertising is suspect.

As well as the attack on the content of advertising, there has also been much criticism of the mode of presentation of this 'information' which favours persuasion rather than rational decision. In their study of the rhetoric of advertising, Andren *et. al.*¹ distinguish between non-rational and rational influences, or respectively, between persuasion and argumentation. The latter is said to operate in the public or consumer interest whereas the former does not. They compare the rhetoric of advertising (the form of presentation) to a set of criteria which they claim would have to be present if the communication were to be seen as a form of rational guidance to the consumer. They conclude, not surprisingly, that advertising does not contain sufficient information to be the basis of rational choice among products, and that "advertising does not serve the consumer or the public interest." (Jhally, 1984:28)

2.2 The Defence

The critique of advertising, Marxist and liberal, focusses on the role of the "consumer". Advertising is thought to encourage 'false needs' and, the Marxists would argue, false ways of satisfying those needs. Defenders of advertising, although they disagree with that argument, also place their attention on the consumer:

"advertising is presented as an important source of consumer information. Consumption of goods takes time, because of the need to 'search' for a product. Advertising provides a service for which consumers are willing to pay, since it reduces their search costs. (Jhally, 1984:48)

Where the critics of advertising see confusion, the defenders see *rational* consumers making informed choices based on available information. An important part of the defence of advertising is the claim that ads do not, in the long-run have any measureable impact on overall consumption patterns. This is an important argument for those who would like to see less control on advertising and certainly, based on the

¹ (1978:116)

empirical evidence, quite persuasive. Albion and Ferris (1981), cited in Jhally (1984:42) point out that

Our coverage of the research has shown that Borden's discussion of the effects of advertising on the demand for an industry's product and the demand for aggregate consumption of goods and services is still relevant forty years later. Advertising may be of help in increasing the demand for a particular product, and it may have helped to create attitudes and desires compatible with increased consumption at the expense of savings, but only within a social and economic environment conducive to that increase. We believe strongly that advertising, as an efficient form of mass communication, can *accelerate* the growth of new markets and new entries into markets. We doubt that advertising significantly determines the ultimate size of a market...Other factors appear to be much more important in increasing demand. The effectiveness of advertising is severely limited, relegated mostly to new products and new services. (1981:179)

2.3 Advertising and Public Information

The parallels in these arguments about advertising in a market society to the discussion of citizens' rights in democratic society are illuminating. In both cases we have a central focus on the **actor** and disagreement about the ability of this actor to make judgments based on available information. The actor in economic arguments about advertising is the consumer. If we expand our focus on advertising to include political goods the consumer becomes the voter. Other similarities exist as well. There are functional equivalents in the areas of **objectives** (participation/consumption), and the **means** of achieving these objectives (voting/buying). The objectives of advertising, from the perspective of those within the industry, is to promote the consumption of goods. From a political perspective this would take the form of political participation. Consumption goals are achieved by the purchase of goods; participatory goals might take the form of political activism or, at minimum, voting.

Parallels are also to be found in the critical analysis and the defence of advertising from an economic or political perspective. The critics of advertising see it promoting the satisfaction of false needs. From an economic perspective this takes the form of buying commodities to satisfy urges encouraged and fostered by the advertising community. The political equivalent has been described by Paletz, Pearson and Willis as "pseudo-participation"; i.e. participation in the political process in a form which satisfies a need **as defined by the system**. The authors point to the deterioration of democratic participation into merely participating in periodic elections where there are no real alternatives offered. Similarly, the defenders of advertising point to its usefulness to rational consumers. From an economic perspective the implication is that in the search to satisfy wants, advertising enters the picture when people are evaluating alternatives for their satisfaction. Political advertising expresses similar sentiments, arguing that the information contained

therein provides citizens with useful information which can be used to make informed choices, and does not enter the decision-making process before that time to determine the alternatives or set the agenda or suggest hopes, desires and ambitions for the populace. It seems that advertising, to the extent that it is used to promote the purchase of certain goods, can be used to promote the purchase of "political" as well as commercial goods.

Public involvement, though it may be on the minds of the formulators of policy, is more of an "all-round" justification than an actual goal, although some government advertising does encourage the citizen to "write for more information", or "call in", or "attend a hearing in your area". By and large, however, advertising done by the federal government is designed to change behaviour rather than encourage a discussion of the issues. Even by the very limited measure of voting there is no evidence that more people vote because of publicity which promotes the pastime than would otherwise do so.

Despite the apparent problems with advertising² it continues to grow.

In the commercial context the rationale for the reliance on advertising is well known. In his study of the subject, Sut Jhally asks why advertisers spend so much on advertising when they don't know if it effective or not. "There are," he finds, "two answers."

First, producers advertise so much not because they know that it will work, but because they are not sure that it will not work. As Schudson puts it: "Because advertising does not work always or even often and certainly is not predictable regarding when it will work, firms continue to invest in it. It is a hedge against uncertainty." (Schudson, 1980:20) Secondly, while advertising may not affect the aggregate demand for a product type, it influences substantially the market share that each company can command at any given time. Advertising is here geared towards brand loyalty and drawing consumers away from competitors. If this is correct, then it seems that at a general level and irrespective of specific advertising content, advertising could be viewed as a device that consumers use to evaluate alternatives in the marketplace prior to consumption. Advertising is here viewed as a form of 'information'.(1984:45)

What is less clear, are the reasons for and the extent to which advertising has become a part of Canadian public policy.

Governments have long been aware of the potential for reaching a wide audience that advertising provides. Even before confederation the Colonial governments in British (and French) North America vigorously promoted the possibilities awaiting immigrants to this country. In Canada the federal

² I would cite the questionable effectiveness of ads to increase overall demand and the suspicion that ads are not suitable for increasing participation but rather merely allow one to make choices from a known universe of alternatives.

government has continued this practice to the extent that advertising is now categorized and elaborated in the government administrative policy manual. Advertising, the policy states,

refers to all activities including advertising research as defined herein, involved in the purchase, by or on behalf of the government, of space or time in print or broadcast media or in other mass media such as outdoor and transit advertising. (Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS), 1985:7)

The federal government distinguishes this type of advertising from "paid announcements", a category of promotional activity which refers to "those public notices that are usually placed *directly* with the media by departments; for example, notices regarding tenders, sales, job offers, public hearings, business hours, addresses and telephone numbers." (TBS,1985:8).

Advertising is practiced by almost all departments of government, crown corporations and agencies to varying degrees. Some, like Health and Welfare Canada (HWC) and Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) have large budgets which reflect the large numbers of programs administered by these departments. Other, smaller, organizations within the government spend little, if any, money on promotion. Not only are the budgets diverse, but so are the motivations for spending them. Some departments, HWC for example, use advertising to influence behaviour towards socially accepted goals: "Take Action on Overdrinking." Other departments use advertising for self-promotion: the National Capital Commission ran a series of ads announcing that 1984 was their 25th anniversary. There are government ads designed to achieve commercial goals (egg marketing, for one) and informational objectives (Spot Fishing Closures in Salmon Breeding Areas).

Although much of the controversy about government advertising focusses on either expenditures and their growth in the face of other government restraint or patronage, the thesis will argue that the underlying unease with government publicity, as well as the source of its defence, comes from notions of democracy and the role of information in society. It is important to recognize both the theoretical and the historical ties that advertising has to information services in Canada.

2.4 Government Information Services

Governments collect and disseminate vast amounts of information. Just one of the federal government of Canada's information arms, the Canadian Unity Information Office (CUIO, recently disbanded), had an enormous scope:

The Canadian Unity Information Office is the coordinating body for all government publicity campaigns. ...We have 57 different publications that are put forth by the Canadian Unity Information Office. More than 6.6 million copies have been distributed throughout Canada. The CUIO has held exhibitions right across the country in the smaller communities where people might not have the access to information that they would in the big cities. Over the past short while the CUIO exhibit has visited 1,289 communities throughout Canada and attracted over 3 million visitors. The exhibits show Canada's north, its resources and explain its different peoples to everyone across the nation. There are as well documentation kits. More than 52,000 of them have been sent to Canada's schools at their request. Special events have been arranged from the west coast to the east coast; including the Canadian Pacific Exhibition [sic], the CNE in Toronto and the Quebec exhibition. Government programs are set forth in booths so that people can see what their government is doing for them, what rights they have as people and what they should expect from their government.

It has been estimated that publishing by governments far exceeds all the publishing done by private publishers. (Fry,1973) But we should not associate public information policy solely with publicity, though. The government affects the flow of information in modern society as much by what is *not* said and by what it allows others to say (hate laws, privacy laws, confidentiality clauses with those who deal with the government, control over public servants). In addition, policies ostensibly directed toward material goals may also have a large symbolic influence. Mark Yudof (1983) points out that

the modes and types of government discourse include time-honoured methods as well as those provided by modern technology: direct access to the broadcast media, mass distribution of documents, speeches and other activities of political leaders reported in the private media, the gathering and disseminating of statistics and research results, advertising, preparation and dissemination of official reports, activities of government public-relations offices, dissemination of official records of government proceedings, press conferences, public schooling, military training, and so on. The list might well include government conduct (e.g. passing energy conservation legislation or making child abuse a criminal offense) that symbolically communicates values. (1983:325)

Government can, in any particular policy or regulatory context orient its information activities around one or more basic strategies. Ray Eldon Heibert has provided a useful typology of these strategies. It is important to bear in mind that government advertising is just one of the three "techniques" in one of the four "strategies", (persuading) that Heibert describes. Government advertising operates within the context of many other initiatives. Also, a given strategy will be accompanied by others which will reinforce (or conflict with) the objectives of that strategy.

Another way of looking at government information is to examine the different "roles" the government can have in terms of providing information. Bill Stanbury, in an adaptation of an American classification system, has provided a useful classification of Federal Government expenditures on information.

Figure 1

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES	COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES
WITHHOLDING	LEGAL EXEMPTIONS FROM FOI POLICY CONSIDERATIONS OFF-THE-RECORD SESSIONS
RELEASING	NEWS MEDIA - PRESS RELEASES - PRESS BRIEFINGS CONTROLLED MEDIA - INTERNAL - EXTERNAL
STAGING	PRESS CONFERENCES SPECIAL EVENTS SPEECHES, ETC
PERSUADING	MASS MEDIA ADVERTISING PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS DIRECT MAIL, ETC

PLANS,
PROGRAMS,
POLICIES,
ETC.

All governments are involved with information services of one type or another; they vary only in the nature and extent of that involvement. Scott Cutlip has provided a useful definition of a *public* information system: "...all those elements and channels of communication through which a citizen learns of the activities of his government and conveys to government his views and needs." (1976:24) Although this thesis will focus only on the bureaucratic or governmental aspects of this system it should be remembered that the public information system also includes political parties, pressure groups and the mass media. /

This paradoxical issue has both legal and moral aspects. / There are statutory requirements for the publishing of financial and regulatory matters which obligates the government to publicize itself. Much of this is taken for granted and is non-controversial; examples are the Canada *Gazette*, *Hansards*, and tendering and regulatory decisions. The federal government of Canada and some of the provinces have also enacted Access to Information laws establishing, with some exceptions, the informational equivalent of *habeas corpus*. Traditionally Canadians have been accustomed to a secretive bureaucracy and executive. The moral traditions which allow Cabinet secrecy remain strong in government circles.³ In this respect we follow British precedents, not those of our American neighbours.

Most federal departments maintain publicity arms but, as the Glassco Commission (1963) pointed out, these were fragmentary and uncoordinated. In 1969 a Task Force on government information urged

³ See Rowat (1981) for a more in-depth look at secrecy in Canada.

Figure 2

CLASSIFICATION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES
ON INFORMATION

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
1. Expenditures on the dissemination of information for government as employer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * PSC recruiting * DND recruiting * RCMP recruiting
2. Expenditures on information to promote private sector business activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * ads to promote tourism in Canada * promotion of exports * management services performed by FBDB
3. Expenditures on information compiled, processed and disseminated by the government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Statistics Canada * Economic Council of Canada * Atmospheric Environment Program (i.e., weather, research, forecasting) * Fisheries, agriculture research * NRC internal research
4. Expenditures by business oriented Crown corporations on information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * advertising expenditures by Air Canada, Petro Canada, etc.
5. Expenditures in the form of grants to organizations or individuals in the private sector to finance the production, compilation, processing and dissemination of information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Medical Research Council * SSHRC/NSERC * NRC grants to external researchers
6. Expenditures for the production and dissemination of information on the activities and processes of government itself: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. information on the functioning of government institutions. b. information on specific programs and services. c. intentionally persuasive communications. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * production and dissemination of <i>Hansard</i>(a) * departmental publications and advertising describing specific programs and services. (b) * CUIO-type campaigns on referendum, or energy (c) * "Lifestyle" ads by HWC re: drinking, smoking and eating (c)
7. Expenditures on government cultural institutions which both inform and entertain.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * CBC * National Gallery * NFB, National Museums * Canada Council (mainly grants to private sector organizations and individuals.)

the federal government to get more involved with publicity, saying "a citizen needs information to elect those who are to govern him, to participate fully in the life of the community, to defend his interests...to understand the significance of public events." (1969,II:6)

The ill-fated Information Canada⁴ attempted to respond to those needs but it was not until 1981 that the government set out a firm "Communication Policy". In this the government stated "Canadians have a right to...information...about their government..." (PCO,1981:1)⁵ As Canada enters the 21st century there are strong pressures on the provision side of information policy.

The other side of the coin, the obligation to leave citizens alone to some extent is much less clear. In terms of legal constraints, Canada's statutory references (other than secrecy provisions) to restraining information refer mostly to elections and voting. The province of Saskatchewan prohibits advertising by government departments in the period prior to an election unless there is an emergency or other compelling need.⁶ In Quebec a bill that would have restricted the use of polling and advertising by the provincial government received first reading in 1981.⁷ Federally, there exists only the requirement that "government publications" shall not promote or oppose a particular registered party or candidate - Section 13.7(1)(c) Canada Elections Act.

Neither federal or provincial departments, crown corporations or agencies are controlled by the "truth in advertising" sections of the Misleading Practices Act administered by Consumer and Corporate Affairs. This is because of the "crown shall do no wrong" assumption of the Canadian legal system. Also, the Act applies only to commercial activities which excludes many of the informational programs of government departments.⁸

In Ontario the Commission on Election Contributions and Expenses defeated a vote to ask the government to "give the Commission the power to review advertising that may be partisan."

⁴ See Beverly Edwards' "The Rise and Demise of Information Canada" in Rowat (1981).

⁵ This is just one of five major points approved by Cabinet in July, 1981 Interestingly, the policy notes that "Effective communications between citizens and government imply a reasonable effort on the part of the citizens to seek the information they require..." (PCO,1981:1)

⁶ Section 229(1) of the Election Act of Saskatchewan requires that during an election no department, board, commission, Crown corporation, or other agency can publish in any manner any information or particulars of its activities "except in the case of an emergency where the public interest requires the publication of any such information or particulars."

⁷ Bill 191 (1981) was introduced by Liberal member for Westmount, Richard French.

⁸ Apparently there is a move within the government to include crown corporations such as Air Canada in the ambit of the Act when it is next revised (supposedly sometime this year). Telephone interview with Marcie Girouard, CCC, Ottawa, July 24, 1985.

(Boyer,1982:38) As Mr Boyer observed, "If the Commission itself chooses not to seek this power, it is even less likely that the Government on its own initiative will have the act ammended to give the necessary statutory authority." (Boyer,1982:38)

Beyond these "election-time" controls there are no legal restraints on government spending on publicity or advertising. Part of this is due to the tradition of supremacy of parliament; governments are not given to controlling the powers of subsequent parliaments. The Americans, for example, have laws on the books, passed by a congress from the turn of the century, which requires that money to be spent on publicity must be specifically requested for that purpose.⁹ This may, in part, explain the extensive use by government departments in the U.S. of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) messages carried free of charge by media outlets.

This is not to suggest that Canadian Public servants are free to carry on extravagent information campaigns, unlike their American brethren. More likely the lack of control on publicity up to now – beyond the structure of parliamentary practices – is due to a lack of something to control. The public service has traditionally maintained a fairly low profile in Canada. Although the profile has changed a great deal in recent years, the structures of control have not.

With the exception of the Wartime information Board and other information programs during the Second World War, there is good reason to think that prior to the 1960s, controls or limitations were hardly necessary since there would be very little to control. This will become apparent in our review of the history of Canadian federal publicity programs. For now it can be noted that, at least until the 1970s, government information programs rarely¹⁰ achieved sufficient notoriety to warrant statutory control. To the extent that they have aroused concern recently (in the House of Commons and in the media) this has had the effect of making some people believe that government publicity, of some types, is unwarranted or

⁹ In the after-math of a minor *cause celebre* in 1913 the so-called "Gillette Amendment" restricted the U.S. government's use of "publicity experts". This was in response to an ad which announced examinations for a "publicity expert, for men only" in the Department of Agriculture's Office of Public Roads. It remains in force today as Section 3107, Title 5 of the United States Code. For a short history of U.S. Government communication see Herrold in Heibert, (1981):14-21.

¹⁰I did find one newspaper article in the 1960s critical of government spending on advertising; during Expo67.

excessive.¹¹ No moves have been made yet to implement any sort of 'checks and balances' into the field of government publicity.

2.5 Public Information Policy

One of the fundamental difficulties faced by a democratic society, as Downs notes, is the role of the informed citizen and the responsibility that a democratic government has towards them. In the opinion of the Trilateral Commission there are problems inherent in democracy that are sufficiently serious to have provoked a "crisis" in democracy. The Trilateral Commission is concerned that although "consensus-building is at the heart of democratic politics" (1975:161), "there is clearly a paradox inherent in this view since the desire to ensure that governments are able to govern is usually equally matched by the desire to bring government more directly under the control of the citizens." (1975:xxiii) More importantly, there is a further paradox in that

the linkage between private interests and public interests rests on developing individual responsibility for social and political action, that is, there is an almost inherent and timeless conflict in the objective of developing an individual's social and political sense of responsibility in a liberal democratic society, because these are precisely the conditions that make it potentially difficult to gain cohesion or consensus at the community or "public" level. (1975:4)

There is both a premise within the theory of democracy and a need in practice for decision-making citizens to be informed. Yet there are enormous difficulties in "informing" the public. On one hand there is a duty to inform but on the other is an obligation to allow citizens to make up their own minds. In Mark Yudof's review of government information policy in the United States he came across a paradox similar to that cited by the Trilateral Commission:

government expression remains a paradox in both democratic theory and practice. It calls into question the conflicting values of government leadership of the people and government responsiveness to the people. Put somewhat differently, government has an affirmative obligation to promote individual choice and autonomy by expanding the individual's knowledge, and yet, in a negative sense, it should be constrained from programming the citizen to make preconceived choices. (1983:15)

In this thesis it will be argued that, although our capitalist society practices only one type of democracy, another type did exist, at least in the minds of theorists. This second type saw participation not

¹¹ A study by Goldfarb Consultants (1982), to be discussed in more detail later, points out that Canadians "are supportive of government advertising of a factual, informative nature, but they challenge advertising that they perceive as manipulative or as image-building for the government."(p.5)

as the management of human interests but rather the elevation of human qualities. An examination of advertising gives us further indication of the role of citizen participation in this country. Information is important in a democracy, because citizen participation must be "informed" participation. If certain conditions of the modern age require that governments do much of that informing themselves, it is hoped that they will avoid excesses in this area. The problems of such excess and the channels through which government publicity flows are the subject of the next section.

2.6 A History of Government Information

Promotional activities in Canada date back to 1851, when the colonies of British North America sent a number of exhibits to the World's Fair in London. Despite this early start, government information services remained small throughout most of Canada's history.

Early efforts at the distribution of information were centred around informing the public and Canadian industry of new and more efficient ways of exploiting our natural resources. The Department of Agriculture, for example, produced pamphlets on improved farming methods as early as 1887, although it did not formally establish a publications branch until 1910. The Department of Mines included an Editorial and Information division when it was formed in 1907 and the Department of Health and Welfare established a publicity and statistics division soon after it was formed in 1920.

Despite the trend to more and more information services provided by a greater number of departments, government information services remained quite small by today's standards until the late 1960s. It has only been since the Second World War¹² that government information services have become a significant factor in the whole public information system.¹³ In fact, aside from the Wartime Information Board of the 1940s, no effort was ever made to coordinate these various efforts. By and large their growth was piece-meal and haphazard:

Authority for the establishment of public relations information directorates or divisions reflects no common policy throughout government departments or agencies. Of the 13 services studied intensively, five were created under provisions in the Acts establishing their departments. Two, one of which is among the largest services in the government, could cite

¹²As with many bureaucratic apparatuses, the war was a catalyst for major changes in information services.

¹³ A useful source for historical information is the report of the Task Force on Government Information (1969), v.2 ch VII, "Notes on the Historical development of Federal Information Services," pp.123-139.

no authority. The balance cited a variety...ranging from deputy ministerial directive to departmental manual.... (Task Force,1969:I-13)

Although many of the information directorates appear to have "just grown" like Topsy, there have been a few significant events that aided and encouraged their growth. One such event was Sir Wilfred Laurier's decision, in 1907, to establish the Canadian Exhibition Commission to ensure a Canadian presence at the then-popular "World's Fairs". And, as Reg Whitaker notes,

The First World War gave a major impetus to the development of advertising and particularly to the involvement of advertising agencies in the preparation of government propaganda appeals to citizens on such issues as voluntary enlistment and the sale of government bonds. The many businessmen who took up leading positions in the government war effort naturally turned to the publicity methods with which they were already familiar, and to the agencies with which they were familiar. (1980:221)

After the war two factors initially influenced the information services of government. The first was the post-war economic boom which solidified the industrial economy in Canada and established many of the marketing techniques of commercial advertising. These techniques were to gradually find their way into the public sector. The other factor which emerged at this time could be described as the "executive influence." Beginning at the turn of the century, a pattern began to emerge which was described by the federal government Task Force on Information in this way: "important developments in Canada's government information efforts were the result not of departmental initiative but of prime ministerial concern." (Task Force,1969:II,128) Examples of these include the Dominion Bureau of Statistics¹⁴ and the the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (set up by R.B. Bennett in 1932). In 1939 MacKenzie King belatedly recognized the importance of film with the creation of the National Film Board. King was also responsible for a publication which, although it would be a common-place now, was considered quite advanced for its times: the *Labour Gazette*, founded in 1900. Whitaker has suggested that King was actually quite sensitive to publicity issues: "... Mackenzie King himself had long been a strong believer in the management of public opinion as a leading factor in the management of public affairs. His actions as a labour expert, in the employ of the Canadian government and of the Rockefeller empire, had revolved rather more importantly around the manipulation of public opinion than around the solution of the substantive issues of labour disputes." (1980:222) Whatever Mr King's motivations, the practice of executive leadership in publicity matters, as well as the continued example of the commercial advertising

¹⁴ Set up in 1918 by Robert Borden, this department was one of the pioneers; a department of the crown wholly devoted to the collection and dissemination of information.

business, are influences which are felt to this very day.¹⁵

As the writers of the 1969 Task Force report note, information services were not a priority in the thirties. Notable exceptions to the rule were those promotional activities directed at foreign markets and designed to increase consumption of Canadian goods. The domestic scene afforded far less flamboyance:

As a rule in the years between the wars, there was a striking absence of overall policy in government information activity, and this was particularly true and damaging at the departmental level...What preoccupied government was not so much democracy as bureaucracy, and an atmosphere of near-secrecy still surrounded a great many government activities. (Task Force,1969:II;132)

After the depression, it was war which again sent government propoganda winging its way into the hearts and minds of Canadians.

The Second World War gave an even greater impetus to the advertising industry than its predecessor. ...The federal government was leading the way in the use of advertising, particularly through its gigantic Victory Bond campaigns, the greatest promotion campaigns ever to take place in Canada up until that time. Throughout the war the federal government spent at least \$30,444,537 on advertising, of which more than two-thirds went through ad agencies. In fact, by war's end, the federal government headed the list of the largest advertisers in the land. (Whitaker,1980:222)

The years following the Second World War were, as the Task Force put it, "boom times in government information."(II;135) Although the three major information services associated with the war effort (the Wartime Information Board, the Canadian Information Service and the CRBC International Service) were soon disbanded when hostilities ceased, several other departments set up information divisions for the first time. Among those who took the war-time initiative as a sign to go ahead were the Department of Public Works (1954), the RCMP (1952), The National Capital Planning Commission, now the NCC (1950) and the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (1948) which, although it dealt in nothing but "information" had no information division as such up to this time. These offices were largely "press oriented":

So far as television is concerned, the departments as a whole appear to have treated it in the fifties and sixties with much the same sort of cautious experimentation that they brought to the use of radio in the thirties and forties. (II;136)

¹⁵ For example, prime ministerial initiatives have also been important factors in more recent changes in the provision of government information. The Task Force on Government Information (1969) was a Trudeau idea and the resulting Information Canada was intended to realize his ideas of a government which would reach all Canadians. Similarly, the CUIO and the 1981 Communications Policy have been, if not Prime Ministerial directives, associated with the inner cabinet and the central policy-making departments such as Treasury Board, PMO, PCO and the FPRO.

