MA Major Research Paper

The New World Information and Communications Order and Canadian Official Development Assistance

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The Major Research Paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Introduction

A review of the literature on the non-aligned movement for a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO) reveals that many of the central concerns which fueled the historical movement remain unresolved. There persists, in particular, an extreme imbalance in the global flow of information, with multinational corporations from the Western nations dominating the production and dissemination of information. The majority of the world's population is still lacking the "basic tools of modern communication, information and knowledge", as a result of the increasingly hierarchical structure of ownership and influence over the emerging communications and information technologies (Mowlana 60).

First tracing historically the NWICO movement itself, the paper will argue for the continuing relevance of the movement not only to our time, but will assert that the NWICO demands speak directly to central issues of Canadian communications. While Canadian officials were not prepared to side with the non-aligned proponents of the NWICO, Canada has clearly struggled with issues closely related to those facing less developed countries (LDCs) in the existing world information and communications order. This paper will consider Canada's position on the movement in the context of its own domestic policies, attempting to shed light on the logic driving the official Canadian response to the movement. Despite the coincidence of interests between Canadian leaders and leaders of the nations promoting the NWICO, our policy stance historically has been aligned with the Western world, blocking any real transformation of the New World Order. As a result of the opposition of capitalist liberal-democracies, it would appear that the highly politicized movement of the non-aligned countries has been

abandoned. Yet the issues raised by the NWICO continually re-appear, fragmented and de-politicized, in various forums including debates over the inclusion of the cultural sector in free trade.

Explored most intensively here will be the ways in which Canadian official development assistance (ODA) in the field of communications may be seen as a Canadian response to the demands for a NWICO. While Canada's policy stance in the debate within UNESCO may have been relatively straightforward, the ideologies underpinning development initiatives must be teased out. The paper will look both at the intent and the impact of Canadian ODA in order to assess the extent to which these initiatives have met any of the demands put forth by the NWICO, or whether ODA has simply exported Western capitalist models.

It will be argued here that while historically, Canadian communications policy suggests a similarity between the concerns of the Canadian state and those expressed by the proponents of a NWICO, ODA efforts reveal an unwillingness to support any radical re-ordering of world communications promoted by the non-aligned nations. Canada's alignment with opponents of the NWICO, and its ODA in the sphere of information and communications, have both been driven by a concern with maintaining a competitive position in the world economy. In effect, our ODA efforts have defended the very globalizing commercial world system identified by the NWICO as perpetuating inequalities in information and communications.

Historical Development and Demise of the NWICO

The movement for a NWICO can be traced to the early post-war years, when a number of former colonies entered an era of independence. At that time, issues of disparity in world communications arose in discussions within the specialized agency of the United Nations (UN), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) (Hamelink 1994, 196). By the early 1960's communication development was taken up as one of the areas of UN involvement, in particular within the forum of UNESCO (the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (Hamelink 1994, 197).

The nature of the discussions within UNESCO was strongly influenced by the growing majority of "Third World" or post-colonial countries (Roach 96). As "part of the decolonization discourse which was gaining momentum at the time", these states expressed concern that the Western doctrine of "free flow" in communications was in reality not an exchange but a uni-directional flow from the West to the rest of the world (Galtung and Vincent 73 - 74). Out of this desire for substantive change arose the demands for what was coined in 1976 as a New International Information Order (NIIO), and later re-named NWICO (Roach 95-96). The call for a NIIO was in turn closely linked to the expressed desire for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), envisioned as a fundamental restructuring of the international economy (Roach 95; Many Voices 39).

The NWICO movement is best understood in the context of earlier expectations "that the technological achievements of the developed countries (DCs) would contribute decisively to the resolution of global disparities between the rich and poor" (Hamelink 1997, 70). Technical assistance programs, focusing on the transfer of resources and skills, had comprised the major thrust of the UN efforts in the 1960s (Stevenson 3-4; Hamelink 1994, 197). In the old communication development paradigm, introduced into

the UN agenda by the West, "mass communication had promised to speed the transition of rigid, centuries-old cultures of Africa, Asia, and Latin America into the open, wealthy societies of the industrializing West" (Stevenson 2). Early on in the NWICO movement proponents recognized that although some technology transfer had occurred the Third World generally received end-products, whereas the benefits of the technologies were reaped by First World manufacturers (Hamelink 1997, 70). In sum, "technical assistance did not alter their dependency status" and neither were issues of information poverty or threats to cultural sovereignty addressed by technical means (Hamelink 1994, 200).

Further, the old development paradigm was decidedly alien to the newly independent nations. Something indigenous, something new was required to replace the imposed dream of modernity. According to Richard L. Stevenson, the "vision of modernity that development had promised – industrial, material, democratic – often seemed...incongruous and inappropriate in the Third World" (4), tied in as it is with "the alienation of people, with specialization of functions...hierarchical arrangements" and "the notion that man must dominate nature" (Smythe 237).

In response to the disappointments of the past, the non-aligned nations presented a radical alternative to the earlier communication development models. The new paradigm called for "a redistribution of the world's information resources", and "disengagement from the existing information system" in support of an alternative, Third World vision of development (Stevenson 33). Unlike Western modernization theorists, NWICO theorists identified an imbalance in the direction, volume and types of information exchanged between the First and the Third Worlds, systemic in nature and an obstacle to development for the Third World (Brown-Syed). It was argued that communications, the

process of exchanging information, "reflects the disparities which characterize the entire international scene", and thus "far-reaching changes" were required, as expressed in the MacBride Report, commissioned by UNESCO to study issues in world communications (Many Voices 183).

Inspiration for many non-aligned nations in the 1970s was taken from China, which provided a vision for self-propelled development, driven by a dream at variance with the "grim socialism" of the USSR, and yet also starkly different from Western capitalism (Stevenson 5). The complexity of asserting a non-aligned position in a bi-polar world has drawn significant academic attention to situating the ideological stance of the NWICO. Insofar as the non-aligned proponents drew heavily upon Marxist theory, they leaned toward socialism rather than capitalism. In particular, the linkages made between the NWICO and the NIEO, which could be interpreted as a call for a world Socialist distribution of wealth, differentiated the primarily non-aligned proponents from the Western industrialized nations (Brown-Syed). However, the strand of Marxism employed was composed more of critical Western than of Soviet thought, while nevertheless disapproving of Western dominance (Stevenson 35-36).

Stevenson explains that the theoretical underpinning of the movement for a NWICO was composed of three strands (36), all of which can be grouped under Christopher Brown-Syed's label of choice, "structuralism". A cultural imperialism school of thought, encompassing the works of North American Herbert Schiller and a number of NWICO proponents, saw a new colonialism at work through Western corporate and state dominance of information and communications (Stevenson 36-7). The media imperialism analysis asserted that in the post-War period, if not before, "Western

communication practices had been part of a burgeoning military-industrial complex that assured the hegemony of the United States, its allies and transnational corporations" (Roach 97). Out of Latin America came the dependency school, depicting global exploitation through a core-periphery model (Stevenson 37-8). Finally, European theorists in the 1970s argued that the failure of past communication development scholarship was in its emphasis on the individual, rather than the political and economic system. In order to understand the causes of underdevelopment, the European intellectual view stressed an emphasis on the whole exploitative system (Stevenson 7). Common to all three radical critiques of the existing information and communication system is the emphasis on the political and economic structures shaping development and underdevelopment.

The NWICO in particular took issue with concentration of ownership in the Western world (Many Voices 38). This imbalance was manifest both in terms of the number and size of media outlets as well as unequal access to sufficient and quality communications technologies (Brown-Syed). Further, since proponents of the NWICO posited a link between economic development and availability of information, concentration of ownership and control in the West was seen as contributing to the underdevelopment of the Third World (Many Voices 39). Like the transfer of technology it was argued that the flow of information perpetuated dependency. Unprocessed information, much like raw materials, was seen as flowing from LDCs to DCs to then be processed and redistributed. In such a system LDCs, limited to consuming finished products, are tied into a dependency relationship with information and communication exporters, always barred from the cutting edge of new information (Stevenson 6; Brown-Syed). Development aid

for communications in the 1970's was not improving conditions, it was argued, and the

reasons given for this neglect were seen as unsatisfactory (Many Voices 221). The

NWICO found it unacceptable that what aid existed tended to benefit the urban elites,

that development agencies lacked experience and thus competence in communications,

and that the "use of foreign technologies and imported models of infrastructures

sometimes proves more beneficial to the countries providing"(Many Voices 221).

Beyond material inequalities, the NWICO sought a revision of the terms in which the

Third World was viewed in productions of global mass culture (synonymous with

Western culture). Concentration of ownership in the West was held to perpetuate biases

in the content of communication, leading to observations that "exporting nations

reinforce their own cultural images", viewing the non-Western world through a Western

lens (Brown-Syed). Thus, the DC's control over the dissemination of information and

communications was seen as threatening LDCs self-determination, national identity and

cultural autonomy (Many Voices 37-38). The arguments of NWICO proponents thus

touched upon "culture, the very identity of countries of the world, and not only the way

they want to look to others, but also to themselves" (Galtung and Vincent 107).

