Canadian Communication Association Founded:

REFLECTIONS ON THE SASKATOON MEETING

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The Canadian Communication Association was founded in Saskatoon on June 1, 1979 at the Learned Societies Conference. Twenty persons attended the founding meeting at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan. Delegates voted unanimously to found the association, establish the steering committee as officers and Board of Directors until the next meeting in Montreal in 1980 when a draft constitution in both official languages will be voted on. The steering committee established at Windsor the previous year will continue with its present membership plus several members who have been added at Saskatoon. (Donald Theall, of McGill University, will thus serve as pro-tem chairman of the association)

The Canadian Journal of Communication was also voted as the official journal of the association.

The Saskatoon meetings began with a joint meeting on May 31st with the Canadian Political Science Association. A panel consisting of G. Stuart Adam, Carleton University School of Journalism, Fred Fletcher and Arthur Siegel of York University, and Liora Salter of Simon Fraser University, discussed political communication research. The discussion centered around a model of the political communication process which Jay Weston and Stuart Adam had developed at Carleton. Central to the model was the process by which political events are selected for inclusion as news events.

Friday morning the new association sponsored a session with papers at St. Thomas More College. William Melody, Simon Fraser University, chaired the Friday morning session with discussion centred on Dallas Smythe's paper, "Communications: Blindspot in Western Marxism." Smythe (Simon Fraser University, Communication Studies program) expanded upon his published article of the same title (Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory Vol. 1, No. 3) in which he argued that Western Marxist thought has ignored the power of the mass media to deliver to the advertiser an audience. The audience has become the commodity which advertisers use the media to deliver to the owners of the means of production. Media content, according to Smythe, is a lure to get the audience to pay attention to the advertisement of products and services. Thus the media are a tool in the hands of capitalist business to ensure a ready audience for the messages of importance—brand advertisements for products which the producer wishes to sell.

William Livant, University of Regina, expanded upon Smythe's argument in his paper, "The Audience Commodity: On the Blindspot Debate." Livant began by noting that the third party and true antagonist in this debate was absent. Livant continued to expand upon the role of the media in marketing. He argued that the audience has become a commodity. Livant criticized the European assertion that the U.S. culture is a "simple culture." That the U.S. culture does not appear to have the traditions and depth of European culture and life. He argued that the U.S. culture is an advanced culture worthy of analysis and study. That the use of brand names for products in the U.S. is related to the ideological system on which the culture is based.

As an illustration of his point he discussed a New York Times article about the activities of the Coca Cola Company to protect both of their brand names--Coca Cola and Coke.

The discussant for this session was David Crowley of McGill University. Crowley indicated that perhaps the discussion at this session could be seen as an example of the rethinking of audience research. To understand the audience as a commodity, Smythe and Livant were attempting to focus attention upon the "Captains of Consciousness" who depend upon the scholars of consciousness to tell them what the audience wants. Yet, Crowley noted, scholars such as Raymond Williams suggest that there are no "Captains of Consciousness."

The morning session was followed by the business meeting. Don Theall, chairperson of the steering committee, reported on the committee's activities during the past year. The steering committee met three times in the past year— in Ottawa in November, Vancouver in March, and Saskatoon prior to the association meeting. The committee has added three persons to its membership: Ms. Kealy Brooker of the CBC, Prof. Linda Christenson-Ruffman of Halifax and John Twomey of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute. Twomey serves as the representative on the association executive of the Association for the Study of Canadian Radio and Television. (See appended report)

During the business meeting the steering committee to found a communication association presented six resolutions which were accepted by persons attending the meeting. The first resolution established the Canadian Communication Association and empowered the steering committee to be its first officers and Board of Directors. The second motion empowered the new Board of Directors to undertake discussions leading to the establishment of the association as a learned society, establish dues, solicit membership, and prepare a constitution. The constitution will be presented at the next meeting in 1980 at Montreal.
Another motion empowered the Board of Directors to establish committees in preparation of the Montreal meeting and conference. The final resolution accepted the Canadian Journal of Communication, published at York University, as the official journal of the association. Members of CCA will receive a subscription to the Journal as a part of their membership. The editorial board of the Journal is to be named by the Association in cooperation with the Publication Board at York University. The present editor of the Journal, Earle Beattie of York University, will continue in office.