The authors of the Task Force on Government Information concluded their historical review with the observation that

The lesson in the history of the government information services is that expediency has generally determined their growth, and the growth has been uneven. Co-ordinated effort has occurred only in periods of domestic stress or international instability. The Federal Government has come to recognize the functions of government information only very slowly. (II;138)

Although they were slowly growing throughout the late 1940s and fifties, government information services did not receive much critical attention until the 1960s. This was soon to change. Beginning with the Royal Commission on Government Organization (Glassco,1962), that part of the public information system which was supplied by the government was subjected to several investigations and policy proposals.

The Glassco Commission saw the problems of government information services as "...a general blur of diffuse activity, with growing clusters of organization; central planning, direction and co-ordination are lacking." (Cited in Task Force,1969:II-136) The Commissioners' recommendations were largely of a "housekeeping" nature, however, and resulted in no major changes. They did make one major recommendation with regard to advertising. After noting that "by long established practice, advertising agencies are selected at the ministerial level," they concluded: "We therefore recommend that: Advertising accounts be awarded on the basis of competitive proposals in the manner of other government contracts." (1963:III-95) As a general comment, the commissioners argued that there is no place in government for excessive publicity:

What is offered for publication should meet the test of being necessary in the execution of programmes of a department. The public is entitled to expect that public duties are competently performed, and the taxpayers' money should not be spent to impress people with the quality of performance. Thus the objective of being "well and favourably known", so legitimate in competitive business, forms no part of public information policies of departments. (1963:III,71-71)

This reticent attitude, perhaps appropriate for the early 1960s, was soon to be challenged by the "hip" politicians of the late 1960s. In the years following the Glassco Inquiry, public information services remained a concern of the federal government. In the mid-1960s the Pearson government commissioned the Quebec journalist Jean David to do a study of the overall picture. The study was never completed however, because M David was killed in a traffic accident before the report was completed.

Soon after Pierre Trudeau's election in 1968 he reaffirmed his government's commitment to improve information services. On August 30, 1968 it was announced that a Task Force on Government

Information had been appointed, to report back to Parliament in six months.

The Task Force on Government Information, in its two volume report "To Know and Be Known" (TBABK) was much more emphatic than Glassco in its call for an improved system of public information. Its seventeen major recommendations resulted in the creation of a new department of government, Information Canada, and considerable rationalization in the regular information directorates of the various departments. Although "Info-Can" soon came under intense fire and was later disbanded, for a brief period Canadians had a central office of information similar to that of Great Britain and France.

Specifically, the report called for policy statements by both government and the departments:

We recommend that:...

2. A committee of Ministers be charged with the task of developing effective information policies and facilitating a more coherent and economical approach by the executive to the federal information function.

7. Departments and agencies develop and implement information policies consistent with departmental and agency objectives, and with the information policies of the Federal Government to reflect the enhanced role of the information function.... (I;61)

In addition, the Task Force suggested that

Advertising is one of the least expensive and most effective means of mass communication. It should be a basic pillar in a government information structure. The government should use advertising when it is the best way to get specific information to a specific audience at a specific time. Advertising is not always a solution to every information problem, but, on the other hand, neither is it as ineffective as some government officials seem to think; and what the Task Force urges is that the government give advertising more serious consideration than ever before. (II;323)

The Task Force also made observations with regard to the personnel and management of government information services. One of the findings of the Task Force was the low level of advertising experience among information personnel in the government: of 346 employees in 1969 "only 25 claim any significant experience in audio-visual methods and advertising." Moreover, they concluded, this did not appear to be an area which would attract top calibre people. (II;161) Nor was there a concerted effort to promote from within.

In many government departments and agencies the information division, if it exists, is one of the smaller sections. ...It has been found that, until recently, Information Services Officers have not been regarded by management as candidates for courses in management training, either within departments or as offered by the Public Service Commission. This attitude unquestionably reflects the lack of emphasis placed on management ability as a requirement for a successful career in information services. In most departments and agencies, information services and information officers are held in slight esteem and they lack professional status. (II;162)

As a result, although information activities grew in the period following the war, they tended to focus on

"traditional" areas of specialization – the printed word – and failed to exploit the newer technologies and practices of advertising and public relations; something senior management in government would have been at a loss to evaluate in any case.

It can be argued that 1970, with the creation of Information Canada, was sort of a "watershed" year for government information services. The impact of the Task Force's general recommendations was immediate; Parliament approved the creation of a new department of government, Information Canada, in the spring of that year. And although it could not be said that the technical device recommended by the Task Force – advertising – received the same immediate acceptance, the groundwork had been laid, in TBABK, for a massive growth in government advertising.

The theoretical rationales for increased emphasis on information, elaborated by the Task Force on Government Information, were influential throughout the remainder of the decade, despite Information Canada's demise in 1976.

The pattern established after the first world war, of government information services influenced by both commercial practices and executive initiatives was repeated in the 1980s. Information and service to the public was a priority issue during this time and several inquiries into government information, productivity and organization were launched.

Even as the Senate Special Committee on National Finance began hearings on the mismanagement of Information Canada, work was underway on yet another examination of government information policy; the so-called Wall Report.

The Wall Report, commissioned by the Privy Council Office, and completed in 1974 by D.F. Wall, marked a turning point in government policy with regard to information. This change, related to the growth of the PCO in the early 1970s, is another example of the executive influence on information policy.¹⁶

¹⁶ The PCO under Pierre Trudeau began to centralize more and more of the policy creation of the government under its own mandate. It was during this period in the early seventies that the executive (Cabinet) began to formalize the control it held over departments, agencies and parliament itself. As part of this move the PCO, staffed by so-called "exempt" staff – public servants allowed to engage in political activity – took over more and more direction of government policy. No longer were line departments encouraged to initiate policy directions or proposals. In fact, according to some observers the senior management of departments were often "kept in the dark" about the direction of government.

One result of the growing importance of central agencies in the policy process is that information proposals since 1974 have all come from PCO or Treasury Board. They are the creation and reflect the outlook of the "exempt" staff of those organizations. The significance of the Wall Report lies mainly in its shift to a more pragmatic outlook on government information. Where the TKABK report is ambitious and optimistic, this report is frank and realistic. It is frank about the political problems information services can encounter. Coming, as it did, in the final controversy-ridden years of Information Canada's mandate this pragmatic approach is hardly surprising. Also, in the Wall Report there is the proposal, later to become strict government internal policy, that any program plans which go before Cabinet include a "communications plan" as part of the proposal.

Two other developments of the 1970s which had a profound impact on the advertising of the federal government, began, not as a government initiative but as a commercial trends. This is another example of commercial advertising practices influencing the government's. The first trend was really a commonplace, almost since the beginning of advertising, in the commercial sector. It was standard practice for companies to use so-called "image" advertising – advertising which didn't attempt to sell a particular product but rather "sold" the company as a whole.

In the sixties, however, a certain fashion began to emerge – possibly as a response to the environmental movement and trends to higher corporate taxes and generally "bad press" for big business – for companies to use advertising in an effort to influence public policy issues. This became a very popular method of reaching the public for corporate sponsors; memorable campaigns include the ongoing "editorials" by Mobil Oil and the "little red hen" ads by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses.

"Advocacy advertising", as it came to be known, was also extremely popular with the media since it was a "growth" market and tended to involve non-discounted purchases of "full-page" advertisements above and beyond regular product advertising. It also got companies that spent relatively little in the mass media – defense contractors who tended to use specialized publications, for example – into the regular press. It became common for "influential" newspapers, the *Wall Street Journal* for example, to carry up to 1/3 advocacy ads. Newspapers and magazines began to solicit this kind of business with their own ads exhorting company managers to "get their message across."

Not surprisingly, given that the ads were at least partly due to the feisty nature of public advocates (Ralph Nader, Greenpeace), these expenses soon became fairly controversial. Not the least of these controversies was the tax-deductible nature of corporate ads. Not only were the companies big and powerful compared to consumers, argued public advocacy groups, but they deducted the cost of these ads as a business expenses thus forcing all citizens to pay for their views.

It was, of course, on the latter point that ads by the government soon became embroiled in the controversy. Although most of the public debate in Canada has focussed on the ads by the petroleum companies (who, in the mid-seventies, were making enormous profits from the skyrocketing price of oil after OPEC embargos), the government was sufficiently implicated that a Minister of the federal government had to defend the government's position at a special seminar on advocacy advertising in 1981.¹⁷

Away back in 1970, when Trudeau was fresh in office, he created a new agency, Information Canada, to "reach the unreached" - that is, to bring information about government programs and services to the huddled masses. The press attacked Information Canada as a propaganda agency and it was canned.

Advocacy advertising is the reborn reality of Information Canada. But sneakier. Information Canada sat there like a ripe, plump target. Advocacy advertising only intrudes on to our TV screens and into our newspapers when the government has got something to sell. And then, unless the Canada geese flap too loudly or the Crow rate ads contradict each other too blatantly, we won't notice what we've been sold, because our perception will have become more real than reality. (Gwyn, 1983)

While the Ministers of the federal government may have felt it necessary to distance themselves from the controversy surrounding advocacy ads, the temptation to "tell the department's story" at times was very strong. Media outlets played up on this and in one four-colour full page ad in *Marketing* government managers were urged to make use of the services offered by the *Financial Post*:

The *Financial Post* helps sell the projects and services of the cities, the provinces and the federal government. It informs leaders in business and industry of the policies of government departments. 7 out of 10 readers of the FP are in business, over 25,500 readers are influential in buying real estate. Our readers' companies export and import; hire unemployed in winter and students in the summer. Use the *Financial Post* to persuade the business community. (March 23, 1970)

The other source of commercial influence in the 1970s came from Loto Canada. While this was a government-run organization the objectives and practices of the company were strictly commercial. And, unlike other 'commercial' aspects of government - Air Canada, for example - the lottery corporation had

¹⁷ Most of the text of this speech, along with other views and a history of the situation is included in Duncan McDowell, ed., *Advocacy Advertising*, (1982).

to be staffed and organized from the beginning by media experts.

Despite their popularity, lotteries do not provide an essential service as air travel does, and consequently they must be marketed heavily. The experience that the government acquired, in terms of hiring professional advertising people was invaluable. In fact, the director of advertising for LotoCanada, Andre Contant, became the CUIO advertising manager.

The Task Force on Government Information gave information services theoretical legitimation and the Wall Report provided political orientation, but the "crisis" in Quebec provided the practical experience.

Although the controversy surrounding advocacy ads may have made corporate ad managers think carefully and politicians sensitive to criticism these cautious attitudes were soon lost in the hulabaloo surrounding the rise to power of a separatist party in Quebec. The 1969 Task Force mentioned that "co-ordinated effort [in the information services] has occurred only in periods of domestic stress or international instability" (1970:II;138-39). The referendum in Quebec was just such an incident.

To reiterate, then, the stage onto which the Quebec separatists had to step out onto was well prepared- for several reasons. First, the Task Force on Government Information had provided the basis for justifying massive information campaigns: informing the people was a democratic right, a progressive initiative. (Later inquiries and research papers would refine and mould this general statement into the need, on the part of the citizens of Canada, to know about what programs in their neighbourhood were sponsored by the federal government and the need to know about government's policy proposals before members of parliament or the press.) Second, the PCO, in its new role as the central policy arm of the government of Canada, had indicated the dangers and the benefits of a higher profile information policy and how that might be achieved. Finally, the existence, of expert advertising and public relations people *who had proven their value in the execution of a program* within the federal public service made the move to higher profile possible on short notice.

The election of the PQ provided that notice and the troops quickly swung into action. Although the federal government was to a large extent well on its way toward greater use of advertising Rene Lesvesque really lit a fire under the dry tinder. It will become more apparent later in our discussion that not only did the quantity and quality of the ads change dramatically, something that was arguably inevitable, but the

character of the ads also changed. This is meant in the sense that advertising, along with all avenues of government information, began to be used as a tool of overall policy objectives – something that had been explicitly rejected even during the creation of the central office of information, Information Canada. An example of this would be using Employment and Immigration ads in Quebec to impress citizens of that province that the federal arrangement was really the most suitable for them.

As one might imagine, achieving a shift like this would have been difficult if opposition or media voices were strongly opposed. In this the government was aided immeasurably by the perceived "seige" mentality that pervaded in Ottawa at this time. In fact, members of the opposition, in the early stages of the PQ's separation campaign, urged the federal government to "make public" the "truth" for Quebeckers.¹⁸

2.7 Elements to the Crisis

The referendum was not the only factor influencing federal information policy. As mentioned in earlier sections, there were several on-going features of the political and economic environment which served to place information in the forefront of the government's responses in policy questions. Not the least of these was the growing competition for the votes of citizens by the provinces. As province after province turned "tory", the central government increasingly began to see things in terms of "them" and "us". This competition began to manifest itself in unrest and malaise among the provinces and among the citizens themselves. Talk about a "crisis in federalism" became increasingly common.

Alan Cairns, in "The Other Crisis of Canadian Federalism", (1979:175–95) has suggested that the growth of big government at both the provincial and national level has resulted in "self-defeating competition" (p.175) which squeezes out legitimate authority. Essentially a problem of the last two decades,¹⁹ "the most important and emphatic indication [of government growth] ...is found in the fact that the central government and major provincial governments now view their task as the direct management of the economies and societies under their respective jurisdictions." (1979:178) Thus, Cairns concludes,

¹⁸ Flora MacDonald, "Speech to the House of Commons," *Hansard*, March 28, 1977:4369.

¹⁹ In the past, Cairns notes, growth at one level has always been accompanied by a decline in the importance of the other; e.g. the decline of provincial power during the Second World War when Canada was run essentially as a unitary state.

"contemporary Canadian federalism founders on the co-existence of big government at both levels."

(p.193)

Going beyond the symptom of "big government", Herbert Guindon (1964) and C.B. MacPherson (1962) describe the origins of regional dissent. Although Guindon is referring to Quebec and MacPherson discusses Alberta, they come to similar conclusions about the reasons for continuing antagonism between the regions and the central government:

the persistence of provincial state power is to be understood in terms of differing class structures of various Canadian regions and in terms of the regional fractions of the bourgeoisie.... The dominant classes, or rather class fractions, in the provinces, often unable to constitute a unity with their counterparts either through political parties or in economic coalitions have used the provincial state to express their interests. (Panitch,1977:11)

More recently, Larry Pratt and John Richards (1979) have chronicled the rise of a new regional bourgeoisie, the resource-rich Western businessman (or woman). Pratt and Richards describe the phenomenon of a particular class, ascendant but unable to find power in the central government, turning to the provincial arena.

For whatever reasons, be they "big government", rising regionally-based bourgeoisie or simply the acrimony between french and english-speaking Canadians, the seventies emerged into a "crisis of federalism".²⁰

The significance of this atmosphere of "crisis" for this study is apparent when we look at the changes wrought in advertising during this period (1974-1984). Particular events or "storms" in the "atmosphere of crisis" accelerated the changes taking place. We have briefly dicussed the events leading up to the Quebec referendum, including the opposition's cries for federal response to the "propaganda" provided by the "pequistes". The Quebec referendum was the first in a series of three 'crises' which the Liberal government countered with strong publicity campaigns. In two cases the campaign was coordinated by the CUIO (referendum, constitution); in one case another government department (EMR) was responsible.

²⁰ To what extent, if any, this "crisis" has been resolved by the recent election of a conservative federal government pledged to "consultative" relations with the provinces is not as yet clear, nor need it concern us at this point in this discussion. The future of government advertising, however, will depend on this relationship.

The Quebec referendum, according to the director of the CUIO's advertising, was "won because of the federal government's media strategy."²¹ Certainly the strategy was effective in excluding PQ supporters from access to advertising space and time. In a bold move the CUIO snapped up virtually all available air time and display space within two weeks of the announcement of the referendum date. Figures released in 1981 show that an entirely new category of government advertising, "Government of Canada - General," accounted for \$4.5 million in that year.

After the 'success' with the referendum, federal officials appear to have been 'sold' on the merits of publicity and advertising in particular as a public policy instrument. A package of controversial energy policies, the National Energy Program, was introduced with an accompanying massive advertising campaign. This campaign gained a certain notoriety when leaked documents showed that the objectives were to remove energy from the list of concerns that Canadians have. The patriation of Canada's constitution was accorded similar status, and although it was part of a general information campaign advertising remained the focus.

The PCO document, which includes sections on "Principles for Communications Policy," the "Government Communications System," and "Mandate of the Communications Task Force", is part of a broad series of initiatives relating to communication that found their way into government policy at about the same time. According to Bruce Doern, the Liberals came back into office after the "interregnum" of 1979-80 with a determination to reject Joe Clark's vision of Canada as a "community of communities". As part of that rejection they intended to see the federal profile raised throughout the land.

Although expenditures on advertising and information had been growing rapidly through the 1970s - especially after 1975 - these were not altogether planned developments. As one research director who has worked extensively with the government told me, the large expenditures came first, then the experts moved in.

Although the 1981 communications policy borrows heavily from the language of the 1969 Task force on Government Information, there were several intervening developments which affected the direction of this particular policy and set it on an altogether different course. The Wall report, which we have already mentioned, emerged during the time when the idealistic off-spring of the 1969 report, Information Canada, was meeting an early demise. The Wall report and two subsequent reports on government service to the

²¹A. Contant, interview June 25, 1985.

public was more pragmatic than TBABK in terms of the political realities of providing government information. The "crises of federalism", not envisaged in the buoyant 60s, saw the federal government with its back against the wall and responding in a reactive, rather than proactive, way. The 1981 initiatives, which include the PCO policy on communications, the Treasury Board regulations [ch.485], and the review of the committee on Federal-Provincial relations, were intended to remedy this situation to some extent. For this reason, although the preamble to the "Principles" policy states it is intended "to guide future development", we find that in fact the five main principles are actually justifications of on-going practice. The Federal-Provincial Task Force report, similarly, contains economic and democratic rationales for an increased federal presence; a larger federal presence already existed. The Treasury Board policy, although intended to rationalize the management of government advertising, actually includes many provisions to control and centralize the content of government advertising.

PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

The following principles were approved by the Cabinet on July 16, 1981 to guide future development of government communications policies, and also to guide the public service in their communications activities:

- (i) Canadians have the right to full, accurate and timely information, in compliance with the Official Languages Act, about their government so that they can exercise their rights of citizenship and take part in the democratic process fully, responsibly and in an informed manner.
 - (ii) Canadians have a right to access to government records, with exceptions, to be legally defined and ultimately interpreted by the courts, designed to protect essential public and private interests.
 - (iii) Government has the responsibility to provide the public with full, accurate and timely information about the policies, programs and legislation approved by Parliament; it also has the responsibility to inform the public of the factual content of its policy proposals and of facts as it is aware of them regarding the public issues addressed by its policies.
 - (iv) Government has a corresponding responsibility to make every reasonable effort to learn of the concerns and views of Canadians, with particular attention to differences of views in different regions of the country, so as better to inform itself in establishing priorities, in developing policies, and in implementing programs which serve the interests of Canada.
 - (v) Effective communications between citizens and the government imply a reasonable effort on the part of the citizens to seek the information they require to exercise their rights of citizenship, and an obligation on the part of the government to make every reasonable effort to provide access to information on an equal basis in all regions of Canada.
- (PCO, 1981:1)

Since these two campaigns there have been indications that the federal government was becoming more 'careful' with its advertising. With the exception of a brief (and much-criticised) EIC campaign which informed Canadians that Employment Canada was "Helping Canada Work," *soft* advertising such as characterized the pre-constitutional conference (summer 1980) has been declining. In 1982 and 1983 expenditures overall levelled off and then dropped slightly, leading one media analyst to announce

hopefully, "the federal government shows signs of trying to keep a two-year old promise to speak more softly."(Jaremko,1984)

The slowdown in federal advertising spending was short-lived, however. In 1984 expenditures almost doubled as the Liberal government publicized a new Sports Lottery (since abandoned) and dramatically increased spending in almost all other departments and crown corporations.²² The result was an increase of over 80 per cent in federal spending on advertising. Information spending generally was up significantly over previous years, and although the Mulroney government has indicated that it is 'reviewing' Liberal spending plans it is not yet clear to what extent these reviews will allow the Tories to return to pre-1984 spending levels.

Expenditures and recent issues in government advertising will be examined in more depth below. First the thesis will look at the changing role of television and then at the departments themselves and detailed expenditure figures.

2.8 The Changing Role of Television

In the sixties television had just begun to have a large impact on advertising in Canada. It was in 1960, for example, that Proctor and Gamble tripled their broadcast expenditures (from \$1.3 million to \$3.5 million) letting their print expenditures fall to zero. For the government of Canada, however, the benefits of television were obviously not so immediately apparent. In 1960 only \$215,000 was spent on broadcast media (almost all of it by the Canadian Savings Bonds campaign). Further, only just over 10 per cent of this was spent on television. Television remained a low priority throughout the 1960s, never rising above 25 percent of total expenditures and averaging only 20 percent throughout the decade. This at a time when the cost of advertising on television was rising rapidly and many advertisers in the private sector cut their print budgets considerably.

The Glassco Commission (1963) had been critical of departments of government going beyond "strictly factual" presentations and as advertising researchers were finding, TV was not at its best as an "information" medium. For the mundane chores of informing the public of programs, print was the

²²Cynics might suggest that the leadership race and election were the major factors behind these increases.

medium of choice. In the choice of media the expertise and knowledge of government personnel was also often more of a criteria than objective demands for efficiency; as the Task Force on Government Information made clear, there were quite literally no more than a handful of people in Ottawa who had any understanding of the use of audio-visual media.

After 1974, however, government expenditures on advertising began to increase substantially and by the end of the decade they had doubled to over 40 percent annually. Because increases in the cost of advertising on television are not necessarily equal to increases on other media it is difficult to say whether this increased expenditure reflects more advertising or just more money. The willingness to spend more does, however, indicate a growing recognition of the importance of television in an advertising campaign.

It should also be noted that part of the increased spending on television in the late to mid-seventies is due to advertising for LotoCanada

2.9 A Look at Departments: 1954 to 1984

Each government department remains fairly independent in the choice of how much, how often and what they advertise. Even during the Second World War, when advertising (among other things) was strictly controlled, this control was hampered by the independent initiatives of individual departments. Because advertising is under direct ministerial control, (ministers are always concerned with the "public face" of their department) a strong or up and coming minister may try and use the ad budget for their own purposes. In this section we review some of the major spenders in the government since 1954; the earliest year for which accurate figures are available. For these and subsequent comparisons, expenditure figures are taken from data collected by Elliot Research Ltd. of Toronto. Their system includes 'national' radio, television and print advertising but excludes local and display advertising.

In the 1950s advertising was used for very practical purposes, and not much of it was done.²³ From 1954 to 1958 the "army", the "airforce" and "Canada Savings Bonds" (CSB) were in each year the top three expenses. In 1960 and 1961 the Department of Labour replaced the airforce in the top three and in 1962 the post office joined labour and CSB, replacing the army. These remained as the dominant players

²³ From 1954 to 1959 only print figures are available. The first record of broadcast expenses, in 1960, amounts to no more than 25 per cent of total expenses and the annual total for that year is no different than the "print" total for the years previous.

throughout the 1960s. In 1966 and 1967 the Centennial Commission made a cameo appearance, informing people of Canada's age, and in 1969 the Department of National Defence (as it was now known) reappeared as a large advertiser. In the early seventies we find the brief appearance of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS) – now Census Canada – in 1971, a census year and also "Travel Canada" is listed higher, a reflection of the (now discontinued) practice of advertising within Canada for Canadian destinations (by the federal government, at least).

Although the federal government had been moving slowly to "modernize" its advertising image, the years immediately after the Report of the Task Force on Government Information show no great upheavals. Advertising remained "matter of fact" and tended to focus on bread and butter matters; in 1972 and 1973 the Public Service Commission (PSC) was the largest government print advertiser with their employment ads and remained a major overall advertiser until 1974. Although 1975 was another ordinary year – the top three were again DND, CSB and Canada Post – the times were changing for government advertisers, and 1976 would give evidence of that.

In 1976 two major promotional campaigns take top spot for the first time in government advertising: LotoCanada and an energy campaign by the department of Energy, Mines and Resources. The armed forces and CSB remain high but for the next three years LotoCanada takes top spot. The egg marketing board makes a brief appearance in 1977. In 1980, the year of the referendum, a new category of government ads is described in the Media Measurement Services books: "Government of Canada – general." At \$4.5 million it is also the largest single expense in a \$28 million account. Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR) had their ad expenses jump from \$1.7 million in 1979 to \$4.1 million in 1980 to become the second largest advertiser in the government in that year. (While the federal government was spending \$4.5 million on "general" advertising in 1980, the Quebec government spent \$6 million in the same category – "Quebec government – general" (they spent \$4.5 million in the previous year on that category)). "Government of Canada – general" dropped to \$2 million in the following year and disappeared the year after that. Federal expenditures were apparently back on track (literally) by 1982; the major expenses were VIA Rail and Employment and Immigration. Overall expenses were down, if we exclude the major crown corporations, in this and the succeeding year. 1983 was what you could call a "sensible" year with expenses again down overall and major advertisers being VIA, CSB and Employment.

