A NATIONAL JOURNAL FOR THE CANADIAN COUNCIL ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
AND REVIEW OF THE BOOK WHO CALLS THE TUNE

A survey conducted last Summer from Vancouver to St. John's by the National Council on Social Development revealed the desire for a national journal. It would share the knowledge and experiences of community groups across Canada in using the media and reporting on their activities.

The Canadian Journal of Communication is offering to serve as that desired "national journal" by devoting a section to these community groups. They are invited to send in significant material for publication. At the same time the journal will publish as now articles on communication and public media for a theoretical underpinning of non-isolating, identity-forming media along with a critique of the mass media. The Program Director for Social Planning and Citizen Involvement of the Social Development Council, Henry Chapin, joins us in this project.

Chapin, assisted by Alison Stirling, has published one of the most significant booklets on communication ever to come our way: Who Calls The Tune. Using the Media to Promote Social Change in Canada. (Canadian Council on Social Development, May, 1977, $2). It is significant because it centres on the core of communication -- democratically-controlled participant media that go beyond mere responses to "professional" productions. The distorting lens of the non-participant mass media tend to be alienating, not consensual making.

In fact there is no such thing as mass "communication." As now constituted, the mass media do not communicate. They message-make in a one-way authoritarian structure and the trickle of feedback from the receiver is controlled by the sender. The sender seldom knows that the receiver knows or that he has even received the message. In short, no interaction takes place, hence no communication.

Who Calls The Tune asks "Who decides what is fit to print. Or broadcast... In a society in which the major media enterprises are supported and controlled by these same commercial, professional and government interests, those who pay the money also call the tune." Community, citizen and self-help groups only become news when there is a crisis, yet "they need media to project their vision of an alternative society, one with different values and different social, economic and political structures."

"Even the CBC does not offer a truly public broadcasting service, one that would make its programming and productions facilities available to people in communities across the country." Chapin asserts. In reviewing the mass media he declares, "The most common complaint was inconsistent coverage, followed, in order, by lack of access, misrepresentation, lack of control over content, lack of access to media resources and biased reporting.

The book is a trenchant analysis of mass media and delineates various ways of how to make the best of a poor thing and how some small, financially-strapped community media are trying to achieve open communication for print and electronic forms.