Uniquely, the NWICO movement envisioned communications defined by

"equilibrium and reciprocity", a freer and more balanced flow (Brown-Syed). There

were, however, no illusions that the unbridled capitalist global market place would bring

about such balance (Roach 96). Colleen Roach points out that in many ways the

"NWICO movement was an attack on capitalism", on consumerism and the

"transnationalized economy", dominated by the West (96). There was an agreement that

communications must be guided by normative principles, taking shape in the declarations

and statements inspired by the movement. The right to communicate, in contrast to Western liberal notions of individualism and "free flow", was perceived by the NWICO as a collective right, and a social good, rather than a commodity; the values of humanism were stressed, as were the goals of "social progress and national liberation"(Brown-Syed).

While these norms could easily have coincided with those of Soviet party members, other values of the NWICO set the movement on an alternative path to that of the Eastern bloc. Importantly, the NWICO ultimately rejected Soviet proposals for strong government control of the media during discussions surrounding the Media Declaration of 1978 (Galtung and Vincent 83). In contrast to actually existing socialism, the majority of the non-aligned nations preferred the promotion of a diversity of voices and easy communication, over firm state control (Galtung and Vincent 84). Mustapha Masmoudi, a central intellect behind the NWICO, set out a plan for implementation which included notions of "equity and equality based on democratization of informational means and structures", implying "the establishment of a right of access to information sources" as well as the right to communicate (Brown-Syed). The emphasis on ensuring pluralism in terms of sources and access (Brown-Syed) can be seen as an alternative to both Western free-flow and the Soviet ideal of communications as strictly in service of the Communist party (Siegel 26).

The actual changes recommended by the NWICO are usually referred to in broad terms, although some specific demands were also put forth. For example there were calls for a more egalitarian distribution of world radio frequencies, reduced postal rates for published materials, "preferential telecommunications tariffs", more lenient copyright

laws, "protection against possible direct broadcast satellite intrusion" (Mowlana 60), and

efforts to address the high cost of paper (Many Voices Abridged 200). Broadly, there

was a desire to promote the development of national communication systems, to establish

normative guidelines for the media, and to re-design global information systems in a

democratic way (Kleinwachter 15). A number of recommendations focused on the news

media, including suggestions that news exchange within the developing world, and from

LDCs to DCs be improved, in quality and quantity, through raising the consciousness of

newsmakers and reducing Western monopolization of information and communications

systems (Bannon 21-22).

The actual achievements and landmarks of the movement include the impetus behind

the publication of three major documents, the UNESCO Media Declaration of 1978,

UNESCO's 1980 Statement on Journalistic Ethics, and the "MacBride Report", Many

Voices, One World in 1980, which was commissioned by UNESCO to study

contemporary issues in communications (Brown-Syed). In the first two of these

publications the radical views of the NWICO were enshrined, though less so with the

MacBride Report, which was seen as more compromising, in so far as it dropped some of

the radical anti-Western semantics in order to placate the movements' opposition

(Galtung and Vincent 86; Brown-Syed). The rallying cry for a "free and balanced flow"

was altered to, in some views, a more palatable demand for "a new, more just and more

effective world information and communication order" (Galtung and Vincent 87).

The necessity of placation in the 1980's is undoubtedly linked to economic crisis, and

the LDC's heightened dependency on aid. It must be acknowledged that there was a

contradiction between LDC concerns regarding Western technological domination and

hopes for "the promised leap into the 'information age'" through new communication technologies (Roach 96). Compromise may have been a reflection of the crisis-state of the masses in the Third World, but it may also have been rooted in the desires of the relatively privileged. As Colleen Roach notes, "the Western world could not have responded as it did to the NWICO without the participation of the national elites of the developing countries" (Roach114), who were perhaps willing to hush demands for more democratic world information and communications in return for aid usually benefiting the already privileged.

Beyond declarations and statements, the movement failed to gain acceptance for any binding agreements, and no material changes were brought about directly by the energetic and indeed radical movement. In retrospect it is possible to speculate upon a number of reasons for this failure in addition to the desire for assistance already noted, as well as "complications arising from the use of UNESCO as a forum of discussion" (Brown-Syed). It was argued that the mandate of UNESCO, as a specialized body of the UN, did not allow for political activities, but that the organization should be limited to carrying out the technicalities of the General Assembly's political decisions (Hamelink 1994, 206). Those who criticized the NWICO movement itself, added to their complaints disapproval of the use of UNESCO as a forum for a movement with which Western members of the UN body did not approve (Byers 168). Raised also were serious dissatisfactions with the directorship of UNESCO at the time. In addition to being "anti-Western in outlook", Amadou Mahtar M'Bow was criticized as extravagant, "given to patronage", and even corrupt with UNESCO funds, a point not contested here (Brown-Syed). It would, however, seem that these personal failings were unjustly tied in with the

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NWICO movement (Brown-Syed). By highlighting the Director General's controversiality, the Western media applied "ad hominem attacks against the Unesco leader", "with dubious logic to critiques of the organization's programme" (Brown-Syed).

While the above problems were significant, here the difficulties arising from Western opposition will be the focus. In 1984, the U.S. and Britain, in part as a reaction to the NWICO, withdrew their participation and support from UNESCO (Byers 169). We need not look far for ideological explanations for the withdrawals. Although the movement for a NWICO - supported by states which were diverse, politically, economically and culturally - cannot be seen as monolithic, the movement did present an alternative to the presumptions of Western liberal-democracies in regards to communications. As indicated above, the NWICO presented a progressive view on the media's role in society, ideally and in actual practice, while also presenting a controversial macro-perspective on the global system of communications and information.

A major point of vocalized ideological conflict between the West and the largely non-aligned NWICO focused on the appropriate role of the state in relation to the media. Centrally, controversy surrounded the support of the NWICO for greater state regulation in the flow of information and communication. Since among the NWICO proponents there was a level of agreement that the "free flow" of information and communications would only perpetuate imbalances (Many Voices Abridged 113), the movement called for state support of a "free and balanced flow" (Galtung and Vincent 83). For Western liberal-democracies, and in particular for the United States, a strong promoter of the "free flow of information" doctrine, the suggestion that greater state intervention was necessary

provoked fears of censorship (Roach 96-100). The current system was viewed as liberating insofar as it emphasized a free market-place of ideas. Thus a "political solution" it was believed, "would undermine such international norms as the freedom of information" and besides, "would not be in their economic interests" (Hamelink 1994, 207).

The NWICO was indeed a direct challenge to the very basis of libertarian beliefs in the virtues of a laissez-faire economy (Siegel 25), provoking the vehement opposition not only of Western governments, but also of the private media and information industries (Mowlana 65). The NWICO promotion of information as a social good, and communications as a human right, threatened those who depicted information and communications as merely a trade in services, best left to market forces (Kleinwachter 16). Western libertarians, even those who agreed on the existence of inequalities, were fundamentally accepting of the existing structure of global communications and information (Brown-Syed). The under-development of the Third World, it was argued, would correct itself in time, and communications and information problems could be addressed through attention to education, technology transfer, or the development of infrastructures, suggestions which in the structuralist view are only "precursors to more fundamental changes" (Brown-Syed).

The only version of the NWICO that was tolerated by all UNESCO member states was an interpretation of the demands as "a programme for the transfer of knowledge, finances and technical equipment" (Hamelink 1994, 200). Despite the failures of the modernization theorists, the "problem of the international information structure was being reduced to mere technical proportions" (Hamelink 1994, 200). Under the influence

of Western opposition and elite cooptation, UNESCO "redirected its energies" resorting to more liberal semantics and goals (Galtung and Vincent 99-100). In the 1980's, despite the continued under-funding of projects such as the U.S. initiated International Program for Communications Development (Galtung and Vincent 88) "recycled rhetoric equating telecommunications with development" proliferated (Roach 112). Reasserted within UNESCO was an emphasis on the "free flow of information and the freedom and independence of the media, on giving priority to operational activities, and on the importance of information technology" (Hamelink 1994, 203). With more conventional issues firmly in place, in 1989, the Director General of UNESCO stated that there no longer existed plans for a NWICO in the UN body, quite in contrast to its earlier resolutions in support of a NWICO (Hamelink 1994, 203). By the 1980's communication development had circled back to the ideological stance of the 1960's and earlier (Stevenson, 11). Reinstated was a "new version of the old 'media = development' slogan", with a focus on telecommunications, but a refusal to question the structural inequalities that would continue to thwart global communications equality (Roach 112).