The downward trend did not last, however. In 1984 the Government of Canada increased expenditures by over 80 per cent. Perhaps it is cynical to suggest that this is due to the leadership race and election in that (fiscal) year but the figures indicate that almost all departments increased their spending and some did so dramatically: the department of Finance, which had not felt the need to advertise in 1983, was one of the "newcomers" to the advertising by government circus. Another department which joined the fray was the Department of Multiculturalism. Others, like the Department of Regional and Industrial Expansion (DRIE), increased their budgets enormously. DRIE went from \$60,000 to \$2,400,000. The National Capital Commission increased spent 20 times their 1983 budget, going from \$30,000 to \$300,000. The department of Revenue went from \$23,000 to \$550,000. Another factor in the enormous growth in 1984 was the \$5.5 million the government spent on the ill-fated Sports Lottery.

Data from 1985 are not yet available but it will be interesting to see to what extent and in what areas the new Conservative government lowers spending on advertising. It was one of their main criticisms while in opposition.

2.10 The Management of Government Advertising

The financial end of government advertising management is administered by the Secretary of the Treasury Board for the federal government. Authority to do so comes from the *Financial Administration Act* and is contained in chapter 485 of Treasury Board's *Administrative Policy Manual*. The policy was originally written by and is now interpreted by the Information Policy Section, Policy Development and Revision Division, Administrative Policy Branch, Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS). In the spring of 1985, following the election of the Progressive Conservative party and some minor scandals involving advertising, chapter 485 was revised somewhat.²⁴ The following review includes those revisions in its description of government advertising management.

The Treasury Board policy statement, reiterating the objectives of the 1985 version, states

It is the policy of the Government of Canada to coordinate all federal advertising to ensure the public is adequately informed of its programs and priorities and to support its critical social and economic objectives. This circular outlines the organizational and administrative arrangements that have been established to ensure coordination and cost efficient government

²⁴ The revisions are contained in Treasury Board Circular Number 1985-30, dated May 3, 1985. The contents of the circular will "be incorporated into the *Administrative Policy Manual*, as a new chapter 485." (Treasury Board, 1985:9)

advertising. (TBS, 1985:1)

The circular also notes that federal government advertising, in addition to meeting the requirements of this circular must also abide by regulations in other statutes such as the *Official Languages Act* and the Federal Identity program policy and guidelines. "Also, federal government advertising should be closed captioned for the benefit of the hearing impaired."

Overall management of advertising, along with all other government expenditures, is concentrated in the Treasury Board. They are the "headquarters" or "head office" equivalent for government, providing central management and resource allocation to all departments. In some cases, advertising being one of them, the Treasury Board goes beyond these duties to provide "horizontal management." Essentially the resource allocation aspect remains the same but management is subject to more scrutiny. Treasury Board's in-depth involvement, including a separate "Information Policy Branch", was motivated by three developments. The first was a general increase in the appreciation of the importance of "information". Second, privacy and access to information laws – passed in the mid-1970s (this is access to personal information held in government data banks, not the more general Access to Information legislation passed more recently) – necessitated an overseer of government departments to ensure compliance. The Treasury Board, was the only department with the "clout"²⁵ to ensure that the rules were followed. As we shall see, however, in the case of advertising even this influence was not sufficient on some occasions. Finally, the emergence of an explicit "Communication Policy" in 1981 signalled a 'coming out' for advertising by the federal government; once the government admitted that they did advertising as a part of every program a consistent management strategy was necessary.²⁶

The present guidelines administered by Treasury Board originated in the late 1970s. In response to a request by the Clark government, in 1979, to determine what had been going on in advertising, Treasury Board began to investigate advertising policy, such as it was, up to that time. As Jim Dubroy, the principal author of Chapter 485 (September, 1980) of Treasury Board's *Administrative Policy Manual*, told me, substantive policy, if it exists, is not in the public domain. In his opinion, such policy did not exist, but if it did it was not elaborate, long-term or directed. The practices as they existed at that time were too

²⁵ Approval of budgets gives enormous influence. As we saw with the Federal Identity Program (FIP) this too was administered by Treasury Board.

²⁶ It must be remembered that while the TB provides economic management, there are also management functions provided by DSS and by the AMG.

fragmented to suggest central planning and coordination. All advertising was department specific and each ad or commercial campaign had to go to Treasury Board as a "submission". One rule that Dubroy was aware of was the so-called "Drury rule", presumably named after Minister of Supply and Services, Bud Drury. This unofficial rule stipulated that no more than 25% of an ad agency's business could be federal government business, with the implied intention that shops must be good enough to win some commercial business as well. In addition there was some effort to include minorities in advertising.

Another factor inhibiting concerted action was the presumed "impropriety" of the government "selling" things. Department heads would agree that their department did provide information, but with the exception of Tourism, they did not *sell*. Although practices did not shift too rapidly, in 1979 the terminology used in government circles was modified quite markedly: marketing plans were the "in" phrase.

The fall of 1980 saw the issuance of a memo from the secretary of Treasury Board outlining policy with regard to advertising. This was followed up by the Treasury Board circular that became ch. 485. The remarkable aspect of this Treasury Board guideline is the extent to which it was consistently ignored by all those to whom it applied. In an interview with the architect of this policy, a Treasury Board employee, it was determined that such flouting of TB guidelines was not common in government. In this instance the possibility was, there because of the nature of advertising and its perceived power by the ministers and their staff. Unlike many of the policies and programs funded by a department, advertising can be manipulated for political ends. For this reason the "guidelines" for advertising were often simply not referred to. As was bound to happen in such a situation, when problems developed the supposed management base was not there to fall back on. This is exactly what happened when the "Wilson affair" hit the newspapers in the spring of 1985.

After the election of the Conservative government in the fall of 1984, certain people in the Privy Council Office (PCO) determined to examine the administrative procedures for the management of advertising. Somebody who should have known better, brought in the Treasury Board's policy without bringing in the Treasury Board people. Some changes were made to this document and preparation was made to initiate the "changes". When the Wilson affair blew up (Finance Minister Michael Wilson's department awarded an advertising contract to the Minister's son-in-law) the PCO wanted to rush out with the "new" policy guidelines. It was at this point that the Treasury Board staff were called in; they had the

unpleasant task of informing the politicians that they had been revising a document no-one paid any attention to in the first place. Moreover, by ultimately committing themselves to the changes they also committed themselves to implementing the whole administrative structure, expensive and complex as it was.

Near the conclusion of my interview with Jim Dubroy I asked him about what kinds of things would, in his mind, improve the management of government advertising. He felt that more and better management was needed but that the problem was that government advertising is too small to warrant such close attention. It has not reached a certain "critical mass" in program management whereby it can be effectively managed in a bureaucratic fashion. Despite its high profile, advertising is still less than half of one tenth of one percent of the government's annual budget. In addition, it is spread over all the departments and agencies of government. As it exists now advertising is mainly under the restraint of the principles or ethics of individual bureaucrats and Ministers. As Jim Dubroy said, there have been instances where the government has demonstrated a flagrant violation of those ethical principles.

Although TBS establishes the overall direction and provides the authority for administering advertising, the actual work is done by several other groups. The first is the *Advertising Policy Sub-Committee* (APSC) of the Cabinet Committee on Communications (CCC). The APSC is a new feature of the 1985 policy, adding a step between the AMG and the Cabinet Committee on Communications. The APSC, apparently, is to provide some direction for and take some of the burden from the Cabinet Committee. The APSC is supposed to maintain an overview of government advertising and make "recommendations to the Cabinet Committee, as required, on such matters as: allocation of expenditures; priority themes; overall consistency and coordination; effectiveness of the management system; and policy direction." (TBS, 1985:2-3) The other function of the APSC is to provide "statements of concurrence" from the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Communications for the departments. A statement of concurrence is essentially a budget approval. This eliminates a bit of paperwork and deflects a lot of political heat from the Chairman of the CCC, who is usually a senior cabinet Minister who would be happy to have someone else answer the questions about embarrassing campaigns.

The coordinating body below APSC, the Advertising Management Group (AMG), is actually at the service of both the APSC and the Department of Supply and Services (DSS). The AMG was formed in 1980 by the Clark Government and has been retained as the good ideal that it is. Although formerly

composed of three "regionally representative" advertising experts the present policy calls for four. The AMG was initiated as a way to make the skills of professional advertising people available to all departments. In this capacity it mainly works through the Department of Supply and Services. The AMG is officially part of DSS but operates independently for the most part, maintaining separate offices and carrying out its duties as it sees fit.

The AMG also served as a convenient way to dispense the patronage appointments of agencies. If the choice was made by professionals, the argument went, who could question the results? Of course the professionals themselves are patronage appointments.

In addition to providing a professional advisory service, both for production and patronage, the AMG is also responsible for the "concurrences" mentioned above. "In particular, the AMG may act on behalf of the APSC in carrying out its functions, including those pertaining to the furnishing of the various statements of concurrence." (TBS, 1985:4)

Another major actor in the advertising by government is the *Agency of Record* (AOR). The AOR, currently Cossitt Ltee. of Montreal, is a private company (although not necessarily) which, "under contract with DSS, [is] responsible for the consolidation and purchase of all advertising media time and space requirements." (TBS, 1985:5) The AOR changes when the government changes.²⁷ The AOR concept has probably been the least successful "innovation"²⁸ in federal government advertising management.

During the Conservative interregnum of Joe Clark, the Canadian Media Services was born, charged with the responsibility of media buying for the Canadian government advertising campaigns. Subsequent governments retained the principle of a central buying agency using it both as a useful tool and as a way of rewarding friends. As a buying device it didn't really work well. The media are perfectly happy to give discounts to government advertising regardless of the department placing it. ...One problem of the central buying agency was that every time there is an election they lose their better staff and cannot function with the speed necessary for a central buying agency.²⁹

²⁷ At one point during the Liberal's rule in office the AOR was a consortium formed by the major Liberal ad agencies solely for the purpose of managing the accounts which they were responsible for.

²⁸ I use "innovation" advisedly since an AOR is common practice for large package-goods firms. Because of the large numbers of agencies and products and timings it is useful to have one agency coordinate it all and ensure maximum discounts.

²⁹ Correspondence with F.L. Torrington, July 24, 1985, p.2.

The fourth member of the troupe is the *Department of Supply and Services* (DSS). The DSS is the "contracting authority" for government advertising. Beyond handling the accounts, the DSS also maintains a list of qualified advertisers (Canadian ownership, good business credentials, etc) ³⁰ and, using this list, recommends a short-list of potential agencies for a department. The DSS can also contract for independent evaluation

2.11 Advertising: Quantitative Data

This section looks in greater detail at the size and direction of the advertising industry generally, with particular emphasis on government advertising. Government information programs are put in the perspective of their relation to the economy as a whole. Let us begin by locating the Canadian advertising industry in the global context and giving a rough idea of how Canada's federal government compares to some of its counterparts in other nations.

How does Canada's advertising industry compare with the rest of the world? In the Western world advertising is big business and has been growing rapidly for at least the last two decades. In 1980 there were nine countries which reported over \$2 billion (US Dollars) in total advertising expenditures.³¹ Canada is no different from other developed nations, in 1980 it was seventh on the list of nations with large advertising sectors with annual public and private advertising expenditures of just over \$2 billion. On a per capita basis Canada ranks fourth; just behind the USA, Netherlands and Australia. Canada, which spent \$141 per person in advertising in 1980 is behind the United States, which spent \$241 per person but much closer on this measure than in the early 1960s. As a percentage of GNP, Canada's advertising expenditures again rank fourth, at 1.38 per cent. Two nations, the United Kingdom and Australia, tie for second spot with the United States first. Per capita expenditures on all advertising in the United States grew from \$66

³⁰ The questionnaire used to determine a firm's eligibility is reproduced in Appendix A, p.111.

³¹ Advertising is measured in "billings". When a producer wants to promote a particular product he or she does not (usually) produce the actual ad/commercial. This is the job of the advertising agency. The ad agency, however, is not paid directly by the client, but rather collects a rebate from the media outlet (usually 15% plus 2% for prompt payment) in which the ad appears. The agency, however, bills the client for the full amount, thus taking responsibility for the bookkeeping involved in the myriad of purchases that must be made to "campaign" a product in different areas and in different media. This arrangement is used partly because of the particular requirements of the industry (the specialized bookkeeping skills noted above are not to be taken lightly) and partly because of the peculiar arrangements of the first ad agencies which were set up as "contractors" to individual media outlets.

per person in the early sixties to over \$300 currently. In Canada per capita expenditures, which began the sixties at about \$30 now are up to two-thirds of the American total; \$193 per person in 1983. Canada, though not ranked first in any of the scales, is nonetheless a major advertising country by any standard.

Annual advertising expenditure figures for Canada are available each spring from the firm of Elliott Research Ltd., of Toronto.³² As well, Statistics Canada and MacLean-Hunter Research Ltd. issue reports on the publishing and advertising industries. These sources, along with the government's own figures for expenses (the "Blue Books") were used to put advertising expenditures in Canada in a historical perspective. Data since 1950 was collected and reviewed.

One of the obvious reasons for growth in advertising expenditures is growth in the overall size of the economy. As the economy has grown, so has advertising. In Table 1, advertising expenditures are compared to the Gross National Product (GNP). As the data illustrates, advertising expenses have been a relatively constant percentage of GNP since the end of the Second World War. In fact, as the resesarchers for MacLeanHunter observed, the two (GNP and ad expenditure) "move in virtual lock-step." (1982:2) At the beginning of the 1950s Gross Advertising Revenues amounted to just over one and one-quarter per cent of a GNP of \$18.5 billion. Although this rose to over one and one-half per cent in 1960 the latter part of the sixties and early seventies saw somewhat of a decline to 1.3 per cent or lower. In 1975 when inflation was high and the country was experiencing an economic recession ad expenditures fell to 1.24 per cent of GNP. Significantly, economic recessions in the nineteen fifties and early sixties did not dampen the spirits of advertisers to the same extent.³³Part of the reason that advertising expenditures failed to maintain the same level as in early years was that the 1970s recession was accompanied with high inflation, so not

³²The Elliot Research figures, which will be used extensively here and are widely reported in the trade and popular press in the spring of each year (interestingly, only the government seems to have its advertising expenses discussed in the popular press) are measures of media expenditures according to standard rates and lineage - excluding such sources as display advertising. The company determines these expenditures by the simple method of counting. They employ numerous men and women who read newspapers and clip out the ads and then establish their cost by using standard tables for advertising rates. Similar methods are employed for radio and television. It is partly for this reason that outdoor advertising, including transit ads and billboards, are not included. Display advertising is also only recently a major facet of a campaign. In the 1950s, when Elliott began this work, display advertising accounted for less than 10 per cent of all advertising. Now the figure is closer to 20 per cent but the methods at 840 Pape Street have not changed.

³³ "Canada experienced four recessions in the post-World War II period: 1948-49, 1953-54, 1957-59 and 1960-61. During all these recessionary periods total advertising expenditures rose, notwithstanding temporary declines in economic activity." Firestone, 1970:54.

only were people buying less because of unemployment but dollar values shrunk and GNP exhibited rapid (as measured in current dollars) growth. Since the mid-1970s advertising expenditures in Canada have levelled off to 1.38% of GNP.

Another feature of the Canadian economy which has kept pace with growth in GNP is the government. Over the past twenty years annual expenditures by the Government of Canada have been between 14 and 21 per cent of GNP; in the last decade they have maintained a constant presence between 18.6 and 20.7 per cent. The rapid and constant growth in Federal overall expenditures must temper any comments made on advertising by the government. Because of this rapid growth, advertising costs, even when generously estimated, have never exceeded two tenths of one per cent of total government expenditures. This doesn't mean advertising isn't significant, it just is an indication of the extent to which advertising is a relative *financial* lightweight in the government.

Also as a cautionary note, it is important to remember the position of government advertising relative to the whole advertising business. Although advertising expenditures as a percentage of GNP remained stable throughout the last decade, they grew very rapidly in absolute terms. Total advertising expenditures tripled in the 1970s – moving from \$1.390 billion in 1972 to over \$5.2 billion in 1983. In the nineteen-fifties the Government of Canada spent less than \$2 million annually on advertising. Gross advertising revenues at this time were nearly \$500 million; government advertising accounted for less than one-fifth of one per cent of total gross advertising revenues. This statistic, government advertising as a percentage of total Canadian gross advertising revenues, was relatively stable through the nineteensixties (with the exception of 1967 – Centennial Year) and early 1970s. During this period it varied between one-half and onethird of one per cent. In the mid-seventies the figure rose sharply to two-thirds and then one per cent in fiscal year 1978/79, its peak. At present the figure has returned to one-half of one per cent, although the large increase in 1984 spending will raise this to approximately one per cent. One percent of the advertising expenditures may not seem like a great deal but because of the numbers of smaller advertisers the shift has been sufficient to push the federal government to the top of Elliott Research Ltd.'s "Top Fifty Advertisers" since 1976. Another way of looking at this phenomenon is to note that since the midseventies, the government's advertising accounts for over 10 per cent of the top 50 advertisers, up from 5 per cent in 1975.³⁴

³⁴ Stanbury, 1982:51.

TABLE 1

CANADA
GROSS ADVERTISING REVENUES AND GNP, 1963-1983

YEAR	GNP	GROSS AD REVENUE	GROSS AD REVENUE AS % OF GNP
	(MILLIONS \$)	(MILLIONS \$)	
1963	45987	673.974	1.4700
1968	72586	982.395	1.3500
1973	123560	1578.450	1.2800
1978	230353	2972.810	1.2900
1983	378000	5200.000	1.3800

In the last decade, federal government ad expenditures have made "the public" one of the largest advertisers in the land. But what, exactly, does it mean when the government moves from a "middleweight" into the "heavyweight" class of advertising?³⁵ In a sense, these figures are misleading. They give the impression of "one big government", spending massive amounts of money in a coordinated effort to hornswoggle the "average citizen." This is not the case. I will leave until the interview section the discussion of the ability of the government to coordinate its advertising initiatives; let us note for the time being that the money spent by Canada's federal government is in many cases spread very thinly, over a vast range of subjects. In 1981 the government issued 150 advertising contracts to a total of 34 departments and agencies.

The figures used in this discussion, those which come from Elliott Research Ltd., are for media expenditures only and do not include display expenses (billboards, bus signs, etc.). Nor do they include the expenses on wages and salaries by the advertising departments or the payments made to agencies for creative and productive work. Media expenditures are useful when comparing government expenditures to other advertisers outside the government,³⁶ because they give a useful indication of each one's relative impact.

The totals used in this part of the analysis do not include advertising expenditures by the largest commercial crown corporations, Air Canada, PetroCanada and CN Rail as reported by Elliott Research. Although "total government spending on advertising" might encompass these corporations it was felt that their exclusively commercial nature sufficiently differentiated them from the other government

³⁵Aggregate advertising expenditures are occasionally referred to as the ad "tonnage" of a particular company; interview with F.W. Convery, President, F.H. Hayhurst Co., Toronto, June 17, 1985.

³⁶For example, comparing the federal government with Proctor and Gamble.

TABLE 2
 ADVERTISING AS A PERCENTAGE OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE
 FEDERAL EXPENDITURE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GNP
 (1963-83)

YEAR	ESTIMATED AD SPENDING	% OF TOTAL GOVT	TOTAL GOVT SPENDING	% OF GNP	GNP
1963	4.68	.06	7552	16.2	45987 ⁴
1968	10.87	.09	11299	15.5	72586
1973	23.67	.11	20912	16.9	123560
1978	92.48	.20	45955	19.9	230353
1983	76.73	.09	78276	20.7	378000
1984	139.86	.15	88615	*	*

departments and agencies. Other commentators on government advertising have also tended to differentiate between crown corporations and departments and agencies.

If we wish to see the relationship between government spending on advertising and government spending in other areas, it is necessary to move beyond these preliminary figures for expenditure and establish overall program costs. In order to see the extent to which advertising is a component of overall federal government expenditures or a percentage of overall government information expenditures, the analysis must include both the salaries of the departmental employees involved and the program resources expended.

Because of the way the federal government maintains its records in this area ("information" and advertising employees are not separated), an accurate assessment of wages and salaries is not readily available.³⁷ Production, research and creative expenses, when they are explicitly associated with the advertising and not the program itself³⁸ are, however, reported in the DSS's annual expenditures.

Because of the difficulties in obtaining realistic expenditure estimates, the 1969 Task Force on Government Information resorted to extraordinary means to obtain their data. More recently, Stanbury, Gorn and Weinberg were forced to rely on answers to questions put in the House of Commons for their

³⁷ Both the 1962 Royal Commission on Government Organization and the 1969 Task Force on Government Information lamented the sorry state of government data on advertising. As Stanbury notes, "they have improved only slightly." (1983:159 fn24)

³⁸ Interview material suggests that the latter is often the case.

TABLE 3
CANADA-FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
TOTAL GROSS AD REVENUE AND TOTAL FEDERAL AD EXPENDITURE
1963-1983

YEAR	GROSS AD REVENUE (MILLIONS \$)	FEDERAL AD EXPENDITURE (MILLIONS \$)	FED EXP AS % OF TOTAL EXP
1963	673.974	1.487	.21
1968	982.395	3.398	.34
1973	1578.450	7.397	.47
1978	2972.810	28.900	.97
1983	5200.000	23.980	.46

research data.³⁹In both cases the results were not surprising: expenditure data as reported in the press (Elliott Research Ltd.'s Annual Summary) gives only a glimmer of the activity involved in government advertising.

In 1969, O.J.Firestone (the principal advertising researcher for the Task Force on Government Information) with the aid of the task force's research staff was able to determine actual, as opposed to reported, expenditures. Even with cooperation from the departments all expenditures related to advertising were difficult to determine.

It was clear to the Task Force, therefore, that if it was to prepare reasonably reliable figures as to likely expenditures in such information fields and in addition to current budgetary estimates of them, it would have to make a direct approach to the departments and agencies of the Federal Government. This approach took the form of a questionnaire...(Task Force,1969: Vol II, p.33)

The survey conducted by the Task Force tried to cover all of the factors discussed above, including wages and production expenses. Although there were difficulties in completing the questionnaire, even with the help of the Task Force staff, Firestone was able to determine that in 1968 approximately \$11 million dollars was spent on advertising and advertising-related items (including personnel, supplies, research, as well as the fees paid to agencies and media costs). In contrast, the figures from Elliott Research for that year indicate a much smaller total, \$3.39 million, to be precise. This gives us a ratio of reported expenses to "actual" expenses of over 3 to 1. This ratio may be helpful in the discussion of current advertising expenses.⁴⁰

³⁹ These figures were obtained through persistent questioning in the House of Commons by Conservative MPs, Perrin Beatty in particular, in 1980 and 1981.

⁴⁰There is little reason to suppose that in the time since Firestone's survey the government has become significantly more efficient in discharging its advertising function. In fact, given

TABLE 4

FEDERAL ADVERTISING EXPENDITURES BY DEPARTMENT
(thousands of dollars)

DEPARTMENT OR AGENCY	1982 Value of Contracts
Indian and Northern Affairs	na
Canadian Wheat Board	na
Solicitor General	na
External Affairs	na
Agriculture	2.5
Communications	12.2
Revenue Canada, Customs and Excise	15.1
National Research Council	21.7
Chief Electoral Officer	27.4
Veteran's Affairs	49.3
Treasury Board	82.9
Fitness and Amateur Sport	87.0
Labour Canada	215.5
Environment	249.3
Fisheries and Oceans	253.4
Royal Canadian Mounted Police	450.2
Consumer and Corporate Affairs	640.2
Supply and Services	763.2
Public Works	1,269.3
Regional Economic Expansion	1,365.0
Transport Canada	1,563.8
Canada Post	1,668.1
Statistics Canada	1,950.7
Secretary of State	2,765.6
Health and Welfare	3,003.7
Finance	3,170.7
National Defence	3,835.0
Employment and Immigration	4,694.5
Energy Mines and Resources	5,044.0
Justice (CUIO)	12,738.3
Industry Trade and Commerce	14,484.1
TOTAL	60,423.5

The present inquiry does not have the resources to mount a survey equivalent to the one conducted by The Task Force on Government Information, but with the help of some indirect measures it is proposed that we attempt to project the 1968 figures into the present day. Developments since 1968, such as the trend to more research and increased advertising bureaucracy – there is now an "AMG", and an "APSC" in

⁴⁹(cont'd) the trends to more research and the three levels of bureaucracy added since Firestone's time, there is good reason to suppose that the ratio of media-evident (as measured by Elliott Research Ltd.) expenditures to actual expenditures has deteriorated. As indicated above, the figures available from Elliott Research data are conservative ones. The ratio between these figures and those published by the Task Force indicate that in 1968 the ratio of broadcast and publishing media figures to total advertising expenses is 3.2 to one. This figure was obtained by dividing the \$11 million figure for 1968 cited in Firestone by the \$3.39 million published by Elliott.

addition to the "DSS" – suggest that the ratio of total costs to media costs is even higher today. It would seem reasonable, therefore to apply this ratio to current data to get a better idea of the actual size of federal government expenditures on advertising in order to make some internal comparisons.