The business meeting also established membership categories for the Association. The membership categories are: Institutional - $50.00 a year, Active members - $20.00 a year, including an $8 subscription to the Journal, and Student members - $15.00 a year. Membership dues were set in part by the proposed new regulations for learned societies under discussion by the Humanities and Social Science Research Council. Eugene Tate, St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon, is membership chairperson.

Friday afternoon, another session was held with papers being presented. Stephen Kline and William Leiss of York University presented a paper entitled, "Myth and Rhetoric in Advertising." This paper presented an introduction into the research being conducted by Kline and Leiss concerning how Canadian advertising has utilized human needs. Through their paper and the use of slides showing Canadian magazine advertisements from 1910 to the present, they illustrated the changes in the "imagery of satisfaction."

The second paper of the afternoon was entitled, "Activation Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Research," by Eugene Tate, St. Thomas More College. Tate attempted to use activation theory, developed by Donald Fiske and Salvatore Maddi at the University of Chicago, to expand the uses and gratifications perspective. The uses and gratifications perspective developed in Europe and Israel has refocused mass communication research from the traditional question, "what do the media do to people?" to the uses and gratifications question of "what do people do with the media?" By using activation theory, Tate argued, one is able to differentiate uses based on a desire for a) variety of activity, b) novelty, c) variation in physical activity, or d) new information or meaningfulness. Certainly both activation theory and the uses and gratifications perspective perceive the audience members as being active in seeking to use the media according to their needs.

The afternoon session was chaired by William Richards of Simon Fraser University. Douglas Baer of the University of Windsor and Donald Theall, McGill University, were discussants for the afternoon session. They divided the papers among themselves with Theall reacting to the Leiss and Kline paper while Baer reacted to the Tate paper.

In 1972 at the International Communication Association convention in Atlanta, Gus Alexander of Wright State University, gave a paper entitled, "Instructional Metacommunication and Self-Directed Learning." In this paper Alexander made a distinction between two types of discussants and critics which can be found at learned meetings and in the classroom. The first type of discussant, found most often at European meetings, uses the paper as a jumping off point to further develop the field of communication. Thus this discussant will move quickly over inadequacies in the presentation in order to build upon the positive aspects of the paper. This discussant then proceeds to expand upon what is written to point new ways in which the theory and research may proceed. This type of presentation accepts what has been done by the author under discussion, builds upon it, and generally advances the academic discussion.

The second type of discussant, arising from the competitive culture of North America, can say nothing good about the paper which is under consideration. This discussant can only criticize because he or she is in competition with the paper(s) which have been presented. Nothing good must be said about the paper and every attempt must be made to point out errors or inadequacies in the theory and methodology which have been used. If the discussant must go to references and attack them, this is acceptable given the competitive strategy. While the first type of discussant treats the authors as colleagues, the second type of discussant treats the authors as nothing less than beginning students in the field who have much to learn.

At the Saskatoon meeting several good examples of the two types of discussants delineated by Alexander occurred. Of the three discussants during the day two took the first approach and sought to strengthen the papers and field of communication studies. The third discussant dismissed the paper under discussion totally, because of an unwillingness to consider as valid social psychological variables, and gave an excellent demonstration of North American criticism.

When the Saskatoon meeting was planned by the steering committee, four papers were chosen because various members of the steering committee knew they were available. No attempt was made to integrate them into an unified theme for the meeting. These were papers which were available on short notice and the authors were willing to come to Saskatoon.

In his review article in the last issue of The Canadian Journal of Communication, Stephen Kline points out that he believes the field of communication in Canada has a diversity of approaches and theoretical perspectives which is lacking in U.S. communication studies. The Saskatoon meeting, in the opinion of this author, illustrated Kline's description of communication research in Canada. This author is not aware of any papers present at either I.C.A. or S.C.A. meeting in the United States, or even at meetings of the regional associations, similar to those given by Smythe and Livant. The Kline and Leiss paper utilizing content analysis to understand the myth and rhetoric of advertising is closer to some of the papers one finds at international communication meetings since it is within the rhetorical tradition of analysis. (Cont. on back cover)