Continuing Global Relevance of the NWICO

Two decades following the demise of the NWICO, issues of global communications disparity have ironically become increasingly prevalent. It has been argued that today what we have is the reverse of the NWICO vision – while that movement envisioned "Many Voices, One World", the concentration of ownership of the media means we now have many nations, one voice (Mowlana 73).

In what Fredric Jameson has labeled the era of "late capitalism", capital increasingly operates on a global basis, and in addition, formerly non-commercial areas of social life,

including the sphere of cultural expression through the mass media, are integrated into the capitalist mode of production (Garnham 43) Concentration of ownership is manifest in Western media hegemony as well as dominance of the industries of information and communication. It hardly needs to be reiterated that the consolidation of the means of production in the hands of the few, is part of the logic of the capitalist market system, reducing risk and increasing media and industry giants' profits (McChesney 16). The insights are familiar, but the applications of Marxist theory are continually changing. Non-competitive (oligopolistic) horizontal concentration within specific media sectors has been a trend throughout the twentieth century, but since the 1970's and 1980's, media firms have moved toward vertical concentration and conglomeration. Resultantly a small group of transnational corporations dominates the global media market, most of which corporations are US based[1] (McChesney 1999, 86, 88; McChesney 1998, 31). Likewise, "much of the manufacturing of communication hardware, software, programming and data transmission markets" is dominated by 100 transnational firms almost entirely from the U.S., Europe, and Japan (Vincent 182).

Liberalization and deregulation trends, largely propelled by the World Trade Organization and backed up by nations with strong free-trade agendas, have distinct implications for national sovereignty and cultural autonomy, both issues central to the NWICO debate. The trend within multi-lateral and regional trade negotiations has been towards opening markets to foreign goods, services, and investment, while at the same

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[1] McChesney organizes dominant TNC's into two tiers. The first tier is composed of ten corporations, which in addition to dominating the media are also among the largest corporations in the world in all sectors. Eight of the ten are U.S. based, including Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, Tele-Communications Inc. (TCI), News Corporation, Sony, Seagram (which owns Universal Studios), and General Electric (which owns NBC) (McChesney 1998, 31). Dutch Philips and German Bertelesmann are the European representatives in the top tier. In the second tier are four or five dozen corporations, around half of which originate in North America while the remaining half are primarily European and Japanese (McChesney 1999, 88).

time governments have been obliged to scale back interventions in virtually all sectors, sometimes including media sectors. Thus the state is limited in terms of the measures available to ensure, as the NWICO insisted, that information and communication flows remain balanced (Neil).

In the 1990's the excitement surrounding new information technology tended to gloss over the uneven distribution of access, known as the "digital divide" both between rich and poor countries and within countries (Hamelink 1994, 205). The introduction of supposedly de-centralizing technologies such as the Internet has not yet brought about balance in the distribution of access to and control over information and communications (Barney; Gutstein) reinforcing the NWICO movement arguments that the world communications and information system is structured to maintain privilege.

Commonalties between NWICO and Canadian Concerns

Not only are the issues raised by the non-aligned movement currently relevant to the state of global communications, but a number of the NWICO concerns have been particularly relevant to Canada. Distinct from the non-aligned nations in terms of our level of economic development, Canada's proximity to the United States, the world's dominant media exporter, and our linguistic and cultural affinities have nevertheless situated Canada, like the non-aligned nations, as a net media importer. In terms of power relations, Canada has shared the concerns of NWICO supporters, in that our policies reflect a concern with retaining a distinct identity in the face of U.S. cultural hegemony (Zemans 514). Canada's development aspirations, also shaped by our position as an importer of U.S. media, are not dissimilar from those of the non-aligned nations. While striving to retain our roots, we nevertheless seek advancement and modernization in the

rapidly changing global communications system. Like some non-aligned NWICO

supporters, Canada has traditionally accepted the role of the state in regulating the media.

Undoubtedly, if the Canadian state were to treat media goods and services as pure

commodities subject to the laws of the global market, there would be little space for

Canadian communications. Canadian policy-makers recognized early on (McChesney

1999, 231-33) that the economics of media products disadvantage smaller markets, in

which it is not always possible to recover the high first-copy costs of media products

(Galperin). Through various policy measures, the Canadian state has attempted to

address our vulnerability to US exports, experimenting with different types and levels of

public support for national media (Zemans 515). While the state has certainly also

promoted the development of private Canadian commercial media, which deal in

commodified communications, institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation preserve a space for Canadian communications that would not exist under

market conditions.

NWICO issues have in a number of ways been revived in what has become a distinctly

Canadian debate on the place of cultural goods in free-trade agreements (including media

communications). In multi-lateral, regional and bi-lateral free-trade agreements it has

been a Canadian tradition to negotiate the exclusion of the cultural sector (of which

media are a part) from free-trade rules. The nature of exemptions varies from agreement

to agreement (Maule 2002, 40), from cultural exemptions with a retaliation clause

(Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, North American Free Trade Agreement), to

exemptions without scope for retaliation (the 1996 bilateral agreements with Chile and

Israel), to a refusal to commit the cultural sector at all (as in the General Agreement on

Trade in Services) (Maule 2002, 39-40). Not unlike proponents of the NWICO, the Canadian state has been reluctant to relinquish rights to regulate, protect, and promote Canadian films, radio, television, newspapers, books and magazine publishing (McDowell 126).

The rhetoric supporting "ownership restrictions, public ownership, co-production treaties, content quotas, tax incentives and subsidies" (Maule 2001) has often been based on arguments for the socio-political significance of culture. Undoubtedly the state recognizes the role of the cultural sector in sustaining national cohesion and providing other benefits not directly of material advantage. However, it cannot be denied that the special economic characteristics of culture, and in particular the high first-copy costs, provide argument in Canada for the employment of measures sustaining a space for domestic cultural production and expression. It is not a new argument to point out that Canada lacks the economies of scale that have so advantageously positioned the United States to recover those high first-copy costs numerous times over. In short, it is to the nation's competitive advantage to seek to exclude the cultural sector from unrestricted trade, and such strategy is not unique to Canada. It has been argued that the United States' "current position of global cultural domination was achieved, in part, particularly in the early days, through legislation and regulation", and that even in the contemporary era the U.S. government promotes its cultural sector and employs protective measures where it serves to enhance U.S. competitive advantage (Zemans 514).

Such a characterization fits with other accusations that Canadian state's "emphasis is on protecting cultural industries rather than cultural expression," (Browne) the difference being that industries are part of profit-generating capitalist production, whereas

expression is not necessarily commodified. It is important to separate Canada's special treatment of the cultural sphere in trade agreements from an approach to culture that would challenge the commodification of culture, or even more ambitious, the unequal cultural exchanges of the "late capitalist" system. Notably, Canadian governments have rather been strong advocates of a rules-based system of progressive liberalization and deregulation (Sinclair 27, 63) when negotiating sectors which stand to gain from free trade. Beyond merely acquiescing, Canada has been a major proponent of freer trade, as in the GATS, where, as Sinclair points out, Canada "is one of the strongest and most single-minded advocates" for expanding commitments (27). The telecommunications services sector for example is a highly profitable area - in the year 2000 the sector contributed approximately $21.4 billion to GDP – and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) expresses strong interest in further liberalization of the sector (DFAIT 2003). Canada strategy has been to aggressively seek improvements from its trading partners on their commitments for telecommunications services and to foster a pro-competitive environment in general (DFAIT 2003).

Cultural exemptions, it has been recognized, do not always withstand the challenges of trading partners (McChesney 1999, 81). Thus it is questionable whether culture can be permanently kept off of the negotiating table in agreements, such as the GATS, which are entirely directed towards the progressive liberalization and deregulations of sectors previously closed (McDowell 127). In response to the inadequacy of the cultural exemptions, an alternative strategy has been proposed to deal with culture in a free trade environment. This proposal for a New International Instrument for Cultural Diversity (NIICD) constitutes an area in which Canadian policy again ties in with NWICO issues.

Not unlike the earlier non-aligned movement, the proposal for a NIICD has links with UNESCO, however, the proposal has also been taken up outside of the framework of the UN within civil society (Magder 13). Also in common with the movement for a NWICO is the focus of the NIICD proposal on threats of cultural homogenization and inequality of cultural exchanges in a global market system.

With roots in the 1998 Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Development, under the auspices of UNESCO, the discussions around an NIICD were taken up later that year when Ottawa hosted a conference on the topic of diversity (Magder 13). The aims of the conference and the efforts of Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, among others, were strengthened by a 1999 report by the Cultural Industries Sectoral Advisory Group on International Trade (SAGIT) to the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) (McDowell 128). The SAGIT report proposed the creation of a new international instrument designed to deal with issues of cultural diversity, and to support "the legitimate role of domestic cultural policies in ensuring cultural diversity"(quote from the SAGIT report in McDowell, 128). The Canadian government response to the 1999 SAGIT report made reference to the instrument, declaring that a NIICD "'would lay out the ground rules for cultural policies and trade, and allow Canada and other countries to maintain policies that promote their cultural industries'" (quoted from Canadian Heritage 1999, in McDowell 130). The Canadian government sees the NIICD as potentially enabling "Canada to maintain its cultural policies 'while respecting the rules of the international trading system and ensuring market rights for cultural exports'" (Maule 2002, 40).