This was done for the years 1953 to 1984 (See Table 3) In order to determine the validity of this projection, the results were compared with recent estimates of total advertising expenditures taken from figures which are reproduced in Stanbury, *et. al.*, 1983. Government departments, in response to questions in the House, were asked to indicate their total advertising expenditures in several years.(see footnote, above) For the period 1981–82, for example, Elliott Research's figures were approximately \$30 million. Departmental estimates for that year revealed expenditures of over \$60 million, however.(Stanbury, 1983:149) The ratio proposed above would predict a total of over \$90 million on the basis of the Elliott data. The discrepancy between the departmental estimates and this estimate can be partly accounted for by the fact that the figure of sixty million, as Stanbury *et.al.* point out, does not include payment to the agency of record, nor does it include the cost of the Advertising Management Group and the DSS's own advertising management section (29 people in 1981). The figures provided by the departments include only *direct* expenditures; staff and departmental administrative costs are not included.⁴¹

As we mentioned earlier, advertising by the federal government, although it has a fairly long history and at least one precedent as a major institution (WWII), has traditionally been a fairly low-key operation. In the 1950s the government had very little interest in advertising and this is reflected in the expenditure data. Even through the early 1960s there were no major growth periods for advertising other than a brief spurt during Canada's centennial year, 1967. ⁴² The decade between 1959 and 1969 saw government advertising grow by an average of 13.8 per cent annually (49 per cent increase in 1967). The 1970s were the growth years in government advertising. Between 1971 and 1975, the years of Information Canada, advertising by the government grew an average of 25 per cent annually. Contrary to the impression that

⁴¹During my interviews the potential size of these costs was pointed out to me. In many departments there are full-time "advertising specialists" as well as information officers who deal with advertising as part of their function. One senior bureaucrat was of the opinion that "official" reports of advertising expenditures were significantly low, he estimated "that much again" was spent but attributed to program budgets or to general "information costs".

⁴²This is not explained by a general lack of interest in advertising; growth in the advertising industry was steady throughout this period. According to the Task Force on Government Information, and before that the Royal Commission on Government Organization (Glassco), the problem lay in the government's (and the bureaucracy's) reluctance to stray too far into "public relations."

TABLE 5

REPORTED AND (ESTIMATED) ACTUAL FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES ON ADVERTISING
(1963-1983)

YEAR	REPORTED (MILLIONS \$)	ESTIMATED (MILLIONS \$)	% CHANGE (5 YR AVG)
1963	1.463	4.68	17.0%
1968	3.398	10.87	26.6%
1973	7.397	23.67	5.6%
1978	28.900	92.48	34.4%
1983	23.980	76.73	1.4%
1984	43.707	139.86	82.3% (1 YR)

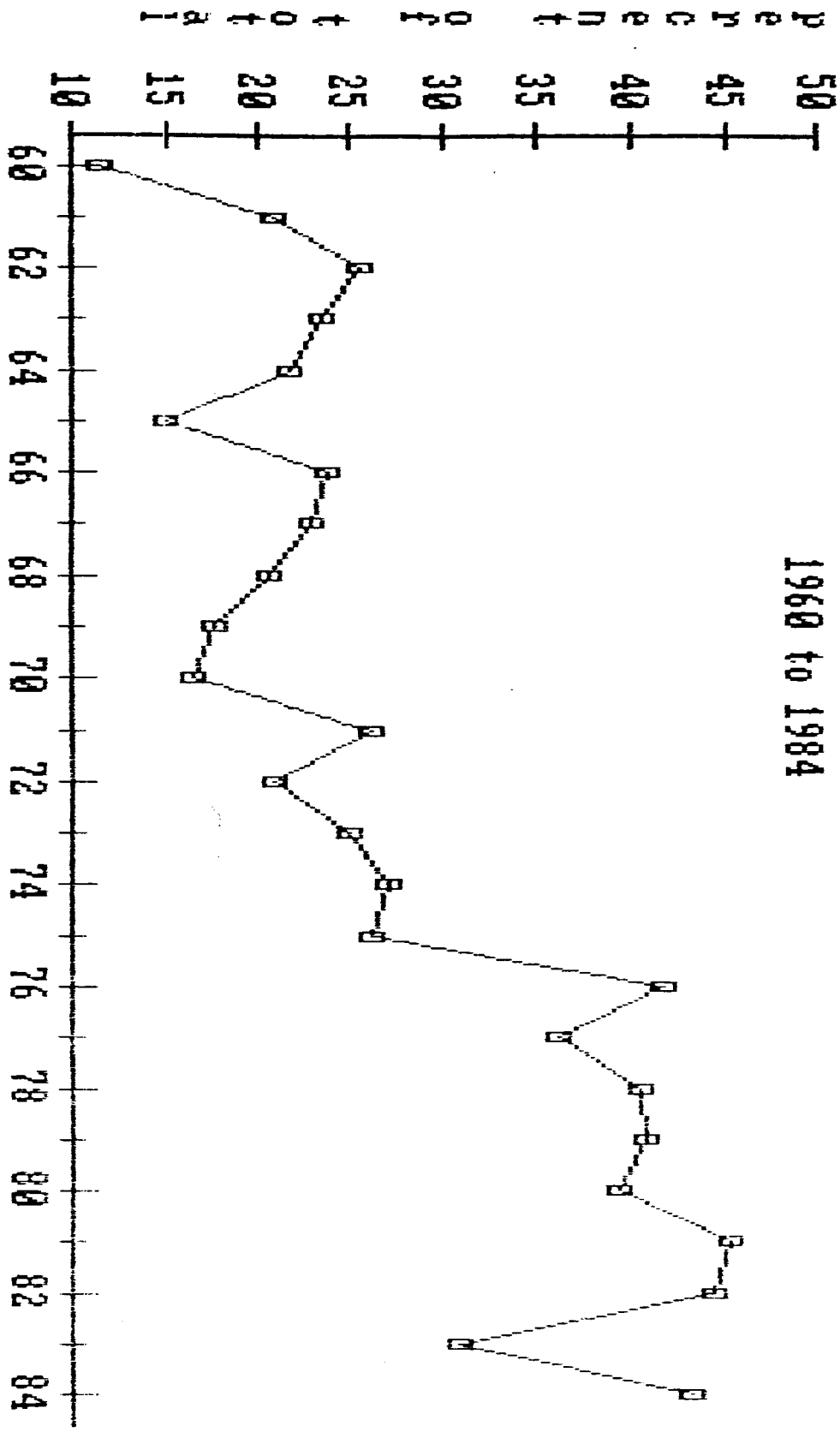
one gets from some commentators (Stanbury *et. al.*, for example), the early 1970s were the longest period of sustained growth in government advertising. The five years of sustained growth in the early seventies were no match for the violent surges of growth in the late seventies, however. In two years in particular, 1976 and 1977, government advertising grew by almost fifty per cent each year. At this point the expenditures had reached such a level that relatively small percentage increases meant very large sums of money. The twenty per cent increases in 1978 and 1981, and the concomitant uproar in the House of Commons, apparently signalled to the government the limits of growth. In 1982 and 1983 there were real declines in the level of funding to advertising. There were, at the time, various commitments from the government of the day (the Liberals) to "ease up" on the advertising. As the figures indicate, however, all this supposed moderation went out the window in 1984. In a move that to this day has not been given the attention it deserves, the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau and John Turner almost doubled its expenditures on advertising. In the wake of a five year period which saw government advertising grow by a mere 1.4 per cent (average 1978-1983) the government of Canada increased advertising expenditures by 82.26 per cent. (See Figure 3) It seems reasonable to conclude that the ratio between visible media expenditures (as measured by Elliot Research Ltd. data) and actual costs of advertising to the taxpayers of Canada, which incomplete departmental estimates already raise to 2 to 1 before other costs are added in, will again approach the 1968 figure of approximately 3.2 to 1. The analysis will proceed, therefore, on the assumption that the approximate figures - produced by a projection using the 1968 ratio - are fairly accurate and offer an indication of the size of government advertising. These estimates of government spending on advertising are intended purely for internal comparisons.⁴³ By internal comparison I mean the

⁴³ When the issue is the impact of government advertising on the advertising industry or on the public then expenditure data as supplied by Elliott research is sufficient and more reliable.

Television as a Percentage of Total Federal Advertising Expenses

1960 to 1984

FIGURE 3



(Annual Figures)

allocation of funds to different programs and administrative responses by the government. For example there has been a steady rise in the amount of money allocated to "information" by the government since the 1960s. Information, because it has a separate accounting category is easy to track within the total of government expenses.⁴⁴ Using the estimates of total advertising expenses we are able to see the extent to which information is provided in the form of advertising and the extent to which that has changed recently.

The information presented here illustrates the increasing extent to which the government relies on advertising to bring information to the people. Advertising has risen from the position of occupying one-fifth of the government's information expenditures to almost one-half. Because these are based on estimated figures there is no doubt some inaccuracy in the results. The general pattern, however, is no doubt true. The government's increased reliance on the electronic mass media to spread its messages is highlighted by the increased use of TV. Figure 3 illustrates the growing influence of television as the medium of choice for government advertisers. This data was collected from the files maintained by Elliott Research Ltd. although it is not part of their published material.

The last part of the chapter has considered government advertising from the expenditure point of view in an attempt not only to provide the background to some of the issues which will be discussed in the next chapter but also to give the reader a more realistic conception of federal government advertising. It has been argued that not only is the government a large and growing advertiser but also that the advertising business in general has been growing in Canada as has the government, aside from all questions of advertising. In relation to both the large advertising business and the immense size of government these days, government advertising, though controversial, is not what one could call a major influence. If the sound and fury over government ads themselves is perhaps overblown the direction that those ads are taking, along with information services in general, is not something we should be complacent about. Although many of those in the next chapter are concerned about what are perhaps minor issues, expenditure and patronage, for example, there are those who see the dangers of government advertising and have already sounded the alarm.

⁴⁴"Information" is one of the 13 "standard objects" of expenditure included in federal government accounting since 1970. Prior to 1970 information-related expenses were accounted for in two different "objects" (09 and 10). Categorized as "03" and broken down into 0301 and 0303, information includes all expenditures for publishing, publicity and advertising including staff and administrative costs. The federal government's total expenditures are provided in the "Blue Books" - Canada's Main Estimates.

TABLE 6
 ADVERTISING COMPARED TO INFORMATION
 AND TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE
 (1963-1983)

YEAR	REPORTED AD EXP. (M \$)	EST. AD EXP. (M \$)	INF. EXP. (M \$)	AD EXP. AS % OF INF. EXP. (%)	TOTAL GOVT EXP. (M \$)
1963	1.463	4.68	21.6	21.6	7552
1968	3.398	10.87	54.5 ¹	20.0	11299
1973	7.397	23.67	48.0	49.3	20912
1978	28.900	92.48	95.0	96.8	45955
1983	23.980	76.73	108.0	36.5	78276
1984	43.707	39.86	290.0	47.9	88615

¹Expo67.

CHAPTER 3

ISSUES AS DEFINED IN VARIOUS FORUMS

So far the thesis has offered a rationale for looking at government advertising and has examined the history of ads as part of federal information policy. Technological influences on the practice of government advertising and expenditure data were also examined. In this chapter the thesis examines government advertising as an issue. Public, media and political views are discussed as well as the academic and trade literature on the subject.

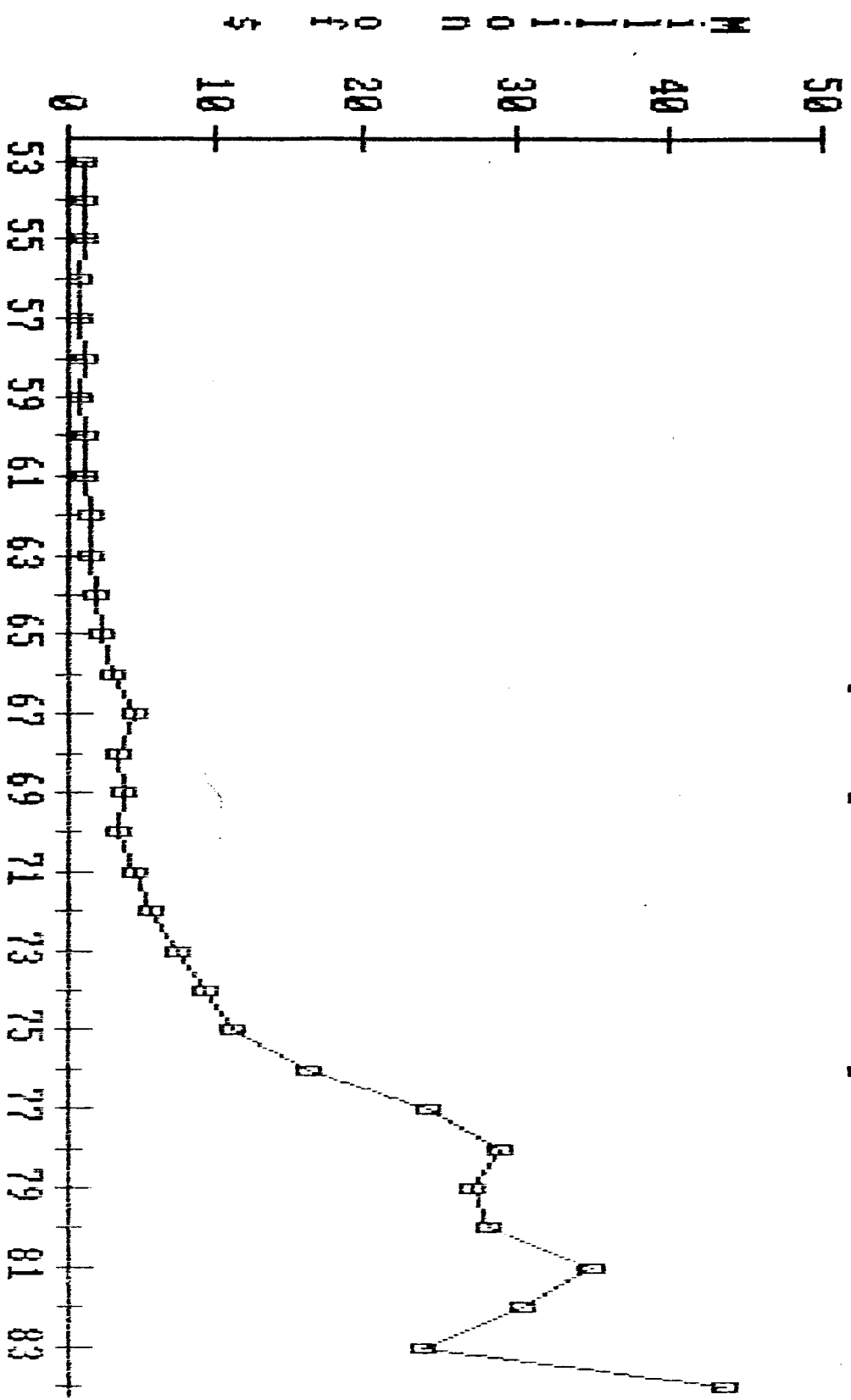
3.1 The Goldfarb Survey

In 1982, at the First Canadian Symposium on Government Advertising,¹ the research firm of Goldfarb Consultants presented a report on the "Public Reaction to Government Advertising." Goldfarb Consultants, which does a lot of work for the Liberal party presented the results of a survey on Canadians' attitudes towards government advertising. According to the authors, the purpose of the study was to "come to grips with the issue of government societal (advocacy) advertising and how the public relates to and responds to this kind of advertising as well as government advertising in general." (1982:1)

Since this survey is really the sole example of (available) public opinion on government advertising, it merits closer attention. The survey was based on preliminary results from focus groups held in Toronto and Montreal. These were used to determine appropriate questions and "to understand the kind of

¹Organized by Societal in Montreal, November 19-21, 1982.

FIGURE 4
Federal Government Spending on Advertising: 1953-84



Yearly total (print only 1953-60).

thinking process that is going on and what is behind the thinking process or contributing to attitude formation." The second part of the research consisted of telephone interviews in four regions: British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. Approximately 250 people in each province were interviewed.

The survey results indicated that, in the provinces surveyed, people generally regard government advertising as legitimate and serving a useful purpose. (1982:5) Three types of advertising in particular received high approval:

- 1) [Advertising] of an informational nature, that is advertising designed to inform people about government programs available to the public.
 - 2) Health and safety oriented advertising; that is, advertising designed to discourage problem behaviour and encourage safer, healthier living habits, especially in cases where there is demonstrated economic, as well as social, benefit derived from such advertising.
 - 3) Humanitarian and consumer behaviour types of advertising that encourages people to buy Canadian, conserve energy, or respect the rights of others, for example.
- (1982:5)

The report notes, however, that a fourth type of government advertising, that which is persuasive or "designed to defend or promote the merits of government policies or programs," is not as widely accepted or approved. Goldfarb Consultants suggest that

people do not want to deny the government the opportunity to state its point of view on policy matters in advertising. But, they are sensitive to how this is done. They want it to be done in a forthright, factual, unbiased, way, not a manipulative way. They are supportive of government advertising of a factual informative nature, but they challenge advertising that they perceive as manipulative or as image building for the government. (1982:5)

The Goldfarb research did not reveal any significant differences between attitudes towards federal and provincial government advertising. In addition, the research also indicates that the issues which have plagued government advertising in the popular press are also sources of concern in the general public:

[I]n the provinces surveyed, there is evidence that shows that even though people generally endorse the right of government to advertise even on policy matters, there is considerable mistrust and cynicism of much of the advertising governments do. There is a feeling that governments too often abuse advertising and use it too much for political ends or image building purposes. There is some sensitivity that some government advertising has no purpose or stated role. There is also some sensitivity to the amount of money governments spend on advertising. (1982:6)

This survey is by no means the final word on the public's attitude toward publicity in the name of good government, but it does show that the public is not quite as polarized as the politicians who represent them or the media would like to think.

3.2 The issues as defined by opposition politicians.

Public attitudes toward government advertising, described above, are by no means as polarized as those expressed by politicians in the House of Commons. Predictably, those on the government side defend advertising as necessary for the well-being of the country while the opposition hammers away at the waste and injustices that advertising represents.

Opposition MPs are willing to discuss advertising and its ramifications on democracy. Their attention, though, tends to be less on the effects that advertising might have on individual political participation than its impact on the party and party politics in representative democracy. Two aspects about government advertising particularly concern opposition members of parliament. The first is the issue of patronage which opposing parties feel gives an advantage to the governing party at election time. Ad agencies will work diligently at election time for little or no pay in the expectation of reward later in the form of lucrative public advertising contracts (this is called "value for service" in the trade). Between elections these "politically sensitive" agencies can also be counted on to make the government/party look good in anticipation of the next trip to the polls. The second concern of politicians is the question of parliamentary prerogative – essentially the practice whereby the politicians get a chance to hear, and debate, new government policy before (or at the same time at least) it is made public. Although this is less a partisan concern than the patronage issue, again it reflects a representational rather than participatory mode of democracy.

MPs have also been active in the debate surrounding the management of government advertising. In fact, information that is gleaned from responses to questions by the opposition members is probably the second largest single source of information (information about information is not readily forthcoming from the federal government) about government advertising programs after the published data by Media Measurement Services of Toronto. Their persistent inquiries have been the basis for articles in both the popular and academic press.²

The question of privilege arose in connection with what the opposition felt was a growing tendency on the government's part to publicize its position without the support of the House of Commons. In particular, the MPs were worried about advertising in support of the new constitution which they opposed

² Stanbury, Gorn and Weinburg's 1983 paper was aided to a large extent by their contact with (then PC critic of Communication) Perrin Beatty.

and had not been able to debate at that time. A ruling by the Speaker of the House (Jeanne Sauve) in October, 1980 clarified the grounds on which there might be a question of privilege.

The spending of public money cannot be the issue, but when a person or a government attempts to interfere with our deliberations through spending public money, or otherwise, directly or indirectly, or acts in contempt of the Houses, such action would constitute a *prima facie* case. However, the interference must be such that the member of the House is truly hindered or intimidated. (*Hansard*, October 17, 1980:3781)

Bolstered with this ruling, Perrin Beatty (Wellington-Dufferin-Simcoe) argued that the leaked plans of the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources (the infamous "Hanright memo") constituted a breach of parliamentary privilege because the memo proposed to interfere with parliament's ability to debate an issue:

The underlying strategy in this communications plan is to achieve three goals, in sequence:

1. Take control of the energy debate.
2. Retain control through action and leadership.
3. Remove 'energy' from the list of high-ranking national concerns.

The same memo, written by Donald Hanright of EMR, was used by opposition MPs as a way of expressing their fears of the potential for propaganda that government advertising represents. As Harvie Andre (Calgary Centre) points out, "the document...talks not about perspective but describes an \$11 million program in some detail and with the kind of words officials use to create a condition rather than transfer facts to the public." (*Hansard*, October 8, 1980:3382)

In 1982, following several years of astonishing growth in the advertising expenditures of government and particularly following several campaigns such as the promotion surrounding the National Energy Program and the Constitution, that infuriated the opposition, the Tories used one of their "Allotted Days" (S.O. 58) to discuss the topic of government advertising. Opposition members began a concerted attack on the past and future advertising practices of the Liberal government.

The potential for propagandizing chills opposition members even further when it is used to promote the government party as opposed to the government's programs. They are also concerned about the use of public money to promote particular ministers:

The best example, of course, is the billboard notice which appeared two blocks from Parliament Hill, the employment and immigration advertisement. It was not designed to inform Canadians about a program or about their rights but to promote the corporate image of the Liberal party and the corporate image of the Minister of Employment and Immigration. (Beatty, *Hansard*, May 3, 1982:16827)

Of course the source of the opposition's outrage may be more jealousy than principals. As one MP points

out, the government has a chance to do the promoting that neither opposition party has:

You are taking advantage of a democratic structure to propagandize the people of Canada. You are using the press to do things that neither of the opposition parties can do. (Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte), *Hansard*, May 3, 1982:16848)

Another major concern of the opposition MPs is the use of tax dollars on promotional schemes at times when the economy is in poor shape and, in their opinion, the money could be better spent elsewhere. The "Helping Canada Work" billboards, cited above, were an example of this. The opposition was particularly incensed that, at a time when over 1 million Canadians were unemployed that the government should institute a promotional campaign that had no apparent job creation goals.

Any Canadian who sees these advertisements must ask himself this first question: How can the government justify its priorities in spending \$4.6 million on advertising to promote the government's corporate image, instead of putting the money where it is necessary, to get Canadians back to work? (Beatty, *Hansard*, May 3, 1982:16826)

3.3 The issues as seen by members of the government.

When subjected to attacks on its advertising policies and programs, the government, for its part, stuck resolutely to the contention that responsible government means an informed electorate and it is the responsibility of the government to inform the people. The government also contends that modern society is too complex to rely solely on the press to provide information. Other considerations are the economic benefits that advertising can provide and the challenge advertising from other jurisdictions represents.

One of the most senior members of the recent Liberal government, at least with regard to advertising, was the Secretary of State and Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Communications, Gerald Regan. Regan, as chairman of the CCC, was a strong defender of the government's policies and activities with regard to advertising. On a typical occasion, when the Liberals were under attack in the house for their advertising practices,³ he indicated that it was his belief that

the essence of responsible government is that government informs the public of its initiatives, policies and laws. We cannot have a responsible government if we do not have an informed electorate. I do not believe it is possible for any government to discharge its responsibility of informing the public without utilizing advertising as a very important tool in the process. ...a public well-informed by factual advertising is better able to utilize existing government programs, better able to judge the wisdom of the programs, and is better able to make its representations through elected members or in whatever manner they desire. (*Hansard*, May 3, 1982:16831)

³ *Hansards*, May 3, 1982

When Jean-Jacques Blais, the minister of supply and services and therefore the minister responsible for the management and execution of government advertising programs, rose in the house to defend government advertising he did so on the basis of a perceived *demand* for information. Blais told the house

I know the opposition tries to conjure up an image of the federal government's spending millions of dollars to beguile Canadians with their own money and to answer questions which no one is asking. This is simply not the case. Canadians are demanding more and more information, and the government is dutybound to ensure that its storehouse of information is open to every Canadian. (Blais,1982:16854)

As mentioned above, this demand for information in a complex world simply cannot be met by the press alone, according to the government.

[The media] do not have a responsibility to report on every government program or its details. It is not their job to tell a person exactly how to qualify for a home insulation grant. That is not what they are about at all. (Regan,1982:16831)

Jean-Jacques Blais, in a widely quoted remark, pointed out that in the good old days, all you "had to do was make a speech, and the next day the national press would have the program nicely laid out for all to see" (Blais,1981:9). Those days, however, are over, according to Blais:

Government is too complex nowadays to rely on "policy by press release". Programs must be explained – and not by reporters, but rather by the people who created them. (Blais,1981:9)

In fact, Regan suggests that *more*, not *less* government advertising needs to be done:

Frankly, based on my experience, I doubt whether we advertise enough. I doubt whether any government advertises enough. I find again and again, not only while this government is in office but under other governments that a tremendous number of people do not know about government programs which they should know about.(Regan,1982:16832)

M Jean LaPierre, Mr Regan's parliamentary secretary, points out that the government has a responsibility to those who cannot read.

