

ELECTRONIC BLUES:

A Study of the Environmental Media Effects and Their Political Implications

by 1264

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Approved by:

  
A handwritten signature, likely of E. Lawrence Jones, is written over a horizontal line.

All new technologies bring on the cultural blues,  
just as the old ones evoke phantom pain after they have disappeared.

----Marshall McLuhan

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# THANKS

-Gail Baker who turned me on to communication and McLuhan

-Terry Jones who kept me going in the right direction

-Mother who helped me through the rough times

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## ELECTRIC BLUES

Tell me who do you love man?  
Tell me what man?  
Tell me what's it you love man?

An old fashion melody

Tell me what's it that moves you?  
Tell me what's it that  
Grooves you?

An old fashion melody

But old songs leave you dead  
We sell our souls for bread

We're all encased in sonic armor  
Belting it out through chrome  
Grenades  
Miles and miles of medusan chord  
The electronic sonic boom

It's what happening baby  
It's where it's at daddy

They chain ya and brainwash ya  
When you least suspect it  
They feed ya mass media  
The age is electric

I got the electric blues  
I got the electric blues  
I got the electric blues  
I got the electric blues

Thwump...Rackety...	Old
Whomp	Fashion
Rock...Folk Rock...	Melody
Rhythm and Blues	
Electronics	Old
Explodin'...	Fashion
Rackety-Clack	Melody
Thwump...Whoomp...	
Whump	
Plugged in...	Old
Turned on	Fashion
Rackety...Shoomp...	Melody
Rock	
Rock...Folk Rock...	
Rhythm and Blues	
Thwump...	
Rackety-Clack	
Whoomp...Whump...	

Poof  
Caved in...Caved in  
...Yes caved in

Lyrics shatter

Like	Amplifiers higher
Broken glass	Turn 'em up higher
In the sonic	Amplifiers higher
Boom	Turn 'em up higher
Lyrics shatter	Higher higher
Like	Louder louder
Broken glass	Fire fire

Electronic  
Doom

I got the  
Electric blues  
I got the  
Electric blues  
I got the  
Electric blues

—Hair, Ragni, Gerome, and James Rado

## INTRODUCTION: For What Its Worth

Democracy has always rested on belief in the judgment of the citizen. Thus, as the modern world has evolved, public favor in terms of public opinion has come to hold the attention of students of politics. Public opinion requires public information,<sup>1</sup> and the press has assumed ever-increasing importance as part of the political process in American democracy. As Americans we have become accustomed to thinking of freedom of the press as a necessary link between the citizen and his government. As political scientists and as social scientists we have looked to the content of the media to keep our democracy intelligently on the road to individual freedom.<sup>2</sup>

As our sophistication has increased, our ability to define the role of media and its relationship to government and the population has also increased. A century ago we looked to the newspapers to determine what was the predominant feeling in the country. Now, we look to public opinion polls to determine if there is a predominant feeling in the country. Now, we see newspapers in a secondary position of depth coverage to supplement the newer, faster, more pervasive electronic media. Two centuries ago, we assumed that a good citizen was willing to inform himself of the interests and activities of his nation, to form his

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to William C. Jarvis", Monticello, September 28, 1820.

<sup>2</sup>Walter F. Berns, Freedom, Virtue and the First Amendment (Chicago, Illinois: Henry Regnery Co., 1965).

opinions and judgments in quiet contemplation, to exercise his right of selection at the polls, and to participate when called upon.<sup>3</sup> Today, we assume that the average citizen is bombarded with such a quantity of information about the actions of his nation and its interests that he finds it difficult to relate or to selectively gather all the information necessary for qualitative judgment.<sup>4</sup> We have realized that he will often form his opinions and judgments in keeping with his father's opinions, his favorite public personality's attitudes, and his fellow-workers' comments. We constantly decry the low level of voter turnout and have come to accept the fact that the majority of those who have decided they have a stake in the outcome are the majority of those who turn up at the polls. We have come to see our political figures as men who have sought the office, rather than as men whom the office has sought.

Our discoveries have forced us to reexamine the basic philosophies of democracy and to reinterpret the thoughts of the Founding Fathers. We have replaced the myth of the informed voter with the fact of the casual citizen. We have decided that the role of the press is that of critic of the government and of director of public attentions rather than of voice of the common man. While our printed media still devote a substantial portion of their efforts to the discussion of politics,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Herbert Croly, The Promise of American Life (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1963), chap. 2.