Stephen D. McDowell, while asserting that the "concept of cultural diversity fits well in a liberal pluralist political culture", nevertheless predicts that there will be "efforts to portray cultural diversity as the 1990s equivalent of ...UNESCO debates over the New World Information and Communication Order" (NWICO) (130). Despite the similarities between the movement for a NWICO and the Canadian efforts to promote a NIICD we must not over-look the fundamental, ideological differences between the movement for a NWICO and the proposals for a NIICD as supported by the Canadian state. This promotion of "cultural diversity" on the part of the Canadian state should not be misconstrued as evidence of radical opposition to globalization or the commodification of culture in general. Rather, it can be argued that the Canadian state's current strategies even through the NIICD are fundamentally centrist, in the sense that they are compatible with dominant ideologies. Maule (2002) explains that the Canadian government feels the NIICD could "enable Canada to maintain its cultural policies 'while respecting the rules of the international trading system and ensuring market rights for cultural exports'"(40). The primary aim, rather than to challenge the late capitalist system is to enhance Canada's competitive position within that system, which necessarily entails seeking special treatment for the cultural sector.

The NWICO movement, as argued above, questioned larger issues of systemic global inequality as well as the commodification of different forms of communication (Brown-Syed). The NIICD desired by Canadian officials and cultural industries is conversely an instrument which could "lay down rules for determining how government may or may not behave" (Maule 2001), and as such is more limited in scope, and essentially centrist ideologically. While both the NWICO and the NIICD have sought to preserve, to

varying extents, the authority of the state, the movement for an NIICD by no means revives the radical, stridently anti-imperialist, and occasionally anti-capitalist rhetoric of the NWICO movement. Rather, the semantics currently proscribed are tamer, centering on the less aggressive calls for "diversity".

Canada's Policy Stance on the NWICO: Alignment with the Western World

Interestingly, McDowell describes the NIICD movement's "positive agenda for coalition-building action in multilateral organizations" as "consistent with Canadian efforts in past negotiations" (131). However, it should be remembered that Canada's position on the "coalition-building" opportunity presented by the NWICO, within the UNESCO forum, was one of opposition. Colleen Roach, discussing the opposing views of the Western and the non-aligned worlds on the NWICO, asserts that "if there had been a 'renegade' in the Western ranks it probably would have been Canada, given that its intellectuals and bureaucrats have long criticized the cultural domination of the United States" (Roach 106). It is described as ironic that despite the similarities between Canadian policies and the goals of the NWICO, "Canada was clearly one of the strongest allies of the United States in the NWICO debate" (Roach 107).

Canada's official response to the 1980 MacBride Report is quoted here:

"It is a delicate consensus. Many parts of the text hide fundamental differences of view. Freedom of Speech cannot be sacrificed even in the name of other goals. The MacBride Report should be used as a reference document, with emphasis on very practical steps." (Harley 160)

There was, despite Western opposition to the ideological stance of the NWICO, a level of universal concern that communication disparities impede development and may eventually be harmful for the West (Hamelink 1994 205-206). While not denying the existence of inequalities, the West, including Canada, preferred practicality (Byers 168) as a safer solution than radical restructuring, as is evident from the above-cited response of the Canadian state to the MacBride Report. Joe Clark, former Secretary of State for external affairs "stressed the ongoing role of Canada as a 'moderating influence in a world beset by extremes'"" (Byers 169).

The reason given for Canadian opposition, according to the earlier Secretary of State for External Affairs John Roberts, was the perceived threat to freedom of information and of the press (Byers and Saywell 228), in line with the Western consensus. There was an outcry over the suggestion that states should be "responsible for the activities in the international sphere of all mass media under their jurisdiction" (Byers and Saywell 228).

Commenting on the US withdrawal from UNESCO, officially set for January 1985, the Secretary of State at the time, Allan J. MacEachen, "stated that Canada 'would not like to contemplate any important UN agency without the USA as an active member providing positive leadership'" (quoted in Byers168-69). The Canadian state was equally exasperated, according to MacEachen, with UNESCO's apparent anti-Westernism and problems with the performance of its leaders in economic management (Byers 169). However, Canada preferred a strategy of working from within UNESCO to resolve these issues, and preferred US participation in the project of redirecting "'UNESCO back to the priorities of its mandate: education, culture and science'" (MacEachan quoted in Byers169). UNESCO, in the Canadian view had diverged towards "sterile political

debates" wasting time and resources on "the proliferation of resolutions on the same topic, and the scheduling of redundant conferences and meetings" (Joe Clark quoted in Byers 169)

Perhaps beyond the officially stated Canadian concerns less democratic (but equally practical, and centrist) motivations can be found. In retrospect, we can speculate on the unstated factors, which may have compelled policy-makers to side with other western liberal-democracies, ignoring the irony of Canada's opposition to the NWICO.

A compelling argument can be made that the Canadian response was an attempt to protect vested interests in the private sector. It has been argued that Canada promoted the "'free flow' doctrine at the international level, while adopting a rhetoric and policy designed to protect the cultural and economic stakes of its media/communication markets" in order to gain a competitive advantage in the information markets of the developing world (Roach 109). To the extent that LDC's markets were economically significant for Canada, or promised to be significant in the future, it is not inconceivable that Canadian policy-makers recognized the threats to profit inherent in the non-aligned argument that the "free flow" doctrine was a covert means to capitalist economic expansion (Roach 109). For the sake of better understanding the Canadian state's rejection of the NWICO, we might shift our focus from the multilateral forum of UNESCO to the bilateral relationships between Canada and the developing countries represented by the movement.

Trade and Aid

Canada's interactions with developing countries in the sectors of information and communications can be divided into trade and aid activities, which overlap despite being distinct categories (Vandries 11). Frans Luc Vandries - in his master's thesis entitled "Telecommunications in the Mist: Competition, Cooperation, and Technology Transfer in the CIDA Development Project Cycle in Rwanda 1973-1988" - highlights the blurred divisions between trade and aid in a sector close to the heart of the movement for a NWICO. The time-frame of the project studied is particularly appropriate as it spans the era of the movement, and even survives it by several years. Vandries actually completed the thesis in 1986, but added an epilogue to bring closure to his study of the unusually drawn-out CIDA project. In so far as Vandries addresses development in the light of international competition, his approach coincides with that of this thesis. Here too there is a concern the imbalance of international power and its manifest in development activities. However, Vandries places a strong emphasis on organizational dynamics, spending considerable efforts positioning the various actors in the development project and examining how their centrality or peripherality influenced the "success" of the project and for whom. In this sense, "Telecommunications in the Mist" is ultimately concerned with structures of power at the organizational level, whereas the concern of this study is first and foremost with power at the level of international relations.

Canadian performance in the international trade forum is officially promoted through a number of institutions, of which the Export Development Corporation (EDC) is central (Vandries 11). Created in 1969 as a Crown Corporation (Vandries 11), the EDC (now Export Development Canada) was created to "support and develop trade between Canada and other countries and Canada's competitiveness in the international market-place"

(Department of Justice Canada 1985). For the most part the EDC approves profit-generating ventures, but when directed by the federal government the corporation will occasionally make a loan for the sake of "the national interest" (Vandries 11). Perhaps more accurately, these "national interest" loans are viewed by the government as desirable for the sake of generating profits in the long-term. Although Vandries draws attention briefly to the EDC in order to compare it to the activities of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) his thesis focuses on a project carried out by CIDA. Drawing on materials from the Department of External Affairs and International Trade this paper will examine in greater depth below projects of the EDC paralleling those of CIDA.

International ventures in the sphere of information and communications are also intertwined with the mandate of CIDA, Canada's leading aid institution, and the vehicle through which a number of other development organizations are funded (Vandries 12). CIDA's official mandate, as stated in a 1995 Foreign Policy Statement, is to "support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and thus contribute to a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world" (CIDA 2003). The literature produced by CIDA over the years reiterates in numerous ways the link between poverty reduction and information and communications (CIDA "International Telecommunication Union", CIDA "Panaftel", CIDA News Release 97-63 1997, CIDA 2003), reasserting the Agency's role in the sector. For the NWICO movement likewise, information "was explicitly recognized in the UNESCO Media Declaration and the MacBride Report as a prerequisite for economic development" (Brown-Syed). In a more critical vein, NWICO theorists followed that idea through to conclude that "the structure

of world information flow must necessarily be viewed as supportive of the global economy" (Brown-Syed). Presumably, such a conclusion would be far too political for the Agency. Rather, in a 2003 publication entitled "CIDA's Strategy on Knowledge for Development through Information and Communication Technologies" (ICTs) argues that the poor are enabled to improve the quality of their lives through ICTs, in so far as they allow for access to knowledge, which leads to a broader range of choices (CIDA 2003).