Do we tell these people: You cannot have access to information, you cannot have access to government programs? There is a case where television should be used to give people access to the government, because they may not have had the privilege of an education like so many others. ...Obviously, the big oil companies are not going to have any problems getting information on legislation, but I am not so sure my constituent in St. Joachim will afford a trip to Ottawa to get information on the home insulation program... It is tantamount to asking the government to renege on its responsibilities in a democratic participatory system. (LaPierre,1982:16849)

One of the advertising programs instituted by the government which is never questioned by the opposition, or anyone else for that matter,⁴ is the commercial advertising that the government does, to

⁴In numerous interviews virtually all respondents mentioned the commercial advertising by the government in the area of Tourism especially as beyond reproach politically, well done from a professional point of view and economically necessary from a fiscal standpoint.

attract tourists and foreign businesses to Canada. As Gerald Regan points out,

Travel and tourism represent 5 per cent of Canada's gross national product. Tourism generates 1,130,000 jobs in Canada annually. There are well over 1000,000 small businesses whose livelihood and profitability depend on tourism. Total receipts last year were \$16.5 billion. When you use the most accepted multiplier effect formula, you are talking about total personal incomes of \$28.2 billion last year. To support that important industry and make it grow, we will invest a total of \$4.1 million this year in advertising that works. This is a pretty tiny investment in such a vast industry which brings such returns.(Regan,1982:16833)

The government is also concerned about the competition the provinces present in terms of the information available to Canadians. Many Canadians are not made aware of the extent to which the federal government contributes funds for provincially administered programs (health and education are the prime examples). Another defence of federal advertising is also related to provincial initiatives; the "misinformation" about who "really" pays for those programs and services. "Very few people know that the federal government pays for 60 per cent of [health and education] programs which are completely administered by the provinces." (Peterson, 1982:16845) Provinces are also responsible for major persuasive advertising campaigns of their own. These, government members argue, make federal efforts pale in comparison. Thus, for the Liberal government, swimming in an ocean of provincial (Tory) governments, advertising is a way of combatting inroads on their power.

The Province of Ontario, according to the best information I can find, is spending \$18.6 million a year on advertising. How would you like to apply that per capita as against the Government of Canada reaching a public that is spread over the entire country and is, therefore, much more expensive to reach on each subject with which the government has to deal? (Regan,1982:16832)

And besides, the Liberals maintain, the provinces are far worse than the federal government, at least in terms of spending per person.

Now that the accounts for the last fiscal year are reconciled, the discounts taken and the actual expenditures compiled, we have a total of \$60.5 million for Government of Canada advertising. This compares with reported figures for only two of the ten provinces of Canada of approximately \$30 million spent by Ontario and Quebec for their government advertising.⁵ (Blais,1982:16854)

Although the examples cited are from the previous Liberal government, they are by no means specific to that party. The Progressive Conservatives, during the Clark government, were instrumental in setting up a more coordinated advertising administration and felt quite strongly that the public face of the state could be best presented through advertising. Similarly, the Mulroney government of 1984, although it roundly criticised advertising when in opposition, has not made the sweeping changes that it might have

⁵ It should be recognized that the figures Blais cited for the provincial governments include expenditures by provincial crown corporations and the provincial lotteries.

done. In fact, although budget figures will not be available until next year, none of those interviewed expressed the opinion that advertising had become a lower priority with this government. Provincial governments also exhibit the same schizophrenia; in opposition advertising is regarded as the devil's tool (except when it is used to bring in tourists) but from the government benches it becomes an instrument of enlightenment and hope.

To summarize, the politicians see advertising as providing the necessary information for democratic government and efficiency. Advertising is also thought to be important in meeting the shortfall between the information that exists and the information that the media is able or willing to provide. Government advertising is a legitimate tool in the commercial ventures of the government or in support of the commercial ventures of private Canadians be they fish camps or ski resorts. Finally, government advertising is a valuable and necessary response to perceived attacks or competition from the provinces for the loyalty or legitimating feelings of voters in all provinces.

3.4 The Issues as Defined in the Media

Although the public generally agrees that government has a right to communicate, though they question the way that right is exercised on occasion, and politicians are split, as one might expect, with those in opposition highly critical of government advertising and those in the government defensive, the media appear to have no such reservations. Government advertising can invariably expect "bad press." Advertising by the government is not only a popular topic, it is invariably the subject of strong criticism either in the form of reported quotes from opposition spokesmen or in commentary from columnists. A previous section dealt with opposition comments; this section will be restricted to comments by members of the press themselves.

In general terms, the most impressive finding produced by a review of journalistic attention to government ads is probably simply the large amount of it. In contrast to the academic community, which has tended to ignore government advertising (with some notable exceptions, which we will discuss below), the news media are very attentive to any developments. An informal survey of the number of the entries in the annual indexes of the *Canadian Periodical Index* under the headings "Advertising-Government" and "Government-Publicity" reveals the extent of their comparative diligence. While Canadian journalists file between 50 and 100 stories in these categories each year, the indexes of the *Times* of London and the

New York Times do not even maintain similar categories on a regular basis. If advertising by the government is mentioned in either of these papers it is seldom more than twice per year.

Because of this vigilance, the press raise many issues with regard to government advertising. By far the most common denominator in media coverage is the "expenditure story." Often these take the form of quotes from members of the opposition or reports of the expenditure figures as published by Elliott Research Ltd of Toronto (see Chapter 2).

The press also raises the issue of the use of advertising to step around the media's traditional role as mediators between the politicians and the public. Vaughn Palmer, a *Vancouver Sun* columnist, discusses this problem in connection with the proposal, by the premier of B.C., to use "direct communication" in order to "engage people in the process of developing policy." (Palmer, 1984) Palmer points out that current trends in public information include: "centralization of government information in a single office, the use of pollsters to get direct public response to government programs, ...reliance on advertising, and the premier's reluctance to grant interviews, especially during last year's Solidarity troubles."(1984)

The government is also taken to task for "polishing apples" at public expense. That is, when they spend money to make themselves look good as opposed to putting the money into programs. Journalists argue that the federal government takes this practice to its extreme. (Globe, 1984:7) In an editorial in the *Globe and Mail*, the paper turns its attention to advertising by the government which appears to be blatantly political. In particular, they are concerned about flyers and booklets distributed by the CUIO which tell Canadians "We're in it together, together we'll solve it." This, the editorialist claims, is what will drive the Liberals from power and is indicative of poor judgment: "the distinction between party and state has all but faded from the Liberal mind." (1984:7) According to the *Globe and Mail*

In the first seven months of 1984, the "natural governing party" more than doubled advertising expenditures in the CUIO to \$12.3 million from \$4.9 million a year earlier. Since March alone, the CUIO has awarded \$9.5 million in ad contracts to Liberal-connected firms, almost doubling the CUIO's entire estimated budget for 1984-1985.(1984:7)

The cost is not merely in dollars and cents, however.

...the cavalier fusion of party and public interest imposes a greater cost in a much more profound currency: Canadian political culture. It devalues democracy itself to parade such cynicism before the electorate. These may be small abuses in the context of the government as a whole, but they are sharp and obvious prods to the sensibilities of people with democratic instincts. (1984:7)

Finally, the press persistently keep track of the patronage issue which surrounds government advertising. Typical of these stories is this one describing the contracts awarded to the former employer of a federal bureaucrat and former Tory campaign executive. (*Ottawa Citizen*, 1985) Or the amount awarded to "Liberal" firms prior to the 1984 election. In two months in the summer of 1984 the Liberal government awarded advertising contracts worth \$21.5 million. In the same period the year before, one third that amount, \$7.5 million was spent. In 1982 \$15.2 million was spent in the summer, a period in which the government "front-end loads" (spending in anticipation of campaigns that will break in the fall) "all the time";, according to 'an official in the AMG'. All of the recipients of contracts were "Liberal" agencies.(Westell, 1984) Palmer questions the press's ability to cover political events, supporting Blais's (and others') contention that these times are too complex to rely only on the press to publicise government:

I must add that I find it difficult, as an employee of one of the two Vancouver dailies, to insist that the press can do as thorough job as it used to in covering the government in light of recent policy changes regarding coverage of the B.C. legislature.

Two years ago *The Sun* and the *Province* maintained six reporters and two columnists on permanent assignment in the provincial capital. The number has now dropped to one *Province* reporter, one *Sun* reporter, and one *Sun* columnist (myself), though *The Sun* plans to add a second reporter later this year.

Those are not the only news organizations covering provincial affairs in Victoria, but such a drop in key staff has meant a drop in the volume of news disseminated from the provincial capital. (Palmer, 1984)

To summarize, then, the main issues raised by the press concern patronage, improper publicity for the government and attempts to skirt the "traditional" role of the press.

3.5 The Literature defines the issues

One of the only serious treatments of government advertising in the Canadian academic literature is also one of the most recent. Professors W. T. Stanbury, Gerald Gorn and Charles Weinberg of the University of British Columbia have provided a provoking look at federal ad expenditures in their contribution to the 1983 version of *How Ottawa Spends*, edited by Bruce Doern.

Stanbury, Gorn and Weinberg identify several issues with regard to federal government advertising. First, they wonder about the propriety of the seemingly uncriticizable Tourism ads. Would the government think of voting a cash subsidy for the tourism industry of approximately \$10 million dollars, they wonder? In the area of propoganda, Stanbury, Gorn and Weinburg also mention the infamous

Hanright memo which sought to "dramatically alter the public's perceptions of the energy situation and thereby change their beliefs."

Stanbury, Weinberg and Gorn also wonder about the higher "nonmedia" costs associated with government advertising. Essentially, the non-media costs are those expenditures to agencies for administrative and production work on a campaign. Stanbury, Gorn and Weinberg cite some figures which suggest that non-media expenditures exceed 50 per cent of total outlays. If this figure is compared to the private sector (Stanbury, Gorn and Weinberg admit that their research on this is only preliminary) it appears that the federal government is paying about twice as much as private corporations for this feature.

The Department of Supply and Services (DSS), which is responsible for the contracting of government advertising suggests that there are some very good reasons for this. The federal government, unlike companies in the private sector, will never resort to translations of equivalent advertisements from French to English or vice-versa. All campaigns are separate. This, of course, adds expense. The government also tends not to engage in "target-marketing"; it will not ignore certain ethnic groups or less populous regions just because they can get more "bang for their buck" elsewhere. In addition, the government often engages in "one-shot" type of promotions, such as are common at expositions and fairs or foreign trade shows. Others, outside the government, have suggested that the lack of clarity and easily defined objectives in government advertising can easily lead to higher costs as creative and production people work longer to refine the desired product. The other impediment to efficient operation is the number of levels of approval that a government-sponsored advertising campaign requires. Stanbury, Gorn and Weinberg note, however, that "there is another possible reason for the government's higher creative/production costs." (1983:151) This is the tendency of the government to award lucrative contracts for production and creative work (the part of the agency's fee that is retained "in-house") in the expectation that "the party may obtain the services of advertising experts for little or no payment during election campaigns." (151)

Other than this article, a review of the relevant Canadian literature reveals mainly the lack of interest on the part of the academic community in government advertising. For example, in a recent article on politics and the media, Fletcher and Taras (1984) mention government advertising in a single paragraph:

Recently, governments have turned to advocacy advertising to bypass the gallery. Using mainly television, governments have employed spot commercials to promote everything from

energy conservation and physical fitness to national unity and constitutional reform. An ancillary objective, it seems clear, is to improve the government's image at public expense. Such advertising played an important role in the 1980 Quebec referendum campaign.(1984:208-209)

Fortunately there have been some very good books and articles in the American literature, and while their situation is not exactly comparable, some of the issues raised are. Mark Yudof takes a legal approach to government information, dividing the issues into "sins of commission" and "sins of omission." Sins of commission are those things the government chooses to say (or do: Yudof includes "informational" activities such as laws and symbolic gestures) which interfere with the citizen's right to make up his own mind on a subject. Sins of omission are committed when the government chooses to keep something secret or omits to divulge that which it knows. This is mainly relevant with regard to freedom of information.⁶

In the first instance, the government errs, by "withholding information that might undermine perceptions of the success of government programs or of the competence of government leaders."(Yudof, 1983:3) This is a so-called sin of omission. The Minister of Energy withholding documents relating to the takeover of Petrofina by PetroCanada is an example of this process.

The government can also err on the other side when it is involved in "deliberate distortion or misrepresentation of facts" (Yudof, 1982:3). Opposition MPs felt that the program by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, during the early 1980s, to "remove 'energy' from the list of high-ranking national concerns"⁷ fit this latter category. In a recent article Dean Yarwood and Ben Enis (1982) look at government advertising in the U.S and the development of the use of advertising and publicity in the executive branch of the national government [of the US] with the intention of documenting the size and impact of these activities. Although the details of American practice do not concern us here, in their concluding section, Yarwood and Enis touch on the "problems associated with government publicity in a democracy." (1982:37)

Yarwood and Enis preface their comments on the problems associated with government publicity by recognizing the value that some publicity programs can have.

...modern U.S. agriculture, the envy of the free world, was given an important boost by DOA's public information program which reported the latest research and conveyed proper

⁶ Claus Mueller expands this somewhat by identifying three types of "distorted communication" : 'directed', 'arrested', and 'constrained'.

⁷ Hanright memo, 1981:3. See also *Hansards*, October 21, 1980:3879.

agricultural techniques to the nation's farmers. The work of Smokey the Bear, Woodsy Owl, and Johnny Horizon on behalf of the environment is the stuff of legends. One might as well attack Mickey Mouse as to speak ill of these creatures.(1982:37)

Technological complexity and declines in traditional methods of social control (church and family) as well as massive campaigns by commercial enterprises (alcohol and tobacco promotion in particular) have given new importance to advertising by public authorities, they argue. Nonetheless, the necessity of government advertising does not eliminate questions as to the way these publicity programs should be administered.

3.5.1 Propaganda

Yarwood and Enis make a distinction, based on the work of William Stephenson (1967: 33-35, 192-95) and Dan Nimmo (1974:143-47) between advertising and propaganda. Essentially the distinction turns on the question of political control or influence on particular choices.

This distinction between propaganda and advertising is offered by Stephenson and Nimmo in their discussions of symbols as components of systems of political control and as components of systems of convergent selectivity. In the former, symbols are used to manipulate groups of people and frequent appeals are made to establish belief systems which reinforce the existing order (as with propaganda); in the latter, the appeal is to individuals to do something such as buy a product and there are competing sources of symbols from which individuals can make choices (as with advertising).(p.46)

Yarwood and Enis note that many of the government's publicity programs do "regularly use symbols that support social order and appeal to deeply held belief systems." (p.42) They also wonder about the effect of the perpetual representation of the government as some kind of a "helpful nanny"⁸ will have on politics.

With government cast in this role in much of its publicity, does this not risk blunting healthy skepticism toward government by the populace? (p.42)

3.5.2 Credibility

Yudof (1983) wonders if one of the greatest dangers of government publicity lies not in its explicit message but in the implied message of those ads which indicate that the government is taking care of us.

Paletz, Pearson and Willis (*Public Service Advertising*, 1978) note this problem also:

thus while PSAs [Public Service Advertisements] may explicitly instruct viewers on how to deal with a specific problem, they appear implicitly to suggest that the government is beneficent and working to their advantage. (1978:27)

⁸ "It tells us to watch our diet, to get plenty of rest and exercise, to have our blood pressure checked regularly, not to be "fuelish," to drive safely, to buckle seatbelts, and to protect the environment."(p.42)

Yarwood and Enis also relate the "well-documented diminution of the credibility of government today" (p.42) to advertising and publicity by the government. They cite overly optimistic reports from the Department of Defence (during the Vietnam War), the Environmental Protection Agency (with regard to fuel mileage of cars) and the U.S. Savings Bonds program (which are not, apparently, a good investment in times of inflation) as examples of incidents where the public felt "duped" by the government. In Canada, it could be argued, similar problems have emerged when the government advertised for Urea-Formaldehyde Foam Insulation. The ensuing confusion when the foam was found to cause health problems was damaging to the government's credibility.

3.5.3 Executive Power

In the United States, the system of government, although federal, is sufficiently different from our own that Yarwood and Enis's comments on advertising and publicity being used to attract "independent political support" for programs and agencies seems unclear and unlikely in the Canadian context. There is never any question of the government majority in the House of Commons supporting the initiatives of a particular department if the moves are part of a Cabinet decision. The tradition of government solidarity sees to that. In the American Senate and House of Representatives, however, even if the President represents the same party as those in majority in either House there is no assurance that that majority will support his moves. It makes sense, therefore, for an agency to raise its profile. As Yarwood and Enis point out, once independent political support is achieved "this support can be converted through the workings of the political process into increased budgets, more personnel and new program authorizations." (p.43) The authors describe the process as this:

Advertising in the private sector is often part of a strategy of *product differentiation* as a way of reducing the effect of price competition. In the public sector, it can be regarded as a strategy to enhance name recognition so that the agency involved is not forced to rely solely on its record of service delivery as a source of support. (p.43)

At first glance this appeared to be a highly improbable motive for governmental advertising campaigns, for reasons, mentioned above, of parliamentary tradition. Through interviews and correspondence, however, a picture began to emerge that, while different in many ways to the American pattern suggested by Yarwood and Enis, also exhibited some surprising similarities.

Although Canadian government departments do not engage in advertising in order to win support in the Senate they do use it to gain power. At the most mundane level advertising campaigns are part of the

personal power ambitions of individual bureaucrats. As one respondent noted,

Quite simply, some advertising managers in the public service are out to spend the tax dollars to reap honors from advertising associations, justify higher salaries, and, because they're poor managers who don't have a marketing vice-president breathing down their neck, they can fool their ADM's who don't have a yardstick within the government to judge costs or results. Measurement and return on investment just never arise so managers spend, spend, spend until something wins an award. With the award and a high budget responsibility in hand, the manager submits a letter justifying a salary increase or reclassification. It's not all that sinister.⁹

At a more senior level, Ministers also utilize the public face of their department as a career tool, whether it is within the Cabinet or in a leadership contest. The real executive government in Canada, the so-called "inner-cabinet", retains its own hold on the overall direction of government advertising through the Cabinet Committee on Communications and, until recently, the Canadian Unity Information Office (CUIO). Through these organizations, and occasionally through other "super" ministries such as Energy Mines and Resources during Marc Lalonde's tenure there, the political ambitions of the Prime Minister and senior cabinet ministers are played out. Some of the best examples of this are the programs put in place by the federal Liberals after their victory over the short-lived government of Joe Clark. The National Energy Program and the Constitution both depended heavily on advertising and publicity in their execution and both constituted an attempt by the federal government to introduce some *product differentiation* into politics. That is, they were trying to compete with provincial initiatives and backlash in these areas.

3.5.4 Government and the Media

Yarwood and Enis are concerned that the existence of the government as a paying customer of the media outlets would unduly influence those outlets and result in a degradation of freedom of expression. In the context of the Vietnam War, they note that media may not be as resilient to influence as might be hoped. Writing after the publishing of *The Pentagon Papers*, Harry S. Ashmore, President of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, attempted to assess the role of the news media in government deception about the American involvement in Vietnam. He wrote:

The media as presently constituted could not function without the array of skills and resources provided them without cost in the name of public relations; and this consideration is compounded by the further reliance on advertising or political favors derived from the same sources. (1971:25)

⁹Letter from Dana Doiron, Director, Communication Services, Institute for Research on Public Policy. Letter, February 2, 1982.

Government interference in the media is difficult to measure and subject to all of the methodological vagaries of any content analysis. Nonetheless, in the Canadian context interference with the press in the form of advertising contracts given or not given has a very real and dangerous history. It is the history of government manipulation of the ethnic press in this country, a form of manipulation decried by the owners of the media outlets but insidious because of the limited markets most of these publications enjoy. For the average publisher of an ethnic publication, government support in the form of advertising is a vital part of his or her livelihood. The Liberal party claimed to be sensitive to this issue and was critical of the PCs desire for "efficiency" in government advertising. The parliamentary secretary to Gerald Regan, M. LaPierre, pointed out that many papers in the ethnic media would fold were it not for federal government publicity, although in terms of numbers perhaps, they do not merit the amount of support that they get. ("we all know that Canada has an ethnic press representing quite a few groups who depend on government publicity to survive...") (*Hansards*, May 3, 1982:16850) This support, M. LaPierre argues, *contributes* to the freedom of the press: "thanks to publicity, the press can write even more, radio and television stations can survive." (16850)

3.5.5 Checks and Balances

Or, in Yarrow and Enis's words, "Who Guards the Guardians?". Yarrow and Enis wonder what controls there will be over government advertising and publicity and who will protect the citizenry from potential abuses. Their concern is understandable, given the history of abuse of power by previous administrations (Nixon's secrecy and the Watergate deception). They propose several alternative locii for this control: the General Accounting Office (somewhat akin to our Treasury Board) and the FTC (Federal Trade Commission), which has some statutory status in the area of regulation of advertising. The GAO, however, is more concerned with "budgetary efficiency" than program effectiveness or the propaganda content therein. Similarly, the FTC is reluctant to tackle such a political hot-potato, and, as Wilson and Rachal (1983:3-14) have pointed out, the government finds it much easier to regulate business than its own operations.

In Canada the problem of checks and balances is, if anything, more pronounced. Although the Treasury Board does have strong *de facto* powers of control over government departments in the area of advertising its ability to exercise these powers is severely hampered by the interference of Ministers and political staff in a department. The department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (CCA), which has

jurisdiction over commercial advertising, has no such mandate with regard to public advertising. This is a function both of the explicit wording of the Act which gives CCA its powers in this area and the principle of *lese majeste*, the (king) can do no wrong.

CHAPTER 4

INTERVIEWS

The historical overview suggests that major changes were afoot in the federal government's information services, beginning in the late 1960s. At first haltingly, and with the occasional blunder (Information Canada), the publicity arm of government has grown both in size and importance. The expenditure data gives some indication of the size of government advertising but only an indirect look at the importance ascribed to information services and advertising in particular. Clearly advertising is important, given the amount of money poured into it and the extent to which the government is willing to put up with bad publicity in the name of getting their message across. What I hoped to determine was why it was important in the eyes of those responsible for creating it.

Early on in the research project it was decided that direct contact with the people responsible for federal government advertising offered the greatest potential for insight in this area. This is partly because of a real lack of secondary research. Despite some thorough work on expenditures by Stanbury, Gorn and Weinburg, no one really knew what was going on in the information services, except that they were spending a lot of money and getting into trouble in the press and parliament for it. Although the media and MPs did a great deal to bring advertising operations out into the open, there was little concern for the details; the 'people' changes that I felt were largely, if not responsible then necessary for the changes to government advertising practices.

As described in the previous chapter, there are five main issues in the discussion of government advertising: propaganda, credibility, power (federal versus provincial), the media and control. Propaganda as a feature of modern society predates even the nation-state, having its origins in the "propagation of the faith" for the Catholic church. Since the era of Dr Goebbels, however, it has taken on a decidedly sinister connotation, provoking a paranoia of propaganda in the Western world. In interviews with both the bureaucrats and the advertising people who serve the government there were some who were acutely aware of the propagandistic aspects of their work. Others scoffed at the idea but all recognized it as an issue.

The issue of credibility, the notion that the federal government's legitimacy is at stake and may suffer rather than be enhanced by publicity programs which backfire was not as salient an issue with those interviewed. The issue, as defined by the media and in academic literature, tends to focus on the particular event which could harm credibility. The UFFI issue is an example of this. Within the government,

however, there is a more general concern with the overall legitimacy of the federal arrangement and the way that publicity can be used to counter any deterioration in that legitimacy. This concern is related to the third issue identified with government advertising, the problem of power conflicts.

Since the early 1960s provincial governments in Canada have begun to have more of a presence in the political spectrum. One of the areas of presence which caused considerable controversy was the public battle, through paid advertising, between two levels of government, be it over the crow rate or the constitution. Less controversial in the public eye, perhaps, but a concern within the administrations at both levels, are the more pragmatic issues such as tourism advertising and the conflicts that arise there. Rochelle LaDouceur, an advertising specialist with Health and Welfare Canada (HWC), described the integration of federal government advertising with provincial campaigns. Although our historical overview revealed that in many cases government ads were in response to and in competition with ads placed by the provinces, in some cases provincial co-ordination was arranged. Probably the most successful of these was the "Dialogue on Drinking" campaign, which had active participation from the provinces in the form of displays set up in government liquor stores, etc. In this instance the federal department was accustomed to initiating programs which the provinces executed; health care has always been a provincial responsibility with major federal funding, especially in recent years.

On the other side of the coin are those instances where federal advertising is managed so as to have the least impact within the provinces. An example of this, probably the only example, is tourism advertising.

Due to provincial pressure, the Canadian advertising budget [of Tourism Canada] was reduced and finally virtually eliminated. The provinces argued that federal tourism advertising offset their own efforts; they wanted their inhabitants to stay in the province and we, the feds, tried to get them to travel inter-provincially. Ontario especially felt disadvantaged, because they had the most to lose and the least to gain from increased interprovincial travel.