<sup>4</sup>V. O. Key, Jr., The Responsible Electorate (Toronto, Canada: Vintage Books, 1968), chap. 1.

<sup>5</sup>William L. Rivers, The Mass Media (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 336.

our newer electronic media have relegated politics to five minutes per hour (radio) or four hours per day (television).<sup>6</sup>

We have discarded the vision of individual contemplation and discovered the two-step flow<sup>7</sup> and the theory of cross-pressures.<sup>8</sup> As we discuss the alienation process we investigate the flow of ideas within the coffee clique and the country club. We consider the atomized family and the rootless mobile society as we drift home to another evening of isolated television viewing.

We become agitated at the Daley machine and disturbed at the politics of protest as we observe the party conventions with slightly less enthusiasm than the week-end football game.<sup>9</sup> We rate a president on his eye-contact, his one-line jokes, his skin translucency, and his modulation of tone with slightly more criticism of his style than of that of our favorite evening entertainer.<sup>10</sup>

The political rule of thumb today is that the issues should be avoided in order to offend the fewest number of people. The idea of an issue-oriented public has been relegated to the shelf where rest old American beliefs in capitalism and rugged individualism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>for official criteria of news time see ibid. p. 479-483.

<sup>7</sup>Elihu Katz nad Paul Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (New York: Free Press, 1964), chap. 2.

<sup>8</sup>Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, The Peoples' Choice (New York: Duell, Sloan, Pearce, 1944).

<sup>9</sup>Robert MacNeil, The People Machine: The Influence of Television on American Politics (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 99.

<sup>10</sup>"Betting on 'The Silent Majority'", Newsweek, (November 17, 1969), pp. 35-36.

<sup>11</sup>this relegation was completed with Philip Converse, Aage Clausen, and Warren Miller's "Electoral Myth and Reality: the 1964 Election", The American Political Science Review, 59 (June, 1965), pp. 321-336.

When we speak of First Amendment Freedoms we now think of the Federal Communications Commission and the fairness doctrine. When we remember the great debates we think of blue shirts versus white, braintrusts versus legal expertise, and political image building. When we hear of news conferences we envisage several hundred reporters, cameras, and microphones, not a friendly off-the-record chat. When we contemplate crises we are prepared for Presidential pre-empting of programming. When we schedule campaigns we plan for prime time. When we look for causes of violence we see the 20-inch screen before us. We are caught up in the events of world news and the daily events of our lives. In a sense they play off against each other for our attention, while in another sense they are inseparable parts of the same thing.

We have changed our perceptions of the world around us, and our perceptions have changed our worlds. To Marshall McLuhan the advent of the electronic technology is the most radical environmental change since the advent of the Guttenberg press and its movable type. The electronic media requires a re-ordering of our senses and, with this, reinterpretation of our world. We are faced with a mosaic impression from which we are to draw our meanings. No longer is the individual able to be self-sufficient; his job is part of a new technology which neither allows him the spirit of creation with inception nor the spirit of accomplishment with completion. We have all become specialists, qualified to discover in part but only guessing to make whole.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 2nd ed., 1964).

Our media presents its picture as a mosaic of 200 million bits of information per second,<sup>13</sup> but we are only programmed to receive 4.3 million bits of information per second.<sup>14</sup> Our papers present us with up to 20 hours worth of reading material, but we rarely spend more than 30 minutes glancing over it.<sup>15</sup> We hear the evening news as we are driving from work and discussing the world with our fellow travelers and thinking about the day's events.

Our society has the same mosaic impressionism as our media. There is a generation gap. There is an economic gap. There is an educational gap. There is a cultural gap. There is an information gap. There is a racial gap. It is the gap which our minds have come to fill in from our knowledge of what lies on each side (or our lack of knowledge of what lies on either side), for that is the medium within which we have come to find ourselves. From the mosaic that is the pattern of our lives we have come to extract the meaning that was once plainly printed on the page before us with carefully plotted logic. From the vast and continual bombardment of information, we have come to select networks of news. From the masses of humanity surrounding us we have come to form systems of relationships. Our media reflect our life-styles and we, in our life-styles, reflect our media. It is because of this mirroring

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>14</sup>Colin Cherry, On Human Communication (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1957), p. 288.

