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This publication is a collection of papers together with associated comments which were presented to a 1983 conference on Canadian-U.S. communications policy. The conference was sponsored by Syracuse University, the University of Toronto and the Americas Society with the assistance of the William H. Donner Foundation. Since the text lists no editor, I assume that this collection includes all of the major presentations made at the conference.

The varied subject matter covered by the papers reflects the multidisciplinary nature of mass communications scholarship as well as the four major concerns of this conference i.e., (1) Comparative historical approaches to broadcast policy in Canada and the U.S.; (2) sovereignty and television; (3) the impact of new communication technologies; and (4) the border broadcasting dispute. The latter concern is nevertheless the overriding theme around which most of the discussions centre. This focus accounts for a great deal of redundancy which is apparent in the content of the papers.

Introductory remarks are provided by the former U.S. Ambassador to Canada, Goodwin Cooke and by the Canadian Ambassador, Allen E. Gotlieb. Cooke objectively shows that the communications border dispute is embedded in basic legal, historical, philosophical as well as demographic and geographical differences between the two countries which result in the fact that "...U.S. policy is more concerned with economic consequences and Canadian more with political or cultural effects..."(p. x). Cooke suggests that there is a distinct need for mutual understanding and appreciation of these differences. This attitude is further stressed by Thomas H. Martin in the concluding paper which is addressed to the impact of new technologies. Martin goes one step further however in emphasizing the need for coordinated effort by the two countries to develop bilateral agreements that take into account the best interests of the two parties. Gotlieb suggests that cultural differences between the two countries justify the adoption, in Canada, of regulatory policies aimed at reducing the overwhelming U.S. competition, protecting the Canadian broadcast industry and helping it to achieve one of its basic functions, i.e., to sustain Canadian cultural identity. Much of this argument is reiterated in a subsequent
presentation by John Meisel. Both Ambassadors conclude that new communications technology and new programming strategies will present serious challenges to the diplomatic status quo. However, they both perceive opportunities for Canadian development (e.g., Narrowcast production) which might reduce the need for stringent content regulation.

Major papers, written by Frank W. Peers, Theodore Hagelin and Hudson Janisch; Mark J. Freiman and Yale M. Braunstein, are scholarly, well documented presentations. And, with the exception of Braunstein's article, the material is comprehensible to a varied lay and academic audience. The aforementioned article is much too technical for this particular text. Consequently, the uninitiated reader tends to be more convinced by the arguments of the critics, Ian Parker and Robert E. Babe. The "Comments" throughout the book are generally thought provoking but I occasionally regret the fact that these authorities are restricted to reactive comments. This regret is particularly evident in the case of Cole's response to Peers' excellent historical resume of the comparative origins and approaches to broadcast policy in the two countries. Barry Cole's insight into the more informal processes involved in the development of American broadcast policy aroused our desire for a more extensive and possibly parallel discussion to that of Peers'.

A thorough chronological review of the border broadcast dispute by Hagelin and Janisch summarizes the "constraints on, and contradictions within, U.S. and Canadian domestic communication policies" (p. 41). Although many of the general developments discussed were also dealt with elsewhere in the text, the specific details presented in this article do help to "flesh out" the topic. In addition, these authors move beyond the realm of description to propose, what seems to them, a more rational broadcasting policy which they anticipate will dispel the dispute. Their major suggestion, that American network programming be distributed directly by Canadian satellite links to Canadian Cable systems, results in a vehement though, I believe, justifiable rebuttal by Erwin Krasnow.

Freiman presents a logical and coherent argument for "a free and balanced flow" (p. 116) of information. He emphasizes the negative consequences inherent in the concentrated control of the media today. A control which, especially in commercially dominated communication systems, displays "...all the usual features of commodity production..." (p. 106), and results in a system which is not conducive to meeting the public interest, i.e., "...to hear everything worth hearing..." (p. 113). Freiman then applies his balance theory to the broadcasting situation in Canada. Although he admits that the maintenance of complete national sovereignty in today's global society is unreasonable, the establishment of regulations aimed at achieving some balance between national and international interests is sensible.
Glen G. Robinson's response to Freiman's paper supports the aims espoused by Freiman, but argues strongly against the "imperialistic" means introduced by Canadian government regulations to achieve these ends. His conclusion, that Canadian controls are promoted by economic concerns rather than cultural ones, suggests the need, at this point in the text, for a thorough discussion of the interrelationship between major societal institutions.

Although many of the papers and comments in this volume reflect the cultural interests and biases of involved academics, regulators and practitioners, the writings nevertheless retain a fair degree of objectivity. An exception to this is the paper by Leslie G. Arries, Jr., which is extremely one-sided and filled with value laden statements such as "...this misguided Canadian policy" (p. 141), and "...further illustrates the unreasonable stance of the Canadians..." (p. 144). Such a subjective discussion can provide meaningful insights into immediate, practical problems. However, a comment or a parallel paper presented by a broadcaster in a somewhat similar position across the border would be most appropriate here. As it is, no comment whatsoever is included.

In conclusion, I would like to comment briefly on two characteristics of the various authors. One relates to background characteristics of the various authors. None of the presenters are female, and most of the substantial papers are authored by Canadians while most of the discussants are American. I suggest that the latter fact reflects some bias in the perception of the antagonist and protagonist in the border dispute. The other aspect relates to the apparent lack of concern by academics on both sides of the border about the consequences of a free-flow of communication on the Canadian artistic community. Even Freiman simply "brushes aside" the issue.

Taken as a whole, this book, in addition to providing some important background material appropriate for an introductory course, also focuses on a number of significant but controversial issues and presents arguments that should continue to stimulate discussion.