CIDA's focus on the poor, however, has been constrained by the conditions of its creation. Created in 1968 (Vandries 11), CIDA was designed to report to the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Vandries 13). Lacking the autonomy of a Crown Corporation, CIDA was seen as an arm for the implementation of the policies and objectives of the government (Vandries 13). Lacking authority in the political process, CIDA has enjoyed less independence from political priorities than the EDC, an autonomous entity. In light of these constraints any critiques of CIDA projects inevitably point towards failures of the government and the greater political system.

In the area of CIDA policy the government has great influence, which for Vandries explains why Canadian ODA has been "so heavily tied to Canadian goods and services for so long, despite CIDA's promises to untie them" (20). In the past, as much as 80% of bilateral assistance has been tied to Canadian goods and services, defined as having at least two-thirds Canadian content (Vandries 31). Policies of tied aid were eventually relaxed, with some aid totally untied, aid to the poorest countries 50% untied and to other countries 33.3% untied (Vandries 31). It should be noted that the untied aid still cannot be utilized in the purchase of goods and services from other developed countries,

however, and neither are the countries enjoying untied aid well-positioned as consumers of developed country imports regardless (Vandries 31).

Drawing on Vandries' thesis, and official documentation of similar projects, the criticisms made here will be limited to assessments of the failures of Canadian ODA to truly respond to the issues raised by the NWICO with "very practical steps" (Harley 160).

Telecommunications in the Mist provides the most thorough and balanced account of Canadian ODA in the sector of information and communications, during the somewhat uncertainly bounded era of the NWICO. Little academic work within the humanities seems to have been published on the topic, and official documentation has its shortcomings. Even projects in recent years are cloaked in some obscurity. Official materials for public consumption, including Press Releases and Executive Summaries, either take on the tone of public-relations or the jargon of a specialized bureaucracy. In either case, the details are scarce, and any attempts to measure results scientifically would require materials beyond those informing this study.

Rwanda

Interestingly, the pre-investment phase of the Rwanda project began the same year as the non-aligned call for a NIEO in 1973, a critical step towards the later NWICO movement (Roach 95). In fact, the years during which CIDA was researching and planning the Rwanda program were the most radical years of the non-aligned movement's efforts in the information and communications sphere (Stevenson 10-11). Before CIDA began actual implementation in Rwanda in 1979 (Vandries 58) several landmarks had passed, including the stridently anti-imperialist 1976 Tunis summit at which NIIO was first coined, UNESCO's adoption of the movement that same year

(Roach 95-96), and the MacBride commission (Hamelink 1997, 74). Stevenson asserts that as early as 1978 the movement had shifted from stridency to compromise with the West in order to gain from the rich information resources of the West, and the technology (10).

As a recipient of CIDA assistance in the area of telecommunications, Rwanda's scope for development was great. Telephone equipment for national purposes was in short supply, outdated and in poor condition. There was no money available to maintain what was needed within the borders, and the African nation was additionally limited in its international communications capabilities (Vandries 60). Early studies by experts in the field arrived at conflicting solutions, and though a less sophisticated upgrading option may have been more suitable for Rwanda's needs and capacities at the time, CIDA chose to over-haul the system – a choice Vandries takes issue with throughout the thesis (61, 62).

Specifically, through contracts with Teleconsult and Microtel, CIDA chose to install a microwave telecommunications system, using Canadian technology proven earlier in B.C. Hydro's dam control communications network (Vandries 64). Vandries speculates that the then "glamorous" technology was preferred (over more practical, but less notable options) for its potentially positive public relations impact and as a means to market national technologies abroad (Vandries 71). At the stage of pre-investment planning, CIDA "tried to design a project that would meet its goals, namely, Rwanda's development, the transfer of Canadian technology, and the transfer of resources from the government to the Canadian private sector" (Vandries 89).

In Vandries' view, however, CIDA later ceded its central position to the private Canadian consulting company, Teleconsult, and the project in its implementation was not directed towards the Agency's goals (Vandries 89). Instead, Teleconsult's goals guided the project, and though it undoubtedly shared CIDA's goals for the private sector, it either lacked the scope to foresee obstacles in the international sphere, or perhaps its efforts were too focused on short-term gains to consider long-term prospects (Vandries 85).

From this early case study, we can derive grounds for scepticism regarding the benefits of public-private partnerships in official development assistance. Vandries notes that although there have been indications of resistance from CIDA to mixing aid and trade (Vandries 26) there has been increasing pressure for CIDA to work more closely with the private sector, beginning as early as the late 1970s (Vandries 27). In fact, it is less expensive for CIDA to contract out to the private sector, rather than paying in-house specialists (Vandries 84), and it allows the Agency to draw on a wide pool of expertise (Vandries 85). However, as is evident in the Rwanda project, the priorities of the for-profit, private-sector should not mesh with those of CIDA, assuming the Agency's goals are aligned with its mandate. Nevertheless, as will be shown further below, the virtues of such partnerships have been continually restated in ODA organizational rhetoric over the decades.

Although the private sector did gain temporarily from the transfer, "a sustained transfer of telecommunications technology was not established, and effective development in Rwanda was hampered by ...competition" internationally (Vandries 89). For reasons which remain unclear, Rwanda later accepted a French project duplicating

the Canadian microwave system in many ways, in effect cutting short the partnership

with CIDA, and negating prospects of future equipment sales to Rwanda (Vandries 90).

By the end of the Canada-Rwanda partnership, only one of CIDA's primary goals had

been effectively met: the transfer of resources from the government to the Canadian

private sector. The transfer of Canadian technology was both cut short and made

obsolete, but Rwanda's development was perhaps the least successful area.

A central observation of the NWICO movement, which Rwanda experienced first

hand, was that technology transfer from the First to the Third World consists of end-

products (Hamelink 1997, 71). Just as the NWICO proponents pointed out, in Rwanda

the benefits of the technology transfer were reaped by manufacturers, adding to the

problems of dependent development (Hamelink 1997, 71). In terms of numerical goals,

by 1984 Rwanda had only about half the number of phones hoped and planned for

(although in roughly ten years Rwandans went from having .0469 phones between 100

people, to .0736 phones between the same number)(Vandries 80). Further, "the transfer

of technology, expertise, and knowledge, which is at the core of development, was not

adequately addressed" (Vandries 71). Minimal expertise was transferred with the

technology, making maintenance difficult (Vandries 90) – a problem apparently of

multiple causes. For Rwanda's part, Canadians interviewed by Vandries complained that

the responsible ministry was uncooperative in providing public servants for training (80).

Without the benefit of hearing Rwandan views on the matter, such claims should be

measured against Vandries own observation that the transfer of expertise would not have

profited the Canadian economy to the same extent as the transfer of equipment (Vandries

95). It follows then that less effort was made by Canadians to ensure training occurred, since less profit was involved.

Due to a lack of what the World Bank began referring to as "country commitment" (a term used to this day) (Vandries 73; World Bank Group 1999), both the international organization and CIDA ceased all aid in telecommunications to Rwanda shortly after the project (Vandries 69). Essentially, it would seem that the Rwandan ministry in charge of telecommunications did not have the resources or the desire to maintain the systems which (Vandries 70), we will recall, were never designed with Rwandan needs and capacities in mind to begin with. The ultimate lesson drawn from this experience, for Vandries, is that the most successful actor in a project tends to be the organization with control over the technology or the capital (96). In development assistance, Vandries concludes, the "recipient seems to benefit only incidentally from the aid" (96).

Panaftel

The beginning of the pre-investment phase in Rwanda coincides with the conception of a similar project by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which later came to involve CIDA quite heavily. In 1973 the ITU came up with a "master plan...to serve all of Africa with a vast microwave system, Pan-African Telecommunications (Hebert 50). The microwave system is described as one of the world's "most challenging to build, maintain and operate" (Hebert 50), and the most expensive and ambitious project of its type (CIDA "Panaftel"). In western and central Africa, prior to the Panaftel project, there were only isolated microwave systems where any were operable at all (Hebert 50). The Panaftel West plan in which CIDA was involved would "create a 3000

km path linking Dakar, in Senegal, to Cotonour, in Benin, roughly the distance equal to that between Miami and Montreal" (Hebert 50).

Of the five francophone West African countries affected by the CIDA project, Senegal, Mali, and Burkina Faso were ranked by the United Nations Human Development Index as among the poorest nations on earth (CIDA "Panaftel"). Targeting these nations was in keeping with CIDA's long-held argument that "telecommunications infrastructure in general have an accelerating effect on economic growth which make them instruments for poverty reduction" and especially so for very poor countries (CIDA "Panaftel").