<sup>15</sup>John Hohenberg, The Professional Journalist (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1962), p. 68.



and imitation that the media is of interest; how it works, why it works, for whom it works, and what it means. We have long been pre-occupied with the messages in our information; whether they are effective, what they mean, if they are received, who listens to which ones. But to focus upon the content of the media, to deal with the message alone, is to describe history in terms of today's events alone, to view society in terms of the isolated family, to see economics as the bank balance, or to define the world as Hometown. If we are to understand communications we must broaden our horizon from the concerns of which messages are transmitted to which media are transmitting. The form of the communication process rather than the content is the lasting imprint which changes the environment. We have created technology and that technology is in the process of changing us. It is time we deal with it, learn about it, and consider its effect upon us. It is time we study the electronic blues.

In chapter two I shall define the various media; electronic, printed, and human. The electronic media of radio and television are the main focus as they are the most recent innovation. It is television which is disrupting our age with its requisite sensual re-ordering. Radio preceded television and had but a brief period to dominate the media forms. Printed media have been with us the longest and have been the basis of our logic and our world. It is from this lineal world that television is freeing us. The human network is the interpretative correlary by means of which individuals relate to the information provided by other media forms. The media link the people and their government and, thus, become channels of power in a democratic system where the decisions of the people are related to the information they receive. The impressions which people receive become important to government to the extent that they alte

the perception of information.

Chapter three relates ideas on why the media work. Since media forms are extensions of man's sensory system they are reflections of his style of perceiving the world. As the media form changes from linear to mosaic, man's total environment will change from linear order to mosaic impressionism. This means, to government, an exploration of unused methods of dealing with the process of politics.

These concepts are further explored in chapters four and five. Chapter four deals with the information presently available on how individuals communicate. While searching for specific answers to how messages are translated, social scientists have made a variety of discoveries concerning the media which transmit the messages. Human beings, it seems, are not merely open receivers of all information, but rather have sets of protective attitudes which screen and distort information. The degree of consistency throughout the society in these attitudes relates to the ability of government to act. Chapter five examines the changes which have been brought to government as the result of media changes. Conventions have been increasingly opened to public observance, and the public, in turn, has demanded a greater participatory role. Campaigns have become increasingly personalized and planned to allow greater individual participation. The presidential image has become the focal point of changes in media. The presedential press conference gradually evolved from Teddy Roosevelt's friendly chats with a few reporters to massive nationally televised prime time shows. All these changes in media style have caused problems for the press in its role of critic and director of the world and for the individual in his role as concerned observer, participant, and subject.

The final chapter examines the electronic blues—the present era of cultural shock. America, at present, is faced with serious conflicts between

a variety of groups. At the heart of this conflict are the interpretations of the basic values upon which the United States is founded. The right of participation in government to realize humanistic goals is being tested by thousands of members of the television generation against the bureaucratic organization of the previous generations. The outcome of this confrontation will be revolutionary social change.

## ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC

I dig Rock and Roll music  
And love to get a chance to play and sing it  
I figure it's about the happiest sound going down today  
The message may not move me  
Or mean a great deal to me  
But, hey, it feels so groovy to say

I dig the Mamas and Papas and the trip  
Sunset Strip in L. A.  
They got a good thing going  
When the words don't get in the way  
And when they're really wailing  
Michelle and Cass start sailing  
Hey, they really nail me to the wall

I dig Donovan came in and the chamber trip that way  
His crystal images they tell you 'bout a brighter day  
And when the Beatles tell you the word  
The word they'd love to sell you  
They mean exactly what they say

I dig Rock and Roll music  
I can really get it on that scene  
I think I could say something  
If you know what I mean  
But if I really say it  
The radio won't play it  
Unless I lay it between the lines

——Paul Stookey and Mason-Dixon

## DEFINITION

The media, according to McLuhan, is any extension of man's senses by technology.<sup>1</sup> My concern here, however, is with communication and I shall deal principally with those technologies which contribute to the expression and reception of ideas. These technologies are those of an audial and visual nature. Through print (visual) man has learned to substitute symbols for ideas and, by finding men who have similar symbolic referents, he has learned to communicate his ideas. Pictures are the other principal visual means of communication. Pictures have several advantages over languages. They do not require the learning of the symbolic referents. They provide a more complete meaning to the viewer. They do not order the process of perception.