The fourth major issue identified in the academic literature is the influence government advertising has on the press. This, as one might expect, is not an issue that is raised very often in the media itself. Nor is it something that government employees or advertising agency people ever talked about directly. The exception to this general disregard is in connection with ethnic newspapers. In the United States, on the other hand, influence on the media is a primary concern of those who discuss government advertising. Perhaps the discrepancy is due to the fact that the Americans, who do not have a long tradition of government support of the press through paid advertising, are uncertain about this unknown variable. In

Canada the media appear to have grown accustomed to both federal and provincial advertising largess.

There is considerable concern within the bureaucracy and within the advertising industry regarding the lack of controls on federal government advertising. The advertising practitioners are concerned because they find that political interference often results in either inferior or unclear advertising. They are also uneasy with the attention that controversial advertising gets in the press.¹ The professional manager within the bureaucracy is equally concerned because he finds that political interference makes a sham of the rules and regulations which normally govern the operation of the civil service and its bureaucracy. Several of those interviewed were appalled at the different standards applied to advertising as opposed to other items of federal expenditure.

The problems associated with government advertising, something rarely mentioned by the opposition or the press, and certainly not by the government itself, are illustrative, not only of the difficulties in incorporating advertising into the federal bureaucratic mold but also of the directions and plans of those advertising professionals within the government.

One of the on-going difficulties for an advertising professional working for the government is the fact that senior bureaucrats very seldom "speak the language." They are unfamiliar with, and unappreciative of, the potential and scope of advertising. This is in contrast to other major advertisers in private industry where, as in the case of Proctor and Gamble, for example, most of the senior vice-presidents come from the "marketing" side of the company. In the words of an advertising manager at Health and Welfare Canada (HWC), "they think PR means press releases and three cocktail lunches..."²

A contact in Tourism Canada made the equation even clearer. In his words, "Advertising and bureaucracy are antithetical." As an example of this phenomenon, he pointed to the confusion following the election of a new party to government.

...after every change in government, regardless of when this occurs, there is a 5 - 7 month hiatus in advertising until new agencies are appointed and receive government contracts and

¹As mentioned earlier, the media coverage of non-governmental advertising is almost non-existent and to the extent that it does occur is almost always laudatory. The exception is when private industry "oversteps the bounds" of decency or legality. Once this has occurred, the media are ready to play watchdog. The government, on the other hand, is subjected to constant attention and criticism about its advertising.

²Interview with Rochelle LaDouceur, HWC, June 25, 1985.

new budget approvals. This hiatus destroys tourism advertising plans which are, of necessity, seasonally oriented. In other departments it forces the compression of advertising spending into a short period because the agency cannot act until all contracts are issued, signed and approved, and budgets are 'released'.³

Andre Contant, Director of advertising for Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC), maintained that "ninety-five percent of the Ottawa people [involved in advertising] are *not* qualified." In his words, advertising in the federal government is overcrowded with bureaucrats, strangled by paper, and over-analyzed. Contant also complained about the origins of the directors of information; they are, by and large, former newspapermen who become political press aides and through that connection are placed in charge of "communication". Bob Byron, current chief of the Advertising Management Group (AMG), also noted the lack of qualified people. Since he has to approve all advertising programs done by the government, he sees to what extent communication plans are often an afterthought of a program. He also attributes this to the lack of advertising people in the upper levels of the civil service hierarchy.

There are also the difficulties of managing a major advertising campaign with budgets that come from an overall management committee of the department. There is seldom, at that level, an appreciation of the costs of advertising. Moreover, as one person interviewed mentioned, budgets must be submitted *before* any meetings with an ad agency can be arranged. Only at that point is an agency hired and the campaign proceed. Because of this she is required to guess her next year's plans without any input from the real professionals, the ad agency.

The fact that plans can be made only one year at a time also makes life difficult for an advertising manager. Apparently, in television, most good advertisers purchase their air-time 2 to 3 years in advance. When LaDouceur finally gets to make her purchases she finds that all the good spots are gone, not to mention all of the bargains. This, for Contant, is one of the main problems for a government advertiser; expenditures are not based on objectives but on budget allocations that are set before you begin. This can result in too much money, as well as too little.

In addition to these five issues, identified in the previous chapter as those which are most of concern about government advertising, there is an additional issue which, although it is not touched on by the media, the academics or the opposition politicians, was found to be very important to both the public servants in charge of campaigns and the agency personnel who execute them. I refer to the real concern by

³Correspondence with F.L. Torrington, July 24, 1985

bureaucrats and the public about our health and safety and the desire to do something about it through advertising. In several interviews with the employees of a department which does a great deal of advertising of this type – Health and Welfare Canada – very real concerns were expressed about the need for a public presence in advertising. Both Rochelle LaDouceur and Garwood Tripp, advertising specialists in alcohol and smoking respectively, spoke with passion about their desire to contribute something to counter the millions being spent by the breweries, distilleries and tobacco companies to promote their various death-inducing products. Of particular concern for both people were the under 18 year old women (girls) being lured in increasing numbers into the consumption of alcohol and cigarettes in particular.

Although the federal government is the largest advertiser in the country it spreads this money over many different areas. The opposite, of course is true for the advertising done by those in a particular consumer product group. Not only are beer ads good for a company but they are good for beer sales in general. For LaDouceur, with a budget of less than \$1 million and considerable bureaucratic and political obstacles to efficient spending of that amount the battle with teenage alcoholism seemed perilously unfavourable for the government. Far from the omniscient persuaders regaled in newspaper editorials, many of the advertising professionals who work for the government are beleaguered hopefuls, trying to achieve what they truly believe to be worthwhile goals for the whole country. The Goldfarb survey, discussed in the previous chapter, indicates that "the average Canadian" can relate to these problems and to some extent supports efforts in this area.

In the preceding examples I have tried to outline, in terms of the issues described in the previous chapter, the main concerns of those interviewed. Each of these issues is of considerable importance and worthy of further specific research. What I would like to do in this chapter is initiate that effort by exploring a bit further the range of views within the bureaucracy and in the advertising agencies on each of these topics. I solicited these views through personal interviews and correspondence.

Interviews were conducted in person during a research trip to Toronto and Ottawa in June, 1985. Although those interviewed do not represent a large sample of information people employed (either directly or indirectly, through an agency) by the government, I was able to contact representatives of almost all aspects of the business and so hopefully was able to gain knowledge of the range of views.

In earlier research on a particular information arm of the federal government, the Canadian Unity Information Office (CUIO), I was struck by several comments by directors-general of information in other

departments: these senior bureaucrats were unhappy with the "style" of operations at the CUIO. Moreover, they told me, it was counter to all that they had been accustomed to in government information services. These administrators were taken aback by the "Madison Avenue" (Yonge Street) tactics of the advertising produced for the federal "non" campaign headquarters. Much of this distaste was directed toward the "Toronto people" brought in to fight the PQ. Since that time the "PR" approach had spread throughout the government's information services and, as the interviews revealed, one of the things which spread along with this approach was the awareness of and concern for the propaganda aspects of this work.

Propaganda, as mentioned in the previous chapter, can be distinguished in a theoretical sense from information. The academic distinction, though valid, is inadequate in the day to day world of government advertising. One member of the public service who has a long career in public sector advertising referred to all of his work as "propaganda" and ascribed that title to all government advertising. Such candor is not widespread, however, as a contact at the Treasury Board – the agency which oversees all government advertising – made clear to me. He noted that until recently government personnel would not acknowledge that they ever "sold" anything. This reluctance to speak of "selling", however, is a dying sentiment. Jim Dubroy at Treasury Board informed me that in discussions about government information strategies the term in vogue now is "marketing plan" or "marketing strategy".⁴

Not only are the bureaucrats more willing to talk about marketing the government, but they are changing the way they market the government. This has been noticed particularly strongly by those who do research for the government:

over the past ten to fifteen years, ads [by the government] have gone from being descriptive to being exhortatory; they are systematically trying to change behaviour.⁵]*

Programs which are intended to change behaviour require not only careful planning but also research which will show "before and after" results to justify the expenditures. In fact all of those interviewed, either in the industry or in the government, felt that the amount of research had increased significantly in the last decade.

The attitude that a democratic government has a legitimate role to play in propagandizing its populace is a development, McKinnon argued, that grew out of the government's active role after the

⁴This is the equivalent to the marketing strategies discussed in chapter 2.

⁵Interview with Ian McKinnon, Decima Research, Toronto, June 26, 1985.

1960s. He admits that many of the social programmes associated with interventionist government had their beginnings much earlier, but the difference between socially progressive legislation of the 1960s and the 1970s (Trudeau era) was that Trudeau and his cronies focussed on communication as a dynamic force behind change. No longer was it necessary to provide the infrastructure for social reform; from the communication perspective one need only describe the desired objective.⁶

Those in the research business were in a unique perspective to observe this phenomenon. Once one makes changing behaviour the objective for government information programs, the procedures – not only for developing the tools but also for evaluating the results – become very elaborate.

To the extent that such programs are for "worthy" goals – such as anti-smoking or alcohol abuse awareness – the methods seem non-problematic for the civil servants. This, too, represents something of a shift from the attitudes and practices of civil servants described in the *To Know and Be Known* report. There is even a tendency to separate "good" government advertising from "bad" government advertising.⁷ The most striking example of this tendency came from a government employee who had been closely associated with some of the most "political" advertising campaigns that the government had put on, the anti-"yes" campaign during the referendum in Quebec put on by the CUIO. Now working for Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC), this respondent indicated that she did not even associate her present work with government advertising as such. For her the term "government advertising" was reserved for the partisan efforts and should not be associated with the efforts of EIC and other departments which were doing "good work". Advertising for health and welfare issues, though paid for by the government, did not in her mind mean government in the generic sense. It would seem that for those in the public service that take pride in their work it is necessary to distance themselves somewhat from the partisan aspects of the job.

The differences in opinion about just what is "political" and what is "propagandistic" about government advertising is perhaps partly explained by the comments by the current President of the Advertising Management Group (AMG), Bob Byron. Byron cautions that any discussion of government

⁶Interview with Ian McKinnon, Toronto, June 26, 1985.

⁷This was also noted in our discussion of "the issues" as perceived by the politicians; opposition members in the House of Commons often indicated that they had nothing against the "useful" Tourism advertising or health advertising. What they were concerned about was the advertising which tried to influence Canadians about political matters.

advertising must bear in mind that there are at least four distinct types of advertisements placed by the government. The first type is typified by Tourism or Canada Savings Bonds ads. These are commercials directed toward immediate cost-recovery. By and large this type is non-controversial, at least in its main objectives. The second type of government ad are those aimed at longer term cost-recovery. Byron gave anti-smoking advertising as an example of these objectives. The third type, what Byron calls "public information" advertising, is seen in the public notices of hearings or regulations. Some of these are specifically required by law, others are necessary to comply with common-law tradition that the citizen must be given the reasonable opportunity to know the law. The fourth type are what Byron calls "advocacy" ads. The most obvious example of these were the "Canada geese" campaigns of the constitution period.

Another source, this time from the private sector, also felt that government advertising could be divided into several categories. Bill Saul, advertising research director of Hayhurst in Toronto, made a distinction between what he called "purely informational" advertising (he gave as examples the Health and Welfare advertising) and the "purely propagandistic" type (he, too, made reference to the Canada geese ads). The interesting point to his distinction is that he saw a whole group of ads which fall between these two types and which represent a potential area of abuse, in the sense that they do not appear blatantly political but they are the carriers for information which has political implications or ramifications. More to the point, he felt that this group of "neither here nor there" ads represented a growing segment of the government's advertising budget. Advertising which on the face of it presents some "informational" value but also serves as a carrier for plans with less altruistic motives.

In Bill Saul's mind the path from ads which "sell" a service or a program to those which "sell" the government leads straight to Keith Davie. Although I was not able to speak to Senator Davie, the timing of his return to Ottawa politics (following a near disaster for the Liberals in 1972) and the trend in political (i.e. party) advertising after his arrival⁸ suggests that his influence was pervasive. "The Rainmaker" was not only influential in party circles, however. One respondent spoke of being sent, in 1981, to Toronto to an advertising conference "because the Rainmaker wanted me there." At this time Senator Davie held no formal authority over this person yet it was his say that sent a public servant to Toronto. If advertising and the advertising specialists in the government ever had a "heyday" this was it.

⁸Whitaker (1980) discusses in some detail the changes that the advertising men brought to federal election campaigning, especially in the 1974 election

Laurie Jones, recalling the work that was done during the Quebec referendum campaign pointed to the possibility that in times of extreme pressure even those ads which most see as irreproachable politically, the health and welfare ads, can be subverted to partisan purposes. She was referring to an incident in the "Dialogue on Drinking" campaign in which one commercial deviated substantially from the norm and appeared to be directed specifically toward the Quebec audience. The Quebec government was sufficiently incensed by this particular poster (which bore the headline "Non, merci") that it ceased participation in the Dialogue on Drinking, the only province to do so, and remains out to this day.

One of the concerns in the academic literature was that advertising by the government will cause people to lose their respect for authority if the promotional schemes fall flat. In the interviews, though, this concern was rarely voiced.

Henry Ross, an advertising consultant in Toronto who has extensive contact with the government, felt that government advertising differs greatly from product advertising because of the "mixed objectives" in a government ad. It is these mixed objectives, he contended, which bring up the question of credibility. One of the reasons for these mixed objectives is the tendency for individuals in the chain of approval to insist on their "pet" ideas be considered and included.⁹

For Rochelle LaDouceur, working with the Department of Health and Welfare on the "Dialogue on Drinking" program, the approval process can be surprisingly arbitrary. In a recent campaign which was designed to counter some of the beer companies use of sports in the promotion of alcohol, she developed a series of commercials which used various sports figures. Two of those commercials, one dealing with kayaking and the other with cycling, were axed. This in itself is not common in the advertising business. Commercials get pulled all the time. The notable feature for this researcher was the fact that the ads were rejected by the minister herself. In the largest, in terms of expenditures, department of government the minister took the time to approve or disapprove of individual advertisements.

Another example of the influence of individual Ministers comes up with regard to the operation of the Advertising Management Group (AMG). The AMG was charged with overseeing the government's use of advertising and making sure that their money was spent wisely. But as Fred Torrington pointed out:

⁹This is not to say that private industry is exempt from such influences; Hank Karpus, president of Ronalds-Reynolds Advertising, told me that in one campaign billboards were placed in Toronto so that a particular CEO would see them on his way to work.

The AMG was a good idea and if it wasn't always successful in improving the quality of advertising, it was because they were not always able to withstand a Minister's insistence to proceed in a certain manner regardless of marketing utility. The members of the AMG were of high calibre, experienced ad people, which made some of the poorer campaigns somewhat puzzling – e.g. those of the Department of Energy Mines and Resources. No doubt the AMG passed those campaigns because the Minister insisted.¹⁰

The AMG was working to make government advertising better in a professional sense, even if it was overly sensitive to the political pressures of the day. The AMG, charged with the overall management of government advertising and set up in 1980 to improve the quality of advertising programs, was actively involved in educating bureaucrats in the ways of the ad agency. Jerrold Beckerman, a Vancouver-based advertising consultant, was involved for a few years in this aspect of the AMG's work. His work involved setting up seminars, for between 50 and 75 people, which would "bring government advertising into the 20th century."¹¹ Information officers, which were his main client group, tended to have little or no advertising background. They had media skills but not the skills to get the most money value from advertising.

Sometimes Ministers' plans are subverted by the bureaucracy if they are seen as a threat to their long-term welfare. One of the controversies about government advertising which rouses MPs a great deal is the publication of material before it is discussed or approved in the House of Commons. One long-time employee of the federal government, now working on advertising for Employment and Immigration Canada, told me that this is occasionally the subject of controversy within a department as well. Ministers will sometimes try to get popular programs out to the people as soon as possible, before the politicians have had a chance to discuss it. Senior bureaucrats within the department, however, will try to stall, or balk at these efforts because they know the ruckus this can cause in Parliament. As my informant told me, "the bureaucrats know that the MPs will see this as a real insult – a challenge to parliamentary privilege – and tend to close ranks, turning on the public servants."¹²

The length of the chain of approval is also a source of confusion. For example, the approval process for a given advertisement by the government involves almost five times as many levels, including very senior people up to and including the minister herself. The Information Director at Fisheries and Oceans

¹⁰Correspondence with F.L. Torrington, July 24, 1985.

¹¹Interview with Jerry Beckerman, July 15, 1985.

¹²Interview with L. J., Ottawa, June 24, 1985.

Canada (FOC), Andre Contant, told me about the number of approvals that a project must pass through in order to reach the public. Including his own staff, the agency staff and the senior (minister's) staff, it came to seven approvals. At each level there was the possibility that one or the other would reject the idea or inject new ideas, necessitating a completely new trip through the process. Fred Torrington takes this observation one step further, he has a proverb to fit:

An old Dutch proverb states – "He who builds according to every one's advice, will have a crooked house." The bureaucratic approval process of advertising will often ensure that the house is crooked – or at the very least – pedestrian in design. In tourism advertising it has been suggested that approval be given not only by senior management and at the ministerial level (implying that advertising and marketing professionals cannot be trusted to be effective or sensitive to the political needs of ministers), but by a committee of private industry, *and* by provincial tourism authorities. When one combines this process with the appointment – contract – budget cycle, it simply would mean that nothing ever gets done.¹³

The endless cycle of approval and revision is complicated by the personal ambitions of the ministers involved. Laurie Jones, an employee at Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) and formerly at Consumer and Corporate Affairs and the Canadian Unity Information Office, remarked that many of the problems associated with government advertising can be traced back to the emergence of so-called "vanity advertising". Prior to the 1970s, she felt, most ministers of the government were unaware of or unappreciative of the benefits of publicity, especially with regard to the use of departmental advertising. At Consumer and Corporate Affairs, where Jones worked in the early 1970s, the practice of placing the Minister's name at the bottom of an advertisement was unheard of until the appearance of Andre Oullett in that portfolio in 1973. In Jones' words, things changed around the advertising section with the arrival of a Minister who had several assistants devoted to the "public face" of their chief. In her current position at EIC, Jones noted that the the previous minister, Lloyd Axworthy, was a master at such tactics.

The extent to which government advertising is able to operate in a kind of bureaucratic "never-never land"; weaving through interminable levels of "approval" and meeting none of the formal requirements is best illustrated by an event which struck the Tories unawares. I refer to the so-called "Wilson affair", where the minister of finance found that his department was advertising through the services of his son-in-law's company.

The fall of 1980 saw the issuance of a memo from the secretary of Treasury Board outlining policy with regard to advertising. This was followed up by the Treasury Board circular (chapter 485). The remarkable aspect of this Treasury Board guideline is the extent to which it was consistently ignored by all

¹³Correspondence with F.L. Torrington, July 15, 1985

those to whom it applied. As the author of the policy put it, "it's a comic book; it no more represents reality than a comic does."¹⁴ DuBroy's words implied that such a flouting of TB guidelines was not common in government. The reason that, in this instance, it was so common is due to the nature of advertising and its perceived power by the ministers and their staff. Unlike many of the policies and programs funded by a department, advertising can be readily manipulated for political ends. As such it is guarded jealously by the ministers; they do not allow much meddling in the administration of their advertising and will often go so far as to personally approve all copy and art that is produced for the department. This is not to say that rules were deliberately broken. As DuBroy made clear, it was more a situation where those in decision-making positions read the rules, then made their choices based on the alternatives as they saw them and assumed that they were within the rules. If the rules had been followed, DuBroy suggested they would have been costly and time-consuming. Since there was no enforcement to ensure that everybody followed the same rules, everyone tended to use their own judgement.

What the interviews revealed, more than anything, was the turmoil within the government with respect to its advertising. Clearly the use of advertising by public authorities in Canada is gaining acceptance and recognition within the public service. It remains something of an oddity, however, because of the lack of real representation at the most senior levels. For the purposes related to what Byron referred to as "cost-recovery", (health and welfare, seat-belts, tourism and fisheries: "Today's dish is fish!") advertising has a clearly understood role within the government. As Jones' comments attest, however, even social advertising is not immune to political influence ("Je dis 'non'..."). It is the influence of the Minister, apparently, which overrides departmental objectives. And as several people pointed out, mixed objectives do not make good advertising.

Byron's categorization of those types of ads which are related to cost-recovery and those which have informational or political objectives is an important one. In the history of government advertising ads which relate to short-term cost recovery are very well established. The Canada Savings Bonds and CGOT rank as the oldest and longest-running campaigns in government. I would suggest that much of the long-term cost-recovery type of ads, those which encourage better attitudes to drinking, for example, are more of an extension of this tradition into modern circumstances. They remain cost-recovery related. The other types, however, have a much less definite heritage. Bill Saul's comments that with increased "tonnage" there are more niches for inappropriate "hangers-on" leads one to wonder if fears of

¹⁴Jim Dubroy, interview, June 24, 1985, Ottawa.

propaganda aren't well founded. Certainly there have been instances when government advertising was used for ends which are less than honourable or democratic and yet did not fall into that class of advertisements easily dismissed as propaganda, by pundits and public alike. One of these instances is the use of advertising to supplement or even take the place of traditional responses to problems.

When we discuss the management of advertising it is usually with the implicit assumption that advertising augments or improves the performance of a particular program; advertising of Canada Savings Bonds, one of the first and longest running of Government ad campaigns, is an example of this. The program (CSBs) exists and the ads enable it to succeed. There are instances, however, where advertising management *becomes* program management. This phenomenon, which was discussed speculatively by Stanbury et. al. as being something of a "let them eat images" approach, was described very clearly by an information officer involved with the Unemployment Insurance program. Apparently there was a situation where rules about "cheaters" on UIC were considered in the general public to be too lax. The Department was sensitive to this problem but at the same time felt that further "tightening" of the program was not cost-effective. In other words, it would cost more to catch cheaters than let them go. The public perception, however, was important to the minister and the government so a publicity campaign was designed, not to cut down on cheaters, but rather to give the impression that cheaters were being dealt with. Jones described this as using advertising to supplement a program that cannot be changed.

Commentary on the effects of government advertising was also obtained during the interviews. Many advertising people were confident that the Canadian people would be able to "see through" government ads and not be misled. Their remarks often struck a chord, reminding me of the "defence of advertising" described in Jhally.

The thing you have to remember, Beckerman told me, is that when government advertising does become political the average citizen will see right through it. If they don't the media will soon bring it to their attention, he thought. This echoes the words of Hank Karpus, president of Ronalds-Reynolds. Karpus thought that at least advertising was public. There's nothing sinister about it. People can ignore it, love it, hate it or whatever, but if a government program isn't going to fly then all the ads in the world won't help it. In Karpus' mind democracy is not compromised by a "few ads", as he termed it, for the simple reason that the North American public is sceptical of advertising; they recognize it for what it is. Just like a used car salesman, he told me, you have a built in filter that tells you – this is a salesman – well

advertising is the salesman of the mass media and people know that it is "only advertising."

Not all those involved in the advertising business were quite so confident, however. Bill Saul, referred to above, has worked extensively with the provincial (Ontario) and federal conservative parties. He thinks that a mandate to "inform", as the government has at present with its "Communications Policy" (1981), is too much of a "blank cheque". It allows too much under its ambit and "there is too much power in a thirty second spot."¹⁵

¹⁵Interview with Bill Saul, Toronto, June 17, 1985.

CHAPTER 5

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Federal spending without federal presence, or participation in provincial programs without visibility in the provinces, is not just frustrating for the politician, it is also a denial of the citizen's right to see the government's work and to judge it. (Report,1981:196)

As Canadians are exhorted to get directly involved with their government, information and its dissemination has become an issue increasingly at the forefront of policy discussions. Laws have been formulated which allow the citizen better access to the inner workings of government and also require more publicity by the government. Each of these has its democratic virtues, dutifully extolled by the proponents of the particular programme in question. The language is characteristically replete with reference to the liberating possibilities inherent in information and its free availability. To the extent to which this rhetoric serves to introduce "freedom of information" (FoI) type legislation it is to be commended. More often, however, the terms are used to justify and support the advertising techniques currently in vogue with the government.

In almost every case these efforts are explained and justified using the language of democratic theory. Democratic theory, we find, is held up as justification for publicity programmes which promote government policies. In this chapter we bring advertising into the theoretical context of politics and public policy by looking into its relation to the theory and practice of democratic politics. We also examine democratic theory to better understand why it is that merely associating something with democracy gives it immediate credibility. We also look at the nature of democracy to determine what makes information so important to its well-being.

5.1 Advertising as Information

As we shall see below, democratic theory places information in a very privileged position. Although democracy developed in an era in which advertising as we know it could hardly have been anticipated, there are certain aspects of advertising which fit well with the democratic model. Most important are the equations between rational consumer and rational citizen discussed in chapter 2. Keeping in mind the criticisms of that position by those who are critical of advertising in general, the point remains that for those involved in the industry, advertising is seen as a useful tool in bringing information to large numbers of people in an economic fashion.