In 1976 CIDA responded to the ITU's requests for assistance, coming on board with the private-sector Intel as consultants and later obtaining a contract with Elinca, "a joint venture" comprised of a number of ITC companies (Hebert 50). Eventually Bell Canada International (BCI) was awarded a management contract to smooth out the organizational difficulties (Hebert 50). The inspiration for CIDA's Panaftel involvement, as with other development initiatives in the late 1970's was derived "as much by the political will to see Canada play a significant role in the development of French-speaking Africa, as by that of reaping the commercial benefits that might come with it"(CIDA "Panaftel").

Beginning work in early 1979, by 1982 CIDA's microwave system stretched across western Africa, providing for a much higher volume of voice circuits, as well as carrying TV signals and telex (Hebert 52). Following the completion of the originally planned microwave system, the Agency sought further improvements in the system's performance, and thus extended the program into the 1990's (Hebert 52; CIDA "Panaftel"). Beginning in 1985, and contracting out to the Douserve Group Inc. and BCI,

the project stretched out CIDA's involvement in Panaftel by several years, in the hopes of raising the level of "operating and maintenance efficiency", self-sufficiency, accessibility, and volume capabilities, "making the system profitable" (Hebert 52).

According to CIDA, Panaftel West was pivotal in breaking the landlocked situation of the five countries, and "has had a major impact on their economy and population"(CIDA "Panaftel"). On one hand, the project "represented a tremendous communications breakthrough", and overall was rated by CIDA as "excellent in the delivery of physical infrastructure and in developing the capacities of the telecommunications organizations" (CIDA "Panaftel"). However, the Agency itself admits in an Executive Summary that "rural systems suffered in many cases from maintenance problems and were not designed in such a way as to facilitate telephone access to nonsubscribers" (CIDA "Panaftel").

Essentially, the beneficiaries of the transmission infrastructure and the intuitional support were a higher-income minority in the urban centres who were able to afford telephone "subscriptions", including some private and some public subscribers (CIDA "Panaftel"). As Mowlana argues, "increased access to information technologies will not yield benefits to the poor and less-developed regions of the world unless accompanied by basic restructuring of political systems" – that is, a restructuring of the "distribution aspects of communication" (70). A political analysis was, however, absent from the Panaftel project, and thus the poverty reduction goals of the project can thus be seen as compromised. Communications costs remained "exorbitant", and even following the project there were few public phones (CIDA "Panaftel").

CIDA's responses to criticisms on this account have been largely defensive. The Executive Summary points out that the intention was never to merely subsidize private

users, but rather that servicing private users in part pays for the investment, always motivated by an interest in "opening up regions" and in extending the telephone system to meet the requirements of government and "economic operators" (CIDA "Panaftel"). In retrospect CIDA "deducted that the Panaftel project has strongly contributed to economic growth of the beneficiary countries (or prevented further decline)" and since in these countries, "the majority is poor, economic growth has necessarily benefited the poor" (CIDA "Panaftel"). Thus, despite problems of access for the poorest, CIDA maintained that telecommunications is an effective tool for development and consequently for poverty reduction, at least when the macro-economic situation is considered.

Although the reasons given are vague, the Executive Summary offers its regrets that the initiative was ended too abruptly, "on the basis of new criteria", which prevented "achieving the objectives aimed by the project originally" (CIDA {Panaftel). Explaining the policy shifts of CIDA over the three decades Panaftel spanned the Summary states that infrastructure-based projects progressively became of secondary importance (CIDA "Panaftel"). By the 1990's priorities included emphasizing "economic growth by providing assistance to micro-entrepreneurs and cooperatives, and also good governance and support to decentralization" (CIDA "Panaftel"), in line with the neoliberal tenets of the day. Thus, with CIDA withdrawing from infrastructure provision, "the unique partnership created with the countries in the strategic area of telecommunications was interrupted and the potential for a sustainable commercial relationship involving the Canadian private sector was not achieved" (CIDA "Panaftel"). Resultantly, "long term partnership objectives in this strategic sector for the influence and presence of Canada

were forsaken" (CIDA "Panaftel"). It is somewhat ironic that the neoliberal policies of the 1990's, which dictated scaling back social welfare mechanisms actually undermined some of the capitalistic goals of Canadian ODA.

Richard C. Vincent, in discussing the future of the NWICO ideals offers ten proposals which reveal the divergences between the Panaftel project and the social equity principles of the NWICO and its adherents (181). Specifically, Panaftel did not address the idea that "communication equity goes hand in hand with a fairer distribution of wealth/resources and power", nor did it take into account that "developing countries cannot achieve equity through capital assistance alone" (Vincent 181). Most strikingly, however, the Panaftel project can be seen as inadequate when considered in the context of Vincent's claim that "communication equity must apply to the use, access, and distribution of all communication technologies," and that commercial interests cannot be dominant over cultural concerns (181).

Economic Development Corporation Projects

During the era of the Rwanda and Panaftel projects, government trade bodies were involved in strikingly similar projects. Press Releases generated by the Department of External Affairs and the EDC provide an idea of the nature of these endeavours, largely focused on upgrading technological capacities in the information and communications sector of developing countries. The contrasts between the official mandates of the EDC and of CIDA are clear: the object of the latter is to support sustainable development in developing countries, while that of the former is to promote Canadian export trade. In line with these mandates is the fact that CIDA deals with grants, whereas the EDC offers

loans with the full expectation that these are to be repaid (Vandries 10). Yet, these key organizations in the trade and aid sectors share an ambiguity in practice. Further, it is not unusual in Canada and other developed countries for private investment, such as that facilitated by the EDC to be actually counted as "aid" (Vandries 10).

Both CIDA's grants and the EDC's loans are funneled back into the Canadian private sector, which benefits from the contracts generated by both organizations. Further, just as the interests of the Canadian private sector arise in CIDA literature, so the rhetoric of development is mouthed by the EDC, for example when news releases promise that a project will include training components (human resource development) and that the needs of domestic civilians will be serviced by the telecom equipment and services (presumably impacting quality of life) (Department of External Affairs and International Trade, News Release No. 69). Distinctive, however, is the fact that EDC press releases on international development contracts quite frequently provide an estimate of the number of Canadian employment years that will be generated by a particular project. Thus the contracts outlined below are always framed in terms of benefits to the Canadian economy.

In July of 1982, the Ministry of Trade announced that the Canadian-owned public company Spar Aerospace would be awarded two contracts of valued at over $1 million to provide equipment and services for China's satellite systems (Department of External Affairs, News Release No. 117). While the details of this early project are vague, later Press Releases provide greater detail.

In September of 1988, the same Department announced the EDC's financing of a telecommunications agreement between the government of Morocco and Bell Canada

International (BCI), the international telecommunications consulting arm of Bell Canada Enterprises, which is Canada's largest corporation. The $212 million loan was granted in support of the BCI contract, won through a process of international competition, to install 300, 000 new telephone lines. Statements from Canadian officials boast that the project "represents one of the most significant breakthroughs for the Canadian communications industry in foreign markets," in so far as the victory "enhances the visibility of Canadian industry's performance as a whole in the communications and information-technology sector" (Department of External Affairs, News Release No. 203). The contract with BCI to improve Morocco's phone system was extended in 1991, with another $58.5 million loan from the EDC, according to a news release from what was then referred to as the Department of External Affairs and International Trade (DEAIT) (News Release, No. 64).

In 1989, EDC's funds were lent to the Jamaican government to be re-channeled into the revenue stream of Canadian Northern Telecom. The contract, worth an estimated $45 million, entailed developing and upgrading regional communications networks, as well as enhancing communications services for the tourism industry. The sales, EDC predicted, "will help preserve Canada's position as the dominant telecommunications supplier to Jamaica and in the Caribbean region, and will create employment throughout Canada's telecommunications industry" (EDC News Release, No. 044, February 28, 1989).

The EDC's funding of such infrastructural projects continued into the 1990's, and if the frequency of press releases is a reliable indication, the Corporation's involvement increased. In addition to assisting private corporations to compete for international telecommunications development contracts, the Canadian government's official trade

bodies also fostered partnerships of a more symbolic nature in the information and communications sector. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) on co-operation in the field of information and telecommunications with both Singapore and Mexico were signed in the 1990's, between those developing nations and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Sharing innovations in technology research and development, accelerating commercial exchanges and coordinating policies and regulations governing the sector were priorities issues in the MOUs (DFAIT, which replaced DEAIT) (DFAIT News Release No. 194; No. 4).

In terms of financing activities, in 1990 the EDC offered up to $23.5 million as a loan to the Kenyan government, to support the sale of microwave telephone systems by SR Telecom of Quebec. Much like the Rwanda project, these funds were directed towards connecting isolated rural areas Kenya through the installation of telecommunications equipment (DEAIT News Release No. 199). The following year, the government of Canada, again working through the EDC, financed the sale of Canadian Marconi telecom equipment to Indonesia "with a loan of up to $8.823 million" (DEAIT News Release No. 125). The EDC further supported a number of contracts between the People's Republic of China and Canadian private corporations, including Northern Telecom (DFAIT News Release No. 175), Harris Farinon (DFAIT News Release No. 211), Newbridge Networks (DFAIT News Release No. 18), E.F. Johnson Canada, and Electrohome (DFAIT News Release No. 69). These contracts entailed the provision of a digital microwave system and a digital packet network telecommunications system (News Release No. 175), the sale of digital radio microwave systems (News Release No. 211), radio equipment kits, and a digital communications network for power administration (News Release No. 18).

In order to highlight how at odds the above projects are with the vision of the

NWICO, let us consider what efforts directed towards the best interests of the developing

world might look like. Vincent provides examples, suggesting "the sharing of industry

expertise without even the expectation of a minority capital interest or resale before the

technology is fully outdated" as one possibility (198). Alternatively, the subsidy of

economic development training programs specifically designed for the communication

industry "with the promotion of Third World communication industry independence as

its primary goal" might truly lead to a more balanced flow of information and

communications (Vincent 198). With a mandate to promote the development of the

Canadian economy, the EDC cannot be expected to lend industry expertise without the

prospect of gain, or to promote the independence of recipient nations. Such efforts may

be expected of Canadian ODA, however, and so it is more disconcerting to contrast

Vincent's recommendations with the actual practices of our official development

organizations.

Acacia

Though the EDC throughout the 1990's obviously encouraged projects based on

infrastructure provision (via the private sector), this was not apparently the case in the

Canadian ODA sector, as alluded to above. A prominent undertaking of the 1990's, led

by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) illustrates the changing

priorities of development aid in the information and communications sector. The IDRC

was created in 1970 as a Crown corporation, funded through CIDA, to perform

development research (Vandries 14). The inspiration for Acacia emerged out of the 1996

Information Society and Development Conference (ISDC), held in South Africa (IDRC Program Overview).

The title of the conference recalls the 1960s rise of the "information society" outlined by Colleen Roach, a Western movement that was anti-Marxist (Roach 101). Though the earlier movement is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is interesting to note that "information society" hoped for private sector expansion and the roll-back of government-run communications, saw the Third World as "a source of new markets for Western-based communication TNCs" (Roach 101), aims not incompatible with the Canadian initiatives arising out of the ISDC.

In an IDRC report the ISDC conference is described as the first of its kind taking place in a developing country. Clearly then, by the mid-nineties the NWICO movement was wiped from official memory, including the 1973 historic Non-Aligned Summit in Algiers, first inserting "cultural imperialism" into the international agenda" (Roach 95). The initiatives rising out of the ISDC are said to be "closely associated from the outset with efforts by developing countries, particularly in Africa, to ensure that their voices would help shape the Global Information Society"(IDRC). Considering the IDRC's emphasis on the voices of the Third World, we might well ask how this new initiative differs from that of the NWICO.

In March 1997 the IDRC Board of Governors approved Acacia "which was aimed at establishing the potential of Information and Communications Technologies to empower poor African communities" (IDRC). Drawing on the rhetoric of the participatory development approach, Acacia aims to demonstrate the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to "enable communities to solve their development

problems in ways that build firmly on local goals, cultures, strengths, and processes"

(IDRC). In line with CIDA's views, Acacia is founded on the "core hypothesis that ICTs

will enable poor communities in Africa to contribute more effectively to their own

development and avoid, or quickly get beyond, the traditional stages of the development

process" (IDRC). Such statements exhibit a forgetfulness of the history of

communications development theory, which set aside such naivety a decade prior to the

NWICO movement, when the optimism of modernization theorists such as Daniel Lerner

and Wilbur Schramm was discredited in the late 1960s (Stevenson 2-3; Curran and Park

4-5).

Contemporarily, the theory underlining Canadian ODA still posits strong links

between information and communications and poverty alleviation, but some statements

reflect a tempered certainty. We are assured that Africa's prospects for participation and

competitiveness in "the new global economy" and hence its prospects for progress in

poverty reduction, "depends …on its ability to use and adapt new information and

technological innovation" (International Development Research Centre "Acacia II").

Yet, it is argued that the poverty addressed by ICTs is not primarily material poverty.

That is, the contributions of ICTs to "people's ability to know, to learn" and to

communicate, are not at the early stages directly related to GDP (Acacia.). The path from

"first-use of ICTs to changed economic circumstances" is not linear, and we are warned

that neither is it rapid (IDRC "Acacia".). We may certainly debate whether such

statements reveal greater honesty on the part of Canadian development organizations, or

whether we may read an acceptance of the status quo of uneven development. Less

ambiguous, however, is the complete acceptance of the "new global economy",

elsewhere termed "late capitalism" (Jameson), as the model for Third World development. As Dallas Smythe points out, measuring the development of the Third World against the standards of capitalist technologies is dangerous for any nations with hopes for alternative political systems (for Smyth Chinese socialism was the concern) (243).

On one particular project, the Acacia Initiative has partnered with CIDA, the ITU, Industry Canada, the Telecommunications Executive Management Institute of Canada (TEMIC) and Nortel Networks (ITU 1999). In 1999 the IDRC and partners launched two "African Centres of Excellence" in Nairobi and Dakar, in an effort to "provide solutions to the challenges of universal access and rural connectivity in Africa" (ITU). Dedicated to human resource development, the Centres will train "policy makers and regulators in the development of national sector priorities and regulations conducive to private sector investment" and "senior corporate managers in the management of telecommunications networks and services" (ITU). Ultimately, the IDRC's goal is "to prepare those who will shape the future of the new Africa to embrace market innovations that have proven successful in bringing better telecommunication to more people" (ITU).

So, while Canadian ODA has consistently evidenced a concern with benefiting the Canadian private sector, the Centres of Excellence project typifies the shift towards consulting, an emerging area of strength for Canada since the 1980s (Vandries 24). There are certainly some positive aspects to the ongoing evolution of Canadian ODA policies. For one, with infrastructure falling to the background, previously neglected issues such as human resource development and addressing barriers to access have gained some attention (CIDA 2003; CIDA "ITU"). In recent years participatory, or "local

ownership" approaches have been championed in contrast to the earlier blatant lack of consultation, evident in the Rwanda project for one (CIDA 2003).

While there may be an increase in consultation at the project level over whether, for example, wireless is more appropriate than cable internet access, beyond these details there are still issues excluded from debate. Of concern here is the lack of debate over the neoliberal ideologies embedded in the knowledge shared. In short, in shifting from often inappropriate (because un-consultative) material contributions, to purportedly participatory projects, Canadian ODA is still well-positioned to support the domestic private sector, but additionally gains a cost-efficient means of exporting ideological influence. It should come as no surprise if the "regulations conducive to private sector investment" advocated at the Centres of Excellence are in fact deregulations, ensuring the continued openness of developing countries to Canadian multinationals.

The reliance of Canadian ODA organizations on the private sector negates the possibility of offering an alternative ideology. Discussing the Centres of Excellence in an ITU Press Release, the Director of ITU's Telecommunications Development Bureau "stressed that strategic partnership arrangements were certainly one of the most promising potential avenues for telecommunications development." Public-private partnerships like that between the Canadian public-sector and Nortel Networks, Hamadoun I. Toure (Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the ITU) asserts, "will serve as a model for other ITU initiatives" (CIDA "ITU"). CIDA by the 1990's had apparently shed its reservations on partnering with the private sector, and in accord with the ITU, offered its emphatic approval. In a 1996 CIDA News Release the Canadian Minister for International Cooperation, Mr. Pettigrew, is quoted, asserting that

the "challenge of building a global information society that works for everyone rests, in large part, on the shoulders of the private sector...Governments will set the policy and regulatory framework, but private companies...will build the systems" (CIDA News Release 96-19). Undertaking a number of studies "in close collaboration with the Canadian private sector", CIDA openly worked to attract a broader private-sector constituency to telecommunications development. Such efforts might be seen as altruistic advocacy on behalf of developing nations, if the entire CIDA pitch were not based on promises of profitability (CIDA "ITU").

Admittedly, it becomes difficult to separate CIDA's material reliance on the private sector, from its acceptance of private-sector ideological positions, characterized by the centrality of profit. Equally uncertain are attempts to place these compromises on a time-line. However, if we accept Vandries' observation that in earlier decades CIDA was quite divided ideologically (between those who viewed aid as purely altruistic, and those who sought domestic gains) (13, 21-22) it may not be unfounded to conclude that many of the ideological compromises have been relatively recent. It is disconcerting when the Agency devoted to the underprivileged fails to take into account that arguments for a more limited role for government are "unfair to minorities and the underprivileged'" (Vincent 198).