Advertising, then, appears to fit well with the democratic impulse. Or does it? One could argue that there is a certain ambiguity to the word "democracy", especially when it is brought up in the context of government advertising. As we have seen, depending which side of the political "fence" one happens to be on at a particular moment, advertising by the government can be seen as either beneficial or detrimental to the democratic process. This lack of clarity, rather than any special compatibility, is what seems to make advertising the method of choice for politicians desiring to reach citizens. Despite the concerns of opposition politicians, whose recriminations have the hollow ring of those who know they would be doing the same thing given the chance, a government is able to justify advertising expenditures precisely because of the ambiguity of their position and the media's focus on patronage and expenditure issues. And, although there is something to be said for the position that advertising is singularly unsuited to the task of promoting a democratic society, the question of terms remains. So, before one can make this assessment, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by the words "democratic government." To do this we begin by exploring the roots of the theory of democracy, keeping in mind the role that advertising could play in this form of government, and has played in Canada up to now.

5.2 Democratic Theory

Democracy, a system of government in which the mass ("demos") of people are involved, has a long history. Although it is not our intention to review that history, it is illuminating to note that as recently as 120 years ago "the rule of the people" was not commonly thought to be a good thing (at least not by those who held power). Letting 'the common people' into the centres of political power, it was felt, would lead to confusion and (worse) a shift in the distribution of wealth. Robert Lowe, speaking in the British House of Commons on the subject of extending the franchise, warned that such a move would have grave consequences:

The first stage, I have no doubt, will be an increase of corruption, intimidation, and disorder, and of all the evils that usually happen in elections. But what will be the second? The second will be that the working men of England, finding themselves in a full majority of the whole constituency, will awake to a full sense of their power. They will say, "We can do better for ourselves. We have objects to serve as well as our neighbours, let us unite and carry those objects." (Hansards, 1866:149)

Fortunately for the British aristocracy, things have not come to that. Numerous studies have shown that the distribution of wealth remains as unequal as it was prior to the great "reform" movements of the early part of this century and, moreover, some of the same people (or their families) retain the title to

wealth and power. According to A. P. Simonds,

the explanation for this is probably very simple. Nineteenth-century concern was closely connected to nineteenth-century fears about the threat of political equality to socio-economic hierarchy.... Twentieth-century indifference reflects the realization that there was nothing to fear.... (1982:594)

Today it could be said with some justification that there is not a parliamentarian in any country – capitalist or socialist – that would own up to being "against democracy." In the space of a century "democracy" has moved from being a term which described an unruly, inefficient mode of mob rule to a term of general approval. It has become, as Ian Hampshire-Monk observed, one of that group of speech-acts which "not only describe a state of affairs but also grade, rank, evaluate or otherwise judge [its object]." (1978:27)

Despite the general agreement that democracy is a "good thing", some questions remain as to its content. In the next two sections we examine several attempts to determine what, exactly, is meant when people say that such-and-such is "democratic".

5.3 Democracy and Liberalism

When C.B. MacPherson set out to examine the "Real World of Democracy" he focussed on the historical context of its emergence. MacPherson observed that during the time of much of the growth in democratic practices, society had just completed a transition to the economic philosophy of liberalism.

...before democracy came in the Western world there came the society and politics of choice, the society and politics of competition, the society and politics of the market. (1966:6)

This society, Macpherson argued, required a system of government compatible with the free market. In such a system the government would be responsible for certain "political goods", including services and taxes as well as law and order. It was in order to accommodate the demand for these services that a system of responsible government developed, he argues.

Initially, responsible government had no direct connection with democracy. It was merely a way of introducing market forces into the selection of rulers. It soon became apparent, however, that the rationalist theory which called for freedom and equality in the marketplace had application in the political sphere as well. Macpherson points out that

the market society did produce, after a time, a pressure for democracy which became irresistible. Those who had no vote saw they had no weight in the political market – they had, so to speak, no political purchasing power. Since they had no political purchasing power, their interests were, by the logic of the system, not consulted. When they saw this they came to demand the vote for themselves, using the general right of association to organize their demand. When they did so, there was, equally in the logic of the system, no defensible reason for withholding the vote from them. For the liberal society had always justified itself as providing equal individual rights and equality of opportunity. (1966:8)

Accordingly, the rights and abilities of democratic government have spread to more and more of the population in liberal, free-market societies.¹ With the accession of women to the vote in 1921, Canada achieved universal suffrage. After two world wars fought for 'freedom and democracy' government by popular will has become firmly established in all Western industrial nations as one of those speech-acts Monk referred to as "approving" as well as describing.

The historical record reveals that democracy – as it exists in Western industrial nations – owes a great deal to the liberal economy which fostered it. Democracy and capitalism have, in the West, developed a mutually supportive interrelationship. As Wolfe informs us,

[democracy]...is no longer viewed as a subversive term, one that would make the ruling classes shake, mostly because ruling classes adopted the term for their own use. In the West, democracy has come to mean bourgeois democracy; it is now defined not by standards of participation and equality, but by the existence of certain formal political features such as elections, a constitution, and agreed-upon rules of political discourse. A system with a democratic structure is presumed to be democratic, whatever the degree of psychological health and equality experienced by its citizens. (1977:4-5)

5.4 Public Choice Theory

A modern variant of the theory of democracy which concerns itself with the distribution of "political goods" is the so-called "public choice theory". Public choice theory can be broadly defined as "a particular approach to market analysis, one that infuses both political and legal analysis with disciplinary assumptions taken from economics." (Salter, 1984:18) The classic text of public choice theory, Dennis Mueller's 1979 *Public Choice*, defines the theory thus:

Public choice can be defined as the economic study of non-market decision making, or simply the application of economics to political science. The subject matter of public choice is the same as that of political science: the theory of the state, voting rules, voter behaviour, party politics, the bureaucracy, and so on. The methodology of public choice, as for economics, is

¹ Of course, women were only allowed into the real world of democracy fairly recently. As Pateman argues: "The most serious failure of contemporary democratic theory and its language of freedom, equality, consent and of the individual is that women are so easily and inconspicuously excluded from references to 'the individual'" (1980:212).

that man is an egoistic, rational, utility maximizer. (Mueller, 1979:1)

Essentially, the program for public choice theorists is to

increase the scope of economic analysis by viewing "voter" choice as a variant of public choice and the political system as a marketplace of competing values. In other words, they would argue that social and political goods are distributed through a political process that is characterized by marketplace relations. (Salter, 1985:19)

This conception of the way that society functions (or should function) has achieved fairly broad acceptance in Canada. Not all of the prescriptions for change have been implemented, but as Professor Salter notes, "the assumptions of public choice theory are currently accepted by some policy-makers and are leading to some sweeping changes in Canadian legal institutions as a result of incremental reforms." (1984:26)

Public choice theory represents a step beyond the close tie between western democracy and liberalism described by MacPherson. Market forces may have been partly responsible for the theoretical justification of democratic politics. In public choice theory, however, democratic politics *become* market politics.

5.5 The Contemporary Theory of Democracy

Macpherson preferred the historical approach to democratic theory. Another approach, the empirical one, gained prominence in the 1950s as research techniques developed a modern sophistication and quantitative analysis of survey data became common practice in political studies. Inevitably, democracy itself came under investigation.

In the 1940s and 1950s, with the aid of these newly developed techniques, writers such as Robert Dahl and others were able to empirically confirm the early work of Joseph Schumpeter and the amount of participation in democracies. They, too, found that participation was surprisingly low among citizens. By and large citizens were found to be uninformed about political questions and to the extent that they took part in the political process at all, this was restricted to voting in periodic elections. As participation was one of the basic concepts of democratic theory, the results must have been disturbing. Both Schumpeter and Dahl, however, had a curious response to these results.

[I]nstead of concluding, as they might, that modern democracies need to embark on a major campaign of political education, or alternatively that they were not, in some important sense, democracies at all, these investigators proceeded to redefine the term in accordance with the empirical evidence (Monk, 1978:25-26).

What they did was to down-play the importance of participation in the democratic process. Schumpeter defined democracy in this way: "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote." (1942)

In a sense, this definition shifts the participatory initiative onto the 'leaders'. Schumpeter's theory, which Carole Pateman also calls the "contemporary theory of democracy" has apparently "gained almost universal support from present-day political theorists." (Pateman,1970:14) One writer, discussing the role of publicity in government, notes that "government – in all its branches and at all levels – owes its citizens effective leadership and that leadership derives from effective communication." (Heibert, 1981:5) To what extent that this theory differs from "public choice theory" is problematic. Certainly the 'competition' aspect is familiar to both groups. Leadership, on the other hand, is potentially corrosive to a "political market-place" concept; leaders may try to influence the 'market'. This type of tension, between the "freedom to dominate others" and the need for there to be effective recourse to challenge the leaders, is perhaps not as well understood in the political realm but is strikingly similar to the claims made at the level of commercial culture. I refer here to the "neo-liberal" critics of consumer advertising Jhally refers to. More ominous than either scenario is the danger that a modified "public-choice/contemporary" theory of democracy will take hold – the leaders using the market-place as justification for their actions and at the same time influencing the market-place to suit their purposes. Certainly the economic realm has its fair share of examples of "leading" (monopolistic) companies misusing the competitive market.

5.6 The Classical Writers and a Participatory Theory of Democracy

Using empirical evidence to redefine democracy and move the theory more in line with convention may have been propitious but for some it does violence to the original intentions of democracy. In reaction to this, a critical stream of thought on democratic theory emerged in the sixties. These theorists were reacting to what they saw as inadequacies in the empirical approach. Their response was to return to the actual texts of the so-called "classical" writers on democracy and compared these to their usage in modern theories. What they found was disturbing. For one thing, the term "classical", though much used, was rarely followed up by specific references. In those cases where research *had* been done on those writers who (presumably) comprised the "classical" group, they were often mis-quoted or confused with other

writers. Carole Pateman notes that "*the notion of a 'classical theory of democracy' is a myth.* Neither side in the controversy has done the obvious, and the necessary, and looked in detail at what the earlier theorists did in fact have to say." (1970:17)²

In addition, the critics of empirical theory discovered that the "classical texts" did not, as had been supposed, represent a unified "theory of democracy." A surprising divergence of opinion was found: where one ill-defined theory had been supposed, two fairly comprehensive theories were found. Upon examination of those most closely associated with the rise of democratic theory – Bentham, James Mill, Rousseau, and J.S. Mill – Pateman finds that "two very different theories about democracy are to be found in their writings." (1970:18)

On the one hand, Bentham and James Mill advocated a system in which "the participation of the people has a very narrow function; it ensures that good government, i.e. 'government in the universal interest', is achieved through the sanction of loss of office." (Pateman,1970:19–20) Both the system that MacPherson has described, emerging out of the liberal tradition of the 'management of interests' and Schumpeter's description of democracy through periodic by voter participation have their origins in this tradition of democratic thought. The modern equivalent, public choice theory, appears to also follow from these precepts although it usually advocates a more on-going consultation with 'the people' through polling and interest-group participation in the management objective. This is not, however, the only strain that Pateman found.

For Bentham as much as Schumpeter, participation was part of democracy because it was viewed as protective; participation ensured that the private interests of each citizen were guarded. In contrast, writers such as Rousseau saw participation as part of individual and social *development*:

Rousseau's entire political theory hinges on the individual participation of each citizen in political decision-making. And in his theory participation is very much more than a protective adjunct to a set of institutional arrangements, it also has an effect on the participants, ensuring that there is a continued interrelationship between the workings of constitutions and the psychological qualities and attitudes of the individuals interacting with them. (Pateman, 1977:22)

Where Rousseau saw the potential for human growth, Bentham envisioned the management of competitive individual interests.

² Pateman cites the instance where one writer from the "empirical" school was citing Rousseau but from his commentary must have been reading Locke.

Since the 1960s, Pateman and other writers have been advocating participation, of the kind envisioned by Rousseau, as what is needed in democratic politics. For these writers "participation has far wider functions [than contemporary theory advocates] and is central to the achievement and maintenance of the democratic polity, the latter being regarded not just as a set of national representative institutions but what I shall call 'participatory society'." (Pateman, 1970:20)

Despite the current popularity of "public choice" theory, there was a time when "participatory" theory was very much in vogue in Canada. Its popularity was such that former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau campaigned on the issue in the 1968 election and his Minister of Justice, John Turner, spoke of it in his after-dinner speeches. (Turner, 1969:15) Participatory democracy was also the subject of considerable academic debate at the time

The participation with which we are concerned is one which involves all citizens in the progress, first, of all activities associated with their own areas of life and, secondly, of all activities of any nature affecting the common interest. This participation may reasonably be termed political because of the exceptional importance of government responsibility for development. As a result of the intense interpenetration of the social and political roles, however, participation characterizes an all-inclusive pattern of existence for modern man. The essential social division between individuals is no longer between workers and capitalists, consumers and producers; it is between those who participate and those who do not. This division covers all the rest. It is the new principle for the distribution of true social and political power. This situation is yet another reason for governments to consider, as quickly and as far as possible, the establishment of conditions which will allow the participation of the greatest possible number of citizens in the greatest possible number of common activities. (Dion, 1967:432)

Although this vision of democracy had wide circulation in the 1960s, recent trends in Canada have been toward the "public choice" variant. Interestingly, both theories use participation as a pillar of their respective programs. The next section will discuss the differences between different *uses* of participation.

5.7 Democracy and Participation: Two Trajectories

Our review has revealed two essentially different conceptions of democratic society. The one, which could roughly be described as the pragmatic or utilitarian version (Bentham, Schumpeter) and the other humanitarian or proactive type (Rousseau, J.S. Mill, Pateman), are poles apart in the goals they have for participation but there are some common elements, in that for both participation is the key. Although participation is what ties them together, participation is also what differentiates them. In this sense they may be thought of as existing on a participation continuum.

At one extreme there is the desire to see market forces determine all aspects of society. "Technical rationality", the basic assumption of public choice theory, is held to ensure that all works as it should. The "contemporary" theory of democracy tried to justify low levels of actual participation by reorienting the direction of participation – away from citizen development and towards national management. The "classical" writers who provide the background for both public choice and contemporary theories also expressed a concern for the mediation of various interests in society. Bentham and Schumpeter saw some form of limited participation in the political process as the best method of achieving this mediation economically and fairly. At the other extreme, Rousseau and J.S. Mill looked at political participation as one way to emancipate the hidden potential that exists in every person and by extension, in society as a whole.

It is in the *objectives* as opposed to the *methods* that the two theories differ the most. However, because the objectives differ, the practices that evolve out of each theory will be quite different. The information practices, for example, will reflect and at the same time further the objectives of participation. In order to have a better understanding of the implications of government advertising for participation, and therefore democracy, it is advisable that we examine participation a little more closely.

5.8 Participation up close

Participation may be thought of as having two fundamental components: decision-making and the implementation of those decisions. Implementation, the "action" half of the equation, is achieved through social mechanisms such as laws, regulation and traditions which govern the processes of democratic politics. An example of this is the statutory requirement that federal elections be held at minimum every five years, or the informal requirement that a government resign if defeated on a major bill in the house. Although this aspect is not the focus of the present inquiry it is important to realize that decision-making in any society exists alongside the mechanisms for putting those decisions into action.

Decision-making, the component of participation which *does* concern us here, is multifaceted. Each person makes his or her decisions according to a multitude of reasons. Among them are upbringing, intelligence, logic, intuition, persuasion or coercion. Even those who advocate "public choice theory" admit that

"individual calculations and decisions are not necessarily based in either rational calculation of self-interest. Indeed, individuals may act against their own self-interest, for religious or philosophical reasons, or "because their best friend did so" ... " (Salter, 1984:20).

To the extent that decision-making is not coerced and is rational, however, the rationalist assumptions that democracy is premised upon ("each person is the best judge of his own best interest") indicate that information is the vital ingredient to making any decision. That modern analysts should find a necessity for an informed electorate is not surprising. As noted earlier, the tradition from which democratic theory derives is profoundly rationalist, taking its inspiration from writers such as John Locke. Clifford Christians, in a review of democratic theory, discusses this rationalist basis as well as the two-part nature of participation discussed above.

In democratic theory public opinion results from information and knowledge. "Pure" fact (information) conveyed to a rational public is said to be systematically organized into some stable form of public opinion which ultimately becomes transferred according to constitutional codes into procedures of action (1976:8).

And as Richard Fagen points out, that information plays a vital role in power relationships.

...one of the most enduring of all the concepts in the political lexicon, the concept of power (and/or influence) is inextricably linked to communication. We cannot conceive of the exercise of power by individual A over individual B without some communication from A to B. ...when individuals are in a relationship of power or influence, they are also of necessity in communication. (1966:5)

³ If information is central to democratic society and the citizen's performance in that society, the concept of citizen participation must be broadened to include the requirement that such participation be informed, or, as Hill puts it: "Democratic government is impossible without informed public opinion" (1974:160).

Some writers go even further; Tussman, for example, sets optimistic goals for the democratic citizen:

He must...be concerned with the public interest, not his private goods. His communication must be collegial, not manipulative. He must deliberate, not bargain. This is the program. And it is simply the application of tribunal manners to the electoral tribunal. Nothing more certain than that the abandonment of this conception spells the doom of meaningful democracy. (1978:19)

Historically, much of the democratic debate in the past century on whether or not the franchise ought to be extended to greater portions of the population turned on the question of whether or not citizens were informed enough to handle the responsibility.

In the Victorian era, as the quote from Lowe, above, indicates, the democratic norm itself was in question: that is, "that the ordinary person is, on the whole, a more competent judge of his or her political

³ Even the "action" component of participation can be said to rely heavily on information; in non-coercive relationships decisions are implemented by communicating information.

interests than any other person is." (Simonds, 1982:595) Information is more than "communication" since the latter also includes roads and bridges and the like. In the context of democracy, information, it has been argued, must be more than a 'recital of facts'. A government Task Force on Information tells us "[t]he dissemination of bare facts, no matter how full or and impartial, can no longer succeed in truly informing the people." (Task Force, 1969:4) Dictionary definitions stress the *shaping* aspect of information: "To put into form or shape; to arrange, to compose; to take shape to form." (Oxford)

Although the importance of information is assumed (to the point of neglect ⁴) at present, it is a common theme for those who describe and or criticise government information programs. Typical of these is Moss's "...access to government information is basic to the proper functioning of a democratic government." (1968) Our own government, through its recent Freedom of Information Act (1983) and Communication Policy (1981), has explicitly stated the importance of information to a democratic society. Apparently, in our society the value of information is not in question. What is uncertain is the citizen's ability, based on available information resources, of the to make the correct decisions for him or herself.

The survey research conducted since the second world war suggests that the average citizen is woefully uninformed politically.⁵ Much of the impetus for Schumpeter's reassessment of democratic norms was in direct response to and an exploration of this phenomenon. How, it was argued, could the system operate "so well" if the (nominal) operators of the system knew so little about it and took part in so few of the actual operations.

Although initiatives have been taken towards greater citizen participation – consumer boycotts, referenda and experiments in direct democracy through electronic means are examples of this trend– there have been real problems with making these work effectively. One of the difficulties, of course, is that it is very difficult to make people become better informed. Anthony Downs, in his book *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, points out the following three problems:

⁴ A.P. Simonds notes that "J. Roland Pennock's recent massive study of democratic theory includes perhaps half a dozen sentences, scattered across more than 500 pages, which can be said to address the problem." (*Democratic Political Theory*, Princeton University Press, 1979) (1982:594).

⁵ Philip Converse has made a useful survey of the relevant literature in "Public Opinion and Voting Behaviour," Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science*, vol. 4.: *Non-Governmental Politics* (Addison-Wesely, 1975) pp. 75–169. Although Converse's research is largely from the American context, there is no reason to suggest that Canada is any different .

1. There is no reliable, objective, inexpensive way to measure how well-informed a man is.
2. There is no agreed-upon rule for deciding how much information of what kinds each should citizen should have.
3. The loss of freedom involved in forcing people to acquire information would probably far outweigh the benefits to be gained from a better-informed electorate. (1957:247)

While Downs has some practical questions about the process of creating "well-informed" citizens, there are more basic issues. Recall our earlier statement that the rational premise of democracy is that each citizen is the best judge of what is best for them. In order to be able to make those decisions, however, a citizen must be informed *in such a way as to make use of available information*.

A.P. Simonds offers a tentative list of those qualities which it can be said impart an ability to make rational decisions:

the capacity to grasp, interpret, appraise, and draw appropriate inference from factual information, the ability to follow and elevate an argument, the ability to comprehend and employ abstract concepts (as opposed to using, perhaps blindly, an abstract term) the ability to make connections between events, or ideas, or attitudes – the ability, in short, to "make sense" of the political world. (1958:596).

Simonds also considers the resources which are necessary to acquire such abilities. He argues that a person who is 'politically competent' requires different kinds of judgements, essentially "three different dimensions of being informed." (Simonds, 1982:597) Simond's three types of judgement are important to an understanding of the role that government information can play in the decision-making abilities of a citizen. It is worthwhile, therefore, to examine them a little more closely.

The vital elements are three in number. There must first be a universe of facts, which forms the empirical basis for decisions. Second, there must be a method for making a decision based on those empirical data; the "moral competence" (Simonds,1982:598). Lastly, some sort of historical perspective is necessary so that an informed citizen can use the known facts and moral decisions in order to affect some outcome with a predictable rate of success.

The first requirement, namely that it is necessary to establish a 'basic inventory' of facts about the world, is primary to the ability to make political judgements. This basic inventory consists, not only of material details from the physical world but also "the institutions and practices by which human activities are organized." (597) Simonds argues that public judgements are by their nature of greater 'scope and

comprehensiveness'. This is because, to an increasing degree, they deal with objects and conditions not necessarily in the realm of our own personal experience. They are, by necessity, understood in terms of abstractions. Take, for example "the Constitution" and the need to use such concepts as "nation" and "patriation" to understand its importance to Canadians.

Secondly, Simonds notes, "To be a political agent and not just a repository of knowledge about the world, one must be informed by normative standards that permit the *evaluation* of "what is". (1982:597) One is not born with such standards, he argues, they must be acquired through interaction with others. In this sense the rights of freedom of association are especially important. It is from these discussions that the ability to choose among alternatives and propose new solutions will emerge.

Finally, the informed citizen must have a certain awareness of the past in order to be able to make intelligent predictions of the future.

For steering to be effective, it must be informed about what is *possible*. Political will can be rendered impotent by errors in judgement on this matter in either of two directions: by an overestimation of the limits established by "what is" (nothing is possible), or by an underestimation of them (anything is). (1982:598)

Each of these aspects of informed decision-making described by Simonds is based on some facility with the one which precedes it. But citizens' abilities to acquire and use these kinds of information are hampered in several ways. For one thing, citizens are overwhelmed by the oversupply of information and their relationship to information has become more distant. This distance, Mueller notes, has become a factor in the balance of power between government and individual:

In advanced industrial society, information has become a crucial prerequisite for both political control and opposition politics, a necessity which is due to factors such as the complexity of society, the growth of governmental bureaucracies, and the tremendous distance between those who make the decisions and the individual citizen. (1973:88)

For C. Wright Mills the role of information is intimately tied to monopoly capitalism:

The rise of the mass media, especially radio and motion pictures, had already been accompanied by an immense enlargement of the scale of economic and political institutions, and by the apparent relegation of primary face-to-face relationships to secondary place. Institutions become centralized and authoritarian.... In brief, there is a movement from widely scattered little powers and laissez-faire, to concentrated powers and attempts at monopoly control from powerful centres.(Mills, 1953:581)

Mills and Mueller have suggested that certain aspects of modern society (global interdependence, for example) put a strain on the primary link in this chain: the ability to determine "what is". It can be argued that to a large extent this is because "what is" is always getting bigger and, increasingly, the information is

concentrated in smaller centres.

Even though the mass media and the growing literacy of the population create the preconditions for an informed public, it could be argued that the political information the individual possesses decreases in proportion to the total information that exists, much of which is repositied with governmental agencies. The limited knowledge of contemporary society that can be acquired through educational institutions in addition to governmental constraints on communication leave most of the public ignorant of the mechanisms of the decision-making process and the forces influencing it. Unfamiliarity with the facts and arguments considered in political decisions and policy formation results in a reluctance to evaluate governmental actions, especially if they do not have a bearing on everyday life. (1973:88)

Each of these factors – the role of information in power, the growing amount and concentration of information and the necessity of an informed public for effective democracy – indicates the importance of information resources. Mueller's comments about the extent to which those resources are the property of the government calls attention to the centrality of public information policy and public information services in general. The complexity of government is a rationale in itself for increases in government information services:

Probably the best argument for the government publicist, in fact, is that he is essential to even the minimum adequate coverage of events in Washington. The glut of occurrences each day in the vast, chaotic web of Federal administration simply could not be followed by newspaper staffs unless they were enlarged to many times their present size. (in Heibert,1983:?)

These factors certainly go a long way to describe the atmosphere that led to increased attention on information policy. I would like to suggest that there were other reasons.