Conclusions

When juxtaposing the vision of the NWICO with the programming of Canadian ODA, the direct link between the two projects needs to be made completely clear. Anyone familiar with the non-aligned movement will observe that the literature of the NWICO was pre-occupied with cultural issues largely unaddressed by the technology-focused

projects of CIDA. NWICO proponents were concerned with cultural neocolonialism, especially through the mass media, and about issues of content and practice, seemingly part of a separate language from that spoken by official development organizations. The connection, however, lies in the fact that the availability of and access to communications technologies is a necessary prerequisite to domestic media development (Bannon 20). Canadian efforts in that sense have been directed towards developing the very material foundations upon which the mass media rely. Clearly there have been shortcomings, but we should not simply conclude that Canadian ODA in this sphere has consisted of largely ineffective, yet wholly practical measures. Beyond the apparent practicality, the efforts have in addition been highly ideological – perhaps as much so as the NWICO movement itself.

For every ideological stance of the NWICO proponents, there has been an equally ideological response from opponents such as the Canadian state. Beyond opposing the NWICO call for state support of a "free and balanced flow" (Galtung and Vincent 83), the position of Canadian policy-makers has been to relegate the role of the state to the back-ground while giving a central role to private, capitalist enterprises. In stark contrast to the NWICO's promotion of information and communications as social goods rather than commodities (Kleinwachter 14), Canadian trade and aid bodies have highlighted the market values of information and communications. The press releases and project reports of CIDA, the IDRC and EDC affirm this. In response to the Third World's assertion that "a mere technical solution would only deepen their dependency" (Hamelink 1994, 207), CIDA offered infrastructure and consulting tied to Canadian communications technology

industries. The view that aid should strengthen trade is nothing if not ideological, based on a world-view validating competition between "imagined communities" (Anderson).

The official Canadian stance has been labeled as "reformist" or "liberal", which in Brown-Syed's view is characterized by an acceptance of the existing system, as fraught with inequality as it may be. There is recognition of imbalances in communications flow among reformists, but avenues outside of a radical restructuring are preferred (Brown-Syed). Brown-Syed singles out "CIDAs development education schemes and UNESCO's library training activities" as typical of reformist/liberal solutions (Brown-Syed). Conversely, NWICO structuralists accept liberal proposals to an extent, "but only as precursors to more fundamental changes" (Brown-Syed).

Structural change – changes in the distribution of economic and political power – is understandably avoided by those whose position of privilege relies on the system as it exists. Canada's vested interest in maintaining the current structure of global communications markets stems from our highly competitive and profitable position therein (Roach 109). ODA projects such as those outlined above are not only non-threatening, they are in fact supportive of global inequalities in so far as they promote the competitive position of Canadian industry and even the competitive position of Canadian aid in the global marketplace. Such "neomercantilist" policies (McDowell) are incompatible with aims of increasing equitable and accessible information and communications globally.

The NWICO movement's critique of capitalism, consumerism and the transnationalized economy (Roach 96) was well-reasoned. A vision of an information and communications order characterized by a "free and balanced flow of information",

"equity and equality based on democratization of informational means and structures",

and the establishment of collective rights to information and to communication (Brown-

Syed), is difficult to implement in a global capitalist economy. Even the least radical of

NWICO statements, such as those contained in the MacBride Report, insist that a

NWICO cannot occur without "a two-way flow" between "nations, political forces,

cultural communities, economic entities, and social groups"; "without more opportunity

for each individual to reach decisions based on a broad awareness of divergent facts and

viewpoints"; without the exchange of "information on a more equal footing" free of

"dominance over the weaker partners and without discrimination against any one"(Many

Voices173-4). In terms more alarming for the western world, NWICO proponents such

as Hans Kochler asserted that "information imbalance was part of a systemic problem

inherent in technology and in capitalism itself" (Brown-Syed). Unfettered competition in

a global economy, already marked by a legacy of colonialism, necessarily leads to

inequalities in the exchange of information. For this very reason it is inappropriate for

ODA organizations to operate according to the logic of capitalist competition, while

purportedly working towards "universal access" (CIDA "ITU"), and the "expansion of

access to ICTs by rural and disadvantaged groups" (IDRC "Acacia").

Dallas Smythe's visit to China in 1971-1972 generated a number of insights relevant

to our concerns. Remarkable at the time, China's economic development had brought the

nation to a point where basic needs were being met, and on the horizon was the potential

to produce even beyond this level. For Smythe, the prospect of producing consumer

goods and services in China was problematic for the future of communism. The adoption

of capitalist technologies was of paramount concern for Smythe, who argues that

technology is not autonomous or neutral. Explaining why imported communications technologies are ideological, Smythe points out that "the development of technique in capitalist countries comes from huge corporate laboratories such as Bell Telephone Laboratories" (233). As part of the process of screening innovations, "capitalist corporate managers pick and choose only those ideas for development which offer the probability of developing new and profitable markets or reducing costs" (233). It is in this sense that "the innovations which do take place in capitalism do embody in different ways...the ideology of capitalism" (233). Canadian ODA strategies based on the transfer of technologies, in this sense, can be critiqued not only as distractions from political change, but can also be understood as exporting the logic of capitalism itself (Smythe 233).

There is a certain irony in the adverse Western reactions to the NWICO, coming not only from the state but also from Western media (Brown-Syed). While the freedom of journalists from the censorship of the state was of such concern to the West, and to Canadians specifically, these citizens in arms were nevertheless in the process of handing over freedom of knowledge and of expression to corporations. The transfer of power takes place, as Dallas Smythe reveals, not only in policies of de-regulation and privatization but also in the very laboratories in which information and communication technologies are developed. If this point needs further strengthening, we need look no further than Smythe's example of the development of television. He explains, when TV was initially developed "it would have been quite possible to design it as a two-way system in which each receiver would have the capability to provide either a voice or a voice-and-picture response to the broadcasting station" (Smythe 231-232). It would have

been possible for the station to re-broadcast the responses, facilitating democratic communications. However, "for its purposes", that is, for the further sale of commodities, "capitalism needed only a one-way system and this is what was developed" (Smythe 232).

The threats of commodification identified by the NWICO can be seen as part of a historical process, in transition. The sphere of culture - including the mass media - as Nicholas Garnham points out, has not always been integrated in the process in which capital, through production, generates more capital. In earlier stages of capitalism this sphere was often supported through the surplus revenues of (capitalist) material production. As capital sought new markets and new means of valorization, it has also worked to industrialize culture and to gain access to global markets. Now, cultural production is fully integrated into the process of capitalist production, not only perpetuating the dominant ideology through content, but also ensuring the constant regeneration of capital through sales. The historical transformations of the cultural sphere bring to mind those quire recent changes in ODA. Further studies might consider whether "development" has, like cultural production, made a traceable shift from the outskirts to the very sphere of capitalist production. Idealists still envision development assistance as comparable to the commissioning of artists – an extravagant gesture, the value of which cannot be measured in profit terms. Yet it would appear that increasingly, Canadian ODA is undertaken with a view to foreign markets.

Having noted the disappointments of Canada's official response to the NWICO, it is worthwhile to point out the positive outgrowths from the now-defunct movement. Richard Vincent reminds that while the NWICO was dropped by UNESCO, issues such

as the "democratization of global communication structures", and the communication needs of developing countries have been revived in other forums, by diverse actors (177). Twenty years have changed the state of global communications and thus the critiques of the existing order have also been transformed. According to Hamid Mowlana "the quest is now focused on achieving a new cultural order, which goes beyond simple notions of communication and information" – the "new discourse" concerns a "broader notion of communication ecology" (65). Ecology, in this sense includes "all the symbolic environments in which human and technological communications take place", and thus broadens the boundaries of discussion, disallowing a technological focus (Mowlana 65). The movement for a NIICD as it has been taken up by civil society (in forums somewhat separate from the official, governmental deliberations) can be seen as evidence of this ecological approach. Yet even while remarking on the agency of the disenfranchised, let there be no illusions that the obstacles to a more equitable world order remain momentous.

Dennis Browne provides a contemporary proposal for a viable approach to communication and information, which nevertheless echoes the earlier perspective of the NWICO. To begin with, there must be a shift from focusing on consumption relations to the needs of citizens to fully participate in their communities (299), and it might be added, the ability to receive a wide range of views and communicate ideas broadly. A major obstacle in Browne's view is not the liberalization of markets so much as "the institutional arrangements that consistently favour large media corporations and the industrial logic of commercial media systems" (300). What is required are "new forms of government intervention" in the sector with which we are concerned, "aimed not at

protecting producers but at democratizing the use of communication resources" (300).

Reviving the spirit of the NWICO, Browne reminds that the real need is to refute the

"tenets of corporate liberalism and the global competitiveness logic", evidently

transfused even throughout the sphere of development assistance, and instead to take up

"policies aimed at creating diverse and inclusionary cultural spaces within and across

nation-states" (300). If Canadian ODA organizations are to respond to such a challenge,

a clear distinction must be made between trade and aid, since the former inevitably

promotes the advantage of a few large media corporations whereas the latter must be

aimed at the needs of the majority.

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