Advertising, the persuasive strategy, was at one time less than one percent of the "information" expenditures of the federal government. As we have seen, this has changed in recent years. Following rapid growth in the 1960s and early 1970s – and several startling jumps since then – advertising now comprises over one third of all expenditure on information. As we discussed in an earlier section, governments have several options when considering how to deal with information. Promotion is just one of a group of alternatives including withholding and releasing directly to the press. I suggest, however, that recent changes to the legal status of the "withholding" function, including the Access to Information Act, and an increasingly oppositional press sector have made the latter two strategies less attractive.

A number of factors have, taken together, resulted in an increased emphasis in government circles with regard to the use of advertising. Together these factors mean more advertising by both the federal and provincial governments. Separately they fall into five major areas. The first is the decline in attractiveness of other methods, such as withholding or releasing to the press, mentioned above.

Secondly, governments at all levels can claim with some justification that they have more *reasons* to communicate. The government has, quite simply, many more programs than it ever did, many of them aimed at people not renowned for their inquisitive nature – the unemployed, welfare recipients, native people and recent immigrants. This is coupled with a growing tendency on the part of the ministers who are in charge of these departments and programs to be "publicity sensitive": they are reactive to bad press and proactive in the sense that they want their department's image polished up. A good example of this is Lloyd Axworthy, the Liberal minister for Transport Canada. He oriented much of the advertising activities of his department towards providing him with a public profile when he was beginning a push for the leadership of the Liberal party. Once the election campaign began these ads were a little embarrassing.⁶

The third factor is the more general increase in the ability to reach the population directly, through advertising. Mass media outlets are ubiquitous and take up large amounts of every citizen's non-sleeping time. The economy, generally, has become more oriented in the "marketing" of products as opposed to the manufacture and distribution. Although TV has become more expensive as it reached more people it is perceived as the only way to get a message across. The government, along with all other actors in the economy, has become more expert at using these tools.

The fourth factor abetting increased government use of advertising revolves around the political will to do so. The heightened sensitivity of ministers to publicity, mentioned above, is related to this more general phenomenon. In the years since the arrival of television people have come to accept and even enjoy (some would argue) the presence of "commercials" on their 'sets'. At the same time people have also become accustomed to having the government do things for them – feed them, house them, pay them when there is no work – and while it does these things the government tells them how to get out of the situation; manpower training programs or help in writing a resume are examples. While unemployed people have become accustomed to these "employment professionals", politicians have come to rely more and more on publicity professionals. K.Z. Paltiel notes

⁶ "Axworthy becomes advertising's incredible disappearing man," Christopher Waddell, *Financial Post*, August 4, 1984. Waddell describes how Transport Canada dropped Axworthy's name from the bottom of its billboards and tail-end of its TV ads.

"For the rest of the advertising campaign, which Transport Canada officials started planning in February, Axworth will not be mentioned."

"the federal election has produced a change in the department's original plans."

"The campaign is advertising Transport Canada and its role, not the minister," says a department official.

the advertising agency and the public relations consultant have taken the editor's place in the counsel of parties. the rise to party prominence of such advertising men as Senator Keith Davey, the former [sic] national Liberal organizer, Senator Allistor Grosart who performed a similar function for the conservatives during Mr Diefenbaker's rise to power, and Mr Dalton Camp who precipitated the latter's undoing, bear witness to the process. (1970:77)

This, Whitaker argues, is just an example of a more fundamental change in Canadian politics.

It would seem that the rise of mass advertising techniques in politics tended to coincide with the decline of traditional, localized, patronage-oriented, machine politics. As patron-client politics has been slowly transformed into the more universalist categories of bureaucratic politics, techniques of communication with the mass of voters has obviously become a more pressing concern. (1980:218)

A change in politics is also responsible for the fifth spur to federal government advertising. In the 1960s the centripetal forces fostering a strong central government began to decline and reverse. As the provinces began to grow in power and expertise, much of it financed by federal transfer payments, a battle for the loyalty of the Canadian voters ensued. This was epitomized in the fight on the billboards of Quebec over the referendum of 1981. A situation arose in which there was a form of "brand competition": a virtual carnival for advertising agencies, media outlets, consultants and production people.

A kind of "reverse action" of this phenomenon, acting as a sort of corollary to the fifth element to growth in government advertising, was the extent to which *within* certain jurisdictions there was a real lack of competition for the voter's loyalty. As a result, in Ontario for example, the perception builds up that people will associate the *party* with the *government*. Large sums of government money are spent on making the government look good at election time on the basis of this assumption. There is a considerable saving to party funds as a result.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Frederick Elkin's study of advertising during the Quiet Revolution in Quebec illustrates the usefulness of advertising in the study of social change. He notes that

Since no one institution exists apart from the others, one may theoretically approach social change from any place in the social structure. But some institutions, advertising for one, have broad and direct links to a wide range of phenomena in the larger society and as such are more useful points of entry than those more narrowly focussed. Especially in French Canada, advertising radiates into numerous areas associated with a changing way of life – we remark especially business and the occupational structure, and popular culture and the mass media. (Elkin,1973:6)

In addition to this general utility, advertising by the government provides specific opportunities to investigate the relationship between the government and its citizens. This relationship is important because it forms the basis of democratic politics.

It has been suggested that democratic government has begun to be used to achieve the goal of the management of interests rather than mass participation for human development. As it turns out, if one is looking for a tendency toward the "management of interests" in democratic government, advertising is a likely avenue to explore for several reasons. Advertising is an aspect of federal government policy which has recently undergone transformation in a direction which seems to imply management rather than development. An examination of advertising is also a practical way to see what is going on in Ottawa since it is so obvious. Unlike the operations of regulatory tribunals or the process of statutory revision, advertising is intended for general consumption. It is big and boisterous. In addition, public opinion on the government's advertising is known, and the political and economic costs have been evaluated.

Another aspect of advertising by the government which makes it attractive is the extent to which it is a manifestation of Cabinet objectives. As the interviews revealed, Ministers often give advertising which emanates from their bureaucracy careful scrutiny. The involvement of the Cabinet Committee on Communications is an indication of the extent to which the government as a whole is concerned about its public image. If one were to undertake an examination of other areas of government spending one could not hope to reveal such a direct involvement, nor could you assume that such involvement was a reflection of the political arm of government.

The extent to which advertising is still closely associated with patronage and the government's willingness to put up with criticism in the press and in parliament in order to attain advertising objectives is

indicative of the respect which advertising has achieved in recent years. Finally, a study of advertising allows one to see the extent to which advertising and the advertising professionals (rightly or wrongly) form a support network for politicians and political parties.

6.1 Analysis of Spending: A Review of Trends and Patterns

On the whole, the government's importance in the economy has remained fairly stable in the past decade. The federal government's budget consistently accounts for about twenty per cent of GNP. Within this budget, however, there have been important changes. The direction of these changes was suggested by Doern in his comments about shifting Liberal priorities in 1981. The government at that time decided to shift their emphasis away from social programs and towards "visibility" initiatives. Evidence of this shift is in the figures for "information" (standard expenditure object "03") in recent years. In a period of supposed restraint, information expenditures grew rapidly, to almost \$300 million in the last public accounting (1983-84). This amounts to real growth in percentage terms, although information's actual percentage of total government expenditure remains small.

Within the category of information, advertising now accounts for more of total expenditures than it used to. Emphasis is moving toward mass market advertising and away from more traditional forms of information services, particularly in areas where the government is most concerned about opinions: the constitution, energy are obvious examples. In addition, television has become a much more important part of the media mix in the past decade; it has moved to over half of all expenditure. Television is used by marketing professionals for image-oriented aspects of a marketing strategy.

The analysis of expenditures reveals more than the fact that the federal government is "the biggest advertiser in the country". The government uses advertising as part of the growing use of information services by public servants. Advertising is just one of the more favoured of methods to reach people, accounting for more than half (much more in some years) of information expenditures when salaries and production costs are included. Interestingly, some of the biggest growth in advertising expenditures occurred in the mid-1970s, before the explicit policy shift to a "visibility" orientation.

6.2 Two Task Forces: Comparing the Language

It has been suggested that the continued "presence" of advertising in the government is indicative of the current determination that policy-makers have in this regard. Advertising is a very obvious and easily criticised expenditure, yet there is a continuing commitment to these programs in the face of parliamentary and press criticism. This was not always the case, however. Although advertising is now something the government is willing to suffer a great deal of criticism for, this was not the case just 10 years ago.

In 1975, the government let "Information Canada" dissolve after a Senate inquiry into its finances and organization.¹ Information Canada, the brainchild of Task Force on Government Information (1969) members and Trudeau proteges, Bernard Ostry and Bernard Fortier, had been heralded as the mechanism which would launch Canada into an era of participatory democracy; it would "reach the unreached."² When it ran into organizational difficulties and political flak, however, the plug was pulled despite these grand designs. This did not seem to effect the government's use of information, though. In the years immediately following the demise of Information Canada there was no wholesale drop in the expenditures on information. On the contrary, in the subsequent decade money spent on information, in particular the use of advertising, continued to grow.

This continued growth, which took place at a time when Ottawa was supposedly retreating from a policy of aggressive promotion of government, seems to imply that the rationale which originally underlay the information services provided by Information Canada for some reason no longer met those criteria. As a consequence, it was replaced with another, different, rationale. Evidence of this change in the government's thinking comes from recent vigorous defences of advertising expenditures. The Canadian Unity Information Office (CUIO), which in many respects made Information Canada look like a fiscally conservative wall-flower, was never in danger of a senate review of its operations, despite opposition protests. Throughout the CUIO's 7 year life span there were numerous scandals and accusations of political patronage and propaganda. In spite of this it continued to grow, even when its original mandate, the Quebec referendum, had passed. The explanation for this apparent contradiction – one information arm with little or no support in the government and another with a surfeit – lies in a changing attitude

¹See Beverly Edwards, "The Rise and Demise of Information Canada", in Rowat, ed. (1981).

²P.E. Trudeau, Speech to the House of Commons, *Hansards*, May. 16, 1969.

toward information.

In this thesis, various pieces of evidence, including interview material, expenditure data and theoretical concepts, have been used to indicate directions in government policy and point out some of the ramifications of these developments. For an understanding of the changing attitude to information in the federal government, policy papers from the late 1960s and early 1980s provide an illuminating contrast. In terms of this attitude toward information, the 1960s and the 1980s are truly two different eras.

These two periods are well represented by some of the reports on information programs and information policy of the time. The 1969 Task Force on Government Information report, *To Know and Be Known*, can be contrasted with various reports issued in 1977-1981. In 1969 the Task Force on Government Information provided the government with the rationale for a massive information rationalization. Following the recommendations contained in the report, a new department of government, Information Canada, was formed. In the 1980s, the report of the Task Force on Federal-Provincial Relations also provided ready justification for government expenditures on information. The two reports, however, take fundamentally different approaches to the provision of information.

The Report of the 1969 Task Force takes its inspiration from a thorough review of "information", starting with a re-examination of the definition of the word. In their report the authors argue that "information" has more than one definition but important aspects are 1) the role of information in "shaping" society and being shaped by it; 2) information is factual, not distorted; 3) information is a social phenomenon. They also ascribe a great deal of importance to information's connection with "freedom".

Information implies freedom of expression. Indeed, the collection and distribution of information, the right to inform, and the right to access to information all stem from the concept of freedom of expression.

For the members of the 1969 Task Force, information is not just important, it is regarded as a necessity, a right of each citizen. (One of the first formal statements of this concept was at the the 1948 United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information.) There is, the Task Force argued, a deep-seated human "need" to be informed.

A citizen needs information to make the proper choices in life, to conduct his affairs, to understand his environment, to buy things, build his house, educate his children, etc. He needs information to elect those who are to govern him, to participate usefully in the life of the community, to defend his interests and the interests of those who are near to him, to understand the significance of public events.(Vol II;6)

In addition to this basic need there are satellite needs "the need to belong to a community, the need for amusement, the need to satisfy a taste for scandal and gossip" (II;6) – which are also satisfied by information. When these needs are transposed into legal terminology they become "rights" to information. Not just any information, either. "The right to information implies the right to good information, complete, honest, unbiased, prompt, timely and attractive." (II;7) In this context advertising is regarded by the members of the Task Force as "yet another information channel of sorts." (II;8)

As soon as we accept that the concept of information implies imparting ideas to a particular public, we are bound to concede that advertising is a natural extension of information. Advertising, too, answers a need. For the consumer, advertising is an important source of information on the whole range of goods, services and products that the economy places at his disposal. It uses many methods to announce the existence and the characteristics of a product or service. It exploits all media of communication – press, radio, television, posters, fliers and so forth – to make men [sic] aware of what is available to satisfy their needs.(II;8)

The Task Force comes down squarely for the use of any and all techniques (advertising, persuasion, public relations) by the state: "the State may legitimately employ all of them to enlighten people –to motivate, convince and persuade the public for the purpose of encouraging the proper use of the services the State provides, and to promote a wide understanding of the State's responsibilities and obligations." (II;9)

The Task Force concludes that "The State must not retreat from its duty to provide information and social communication and, to accomplish this, it must equip itself with the necessary means." (II;10) the use of these "means" is justified on the basis that "in liberal democracies, propaganda exists in a competitive situation: commercial and political, complimentary and contradictory, clamorous and subtle..." (II;10) Moreover, the authors argue, "counter-propaganda in society impedes [the government's] action, entices citizens away from their social responsibilities, weakens the government's authority and subordinates the normal relations which the government should remain with the people." (II;10)

The Task Force was also sensitive to the dangers of public information and the "paradox" it must live with in democratic society:

At times, information – in all its forms – jostles the very freedoms that ensure its survival, freedoms that information itself must help to preserve. For these reasons, every democratic society strives to maintain a frequently precarious balance between the freedom to inform and the responsibilities and obligations of those who do the informing. The balance is of paramount concern to the ordinary citizen. He must be as watchful of the State as he is of the mass media.(II;11)

In the closing sentences of their assessment of information and the state, the authors state "...since information is a standard bearer of freedom and dialogue, it places before both the governed and those who govern the demanding challenge of participatory democracy." (II;14)

Participatory democracy, like the word "democracy" itself, has been one of those terms that one criticises at one's peril. In the 1960s it was what the politicians would call a "motherhood" issue. By and large ill-defined and misunderstood, seldom put into practice, and, by many accounts unworkable, it was nonetheless something to strive for and ill-conceived programs and practices (such as Information Canada) were able to achieve instant legitimacy by virtue of their association with this objective. Since then, the term has remained in the political culture, albeit less pronounced. In the 1981 "Communications Policy" from the Privy Council there is reference to the need to get Canadians involved in their government. More recently, the Mulroney government's "consultative" approach can be seen as another reworking of this theme.

This is by no means a new development. In a very real sense participation is a part of democracy that lived in theory but never really got off the ground in practice. This may or may not have something to do with democracy's subordinate position to the free market, as C.B. MacPherson suggests, but it remains the case that in most western countries participation means nothing more than periodic participation in the machinery of electing representatives. As the 1969 Task Force's authors themselves acknowledge, "participatory democracy is not a new idea; it has always been with us. What is new is the present potential to increase its use and effectiveness, *and the emphasis now placed on it by governments.*" (II;18, my emphasis)

In contrast to the 1960s sentiments about informing the people because they needed information to 'satisfy their needs', more recent federal documents, including the report by the Task Force on Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements (Fiscal Federalism in Canada, 1981), speak mainly of the *economic* reasons for informing people. This Task Force's report, which formed part of the Liberal's strategy on winning the referendum and also dealing with separatist elements in Western Canada like the Western Canada Concept, refers to government visibility in terms of "accountability". This report was actually presaged by an earlier green paper, entitled "The Way Ahead" (PCO,1977) which set the stage for post-1981 developments on the information front. In a section entitled "Social Responsibility" the government stated

It is a basic assumption of this paper that Canadians - when presented with the information necessary to assess our future options and opportunities to discuss the directions in which we should be moving - will make their choices in a manner which is both responsible and in accordance with their longer-term interests. (p.32)

The 'basic assumption' referred to here is quite compatible with the basic assumptions of the "management

of interests" approach to democracy. Significantly, the report makes no mention of the 'need' for those interests to be served or the individual objective in serving them. Instead, information is provided so that "interests" are to be judged and these are deemed to be 'our' interests.

The capacity of the individual to perceive how the economy is working can be significantly improved through the establishment of better information and public and private accounting practices which make social costs more visible. (p.27)

This green paper was part of a "tighten your belts" approach by the Liberals in late 1977. Although Doern has focussed on the 1981-82 "estimates" as the point where the Liberals became very concerned about "visibility", the origins of that orientation can be traced back to this document.

Another 1980s perspective on government advertising came from the Minister of Supply and Services, in an address to the Association of Canadian Advertisers in Toronto (May 5, 1981). Here the minister offered several observations on the state of the government's advertising business. Perhaps the most striking aspect of his remarks is the frankly "commercial" tone to them. By 1981 it is apparent that members of the government are comfortable with the terminology and have adopted the procedures of the private sector in their use of advertising.

In his opening remarks the minister states that he thinks "it is appropriate that DSS [Department of Supply and Services] is the government's manager for advertising, since DSS more than any other government department operates and thinks like the private sector." (p.2) The DSS has more than just advertising in its publicity arm: "also the Canadian Government Expositions Centre, the Canadian Government Printing Office, and the Canadian Government publishing centre. *Taken together, these organizations form a comprehensive tool that generates extensive marketing programs both in-house and through the private sector.*" (p.2, my emphasis)

One of the results of this private sector orientation, Blais argues, is that the DSS is "acutely aware" of the market-place, constantly searching for innovative ways of doing things, including "new ways of doing business." One of the new ways the government "does business", apparently, is with advertising:

Perhaps more than ever, the federal government is aware of the power of the message and the role of the media. We have taken deliberate steps to ensure that our major initiatives and efforts are communicated more effectively to Canadians. (p.4)

This approach to information is justifiable when placed in the proper context, Blais argued. As an example, he brought up the twin phenomena of "social marketing" (in which interest groups or special causes have turned to the media in their efforts to raise money) and "advocacy advertising" as examples of

other groups in society using the media to promote their own causes. "Imagine," he said to the members of the ACA, "in your own companies if you had a \$60 billion product and the only advertising you relied on was word of mouth, reports in the media, or comments by your competitors." (p.9) Imagine, indeed. But is the national government, in the form of its gross expenditures, a "product", one might ask? There are other examples of this marketing approach in Blais' speech. He said, for instance, that in reviewing their management of advertising "...we discovered that the federal government was very simmlar to a multi-brand national corporation." (p.16) When reforms were needed, "we followed the example of most large corporations [and] employ advertising experts to provide advice on the effect of individual campaigns on the corporate image and strategy...." (p.16)

Blais used the Federal Identity Program (FIP) as an example of the initiatives taken in the area of corporate image. The "Canada wordmark" (the word "Canada" with a flag over the last "a") is one of the most obvious examples of this program. As of May, 1982, Blais told the Toronto audience, "my department has introduced the Canada wordmark on over 13,000 vehicles, 500 building signs (with more to come), and on federal stationary, business cards, etc." (p.12) The government has followed this strategy for several reasons; Blais cites "consumer awareness, consumer education, *product confidence*, and so on." (p.10)

Blais' comments, made in a prepared speech by a minister responsible for the management of all government advertising, must be considered as indicative of general government attitudes towards advertising. In addition, a comprehensive review of government advertising was under way at this time. As a member of the cabinet with responsibility in this area, Blais was aware of and presumably took an active part in the creation of the ensuing policy document. For these reasons his remarks cannot be dismissed as "off-the-cuff".

The obvious connection between the practice of selling soap and the practice of selling the government may be merely a "technique", however. It may very well be that in his efforts to reach the "advertising professionals", Blais couched his language in terms that those in the audience would appreciate. It would be more significant if this sort of attitude were apparent in a different context.

I suggest that just such a statement was made by Gerald Regan, the Secretary of State, in the House of Commons in 1982. In response to criticisms of a specific campaign that were seen to be overly concerned with "image" (the billboards - "Helping Canada Work"), the minister responded,

The hon. member shows his absolute ignorance of the subject of advertising. He does not look at the entire program. Any man who has been in the advertising business for any period of time will tell him that a comprehensive program using a slogan ties together the radio, newspaper and television ads with the billboard. The billboard plays a very important role of jogging a person's memory about a message conveyed by television in more detail, or in newspapers.(Regan, 1982:16831)

This pretence of being an advertising expert is borne of an attitude that the federal government is a great advertising enterprise. Nor is this the only occasion during that debate that a Liberal member ridiculed the opposition's understanding of the ad industry. And, like J.J. Blais, Regan uses advertising terminology to describe information programs of the government. In a rhetorical question he introduces the prospect of "selling" the government: "Is it enough to allow [a government program] to be reported by the media despite the fact that many people in the country do not get a daily newspaper? Or is there a responsibility to sell that program and have all Canadians know about it?" (Regan, 1982:16832)

The discussion of democracy and democratic theory proposed two "paths" for a democratic society. One, the "management" model, sees voting and citizen participation generally as methods for achieving the best possible outcome for competing interests in society. It was suggested that recent developments in public choice theory include assumptions about democracy taken from this model. The alternative, "participatory", model of democracy proposes that political involvement be seen as a method of "enlightening" individual citizens and allowing them to achieve their potential. It was further suggested that some of the political initiatives of the late 1960s (such as Information Canada) were inspired by these latter assumptions. The examination of policy documents on information from two eras, as was done above, reveals the theoretical assumptions present in each. The "participatory democracy" inspiration which is explicit in the 1969 report was replaced in the later reports with more practical, economic arguments. Managerial democracy may not have been explicitly mentioned yet it infused the thinking which led the Liberals to adopt the information strategies that they did in the late 1970s.

6.3 Conclusions

This thesis has looked at government advertising from several perspectives – from the inside, through interviews; from an economic perspective via expenditure data and from a theoretic perspective in terms of its relationship to participation and the theory of democracy.

Democratic theory is the 'shell' or reference point for the other inquiries in the sense that it provides an awareness of the long-term implications of changes in governmental publicity and also is a source for

the background material which can help to explain some of the trends. Expenditure data was useful in that it gave a concrete picture of the total amount and particular areas in which government advertising expanded. What it failed to provide was a sense of the conditions which precipitated that growth. The interview material is what gives a real sense of what changes in the practices of government advertising means. It was in conversations with the people who produced the advertisements and the people who worked on the campaigns that the author was able to acquire an appreciation of the dynamics of government publicity. The striking feature of these dynamics is their resemblance to market-place relations.

From the research conducted for this thesis, particularly during the interviews, it became apparent that advertising represents a culmination of the transference of market relations to political relations. By this I mean that the many elements of a successful sale of a private good are now available to those who wish to market public goods, be they political parties, at election time, or governments and government policies in between elections.

The necessary components, including polling, market research, opinion research, product development and packaging have long been in use in private industry in Canada. To some extent various elements of the "marketing chain" were also used by government. It would be air to say, however, that the government was not seen as an effective marketer. The integrators, the people who had been putting the various pieces together into a cohesive machine for industry has been the advertising agencies. What finally began to happen in the early 1970s is that these "integrators" were allowed to operate more fully in the public sphere.

This is not to say that all government programs go through its ad agencies; obviously this is not the case. Given overall federal government expenditures, advertising expenditures are nowhere near the percentage they are in a packaged goods company such as Labatts or Proctor and Gamble. What is apparent in the government, though - this emerged in conversation with those in the advertising industry as well as those in government - is that there is more appreciation of the "value" that the advertising agencies offer and also a willingness to make use of the full range of services they make available.

If there was a single incident which marked this "coming of age" for political marketing in Canada, it would have to be Keith Davey's arrival in Ottawa and his subsequent orchestration of the successful 1974 campaign following the Liberals' near-miss in 1972. The connection to Keith Davey, although I was

unable to confirm or deny it during the research, is an interesting case. Even if the man himself did not actually have the influence which is attributed to him, he represents those aspects of the consummate marketing professional which up until that time had been available to, but not appreciated by, the government. Not all departments or programmes make use of all of these facilities but the important factor is their legitimacy in the public service and in the cabinet. A marketing program or attending to the "image" of the department is now seen as a viable option for program management.

Industry people have also remarked on this development. Hank Karpus noted with approval the government's increased expenditure on research in recent years. Even the public, as the Goldfarb study revealed, has come to accept the government's presence in the market-place, as long as that presence is not too partisan.

The nature of this research has not been such that one could make conclusions about the "effects" of government advertising. Rather, the intention has been to point out the implications that this aspect of government can have for democratic society. This is the overarching consideration referred to earlier. From a market perspective, what I have referred to as a "coming of age" for the government in terms of its effective utilization of available tools for product promotion, is perhaps nothing more than the next logical step in an evolutionary process. From a democratic perspective, however, the ramifications are more serious. The shift to market relations in the public sphere tolls the death knell for one aspect of democratic theory, namely the participatory or educative model. Market relations mesh very well with the "other" model of democracy, one based on the objective of managing different interests in society, but they do not bode well for achieving human potential.

The "effect" of government advertising may not be antidemocratic in the sense of "propaganda", but the *implications* of government advertising, I suggest, are profoundly un-democratic, at least from the perspective of one who values the participatory and educative aspects of that system of government.

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