Our audial communications also consist of two styles: language and sounds. Language is an ordering of sound which again rests on the symbolic associations we have been taught to make with them. Thus, natural sounds, like pictures, provide the advantages of communicating without requiring the learning of the symbolic referents, the ordering of perceptions, and provide more complete meaning alone. The media which we will concern ourselves with is that used in the process of mass communications.

Movies and theatre will not be considered as media because they are exaggerations of life and detached projections of it. The media which will be considered, however, are an environment of information and a mere extension of the environment as it socializes. The effect from these media is not artificial, but real. The experiencing of the media is not

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<sup>1</sup>McLuhan, op. cit., p. 21.

superficial and separable from the rest of life, but is a part of it, an influence on it, and a force in it.

Electronic media are radio and television which communicate audial and visual impressions by electronic means. The electronic media has the advantage of speed which the printed media cannot equal. By electronic means impressions can be nearly instantaneously communicated to vast audiences at great distances. Thus, the electronic media can involve an entire nation in an event while it happens. The printed media, however, have the advantages of transmitting greater depth of thought.<sup>2</sup> While they may not be as rapid in their transmission, they may leisurely require the involvement of depth coverage and provide a great many details which may be overlooked or blurred by the electronic media.

There is one other medium which is a mass communication network and which provides for the communication of ideas through audial and visual means. It is the vast human network in which individuals pass on their news and their interpretations of it. It can have large of small audiences. It can provide great or little detail. It can require total or minimal involvement. It can use symbolic, pictorial, gesticular, printed, and spoken languages at the same time. It can be the most or the least effective medium, depending on the individuals involved and their attitudes about one another.

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<sup>2</sup>Rivers. op. cit., p. 2.

## MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

At the heart of our system is the understanding that not only will the branches of government limit each other's power, but that the public will keep a close watch on all branches so as to control them. The mechanism for this surveillance is the workings of the press, including television journalism.<sup>3</sup>

In democracy, the media serve a variety of political functions. They are the average citizen's source of public information concerning governmental activities. They are the main picture of public opinion for the average official.<sup>4</sup> They are the most important forum for general criticism of both government actions and public attitudes.<sup>5</sup>

Some have come to view our press in the United States as a fourth power of government sharing responsibility with the three Constitutionally described branches of government for balancing power and checking on performance. The Washington press has become a forum for the exchange of ideas in governmental arenas, and the national press describes the issues and helps limit the areas of discussion of governmental policies. The press relates to the citizen what his role should be, whether he is performing it adequately, and, if not, why not. It provides analysis and interpretations of events and even defines events from non-events. By the attention the press devotes to an individual, an event, or a policy, the general public learns the thought and priorities it should place there.<sup>6</sup> The press is the public intelligence agency, reporting on

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<sup>3</sup>MacNeil, op. cit., p. xviii.

<sup>4</sup>V. O. Key, Jr., Public Opinion and American Democracy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 413.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Charles Yancey", Monticello, January 6, 1816.

<sup>6</sup>Rivers, op. cit., p. 297.

secluded and secret governmental activities to which the citizen would not have access in other ways. The fact that the public relies heavily on the press for its information and interpretation of events places on the freedom of the press and the competitive coverage of events the weight of upholding the democratic processes. Because the press is the major informational link between the public and the officials, it is the essential channel of political power. Political power rests, in a large part, on the power to persuade and the power of being informed. Thus the process of communication is the process of using power.

#### Magazines

Magazines have limited circulation and, hence, a selective audience. They usually have a central focus determined by their nature around which they are constructed. This format is consistent with only stylistic changes throughout the life of the magazine. The magazine audience thus begins to expect consistency of views and positions to be presented by each magazine; the audience subscribes to the publication because it subscribes to the position.<sup>7</sup> The audience uses the magazine to provide it with a consistent interpretation around which it can construct its world views and interpretations. The publication knows or makes assumptions about its public's tastes, attitudes, and interests, and takes on the task of catering to these characteristics and supplying them with substance. The magazine is usually not limited by geography, but

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<sup>7</sup>Rivers, op. cit., pp. 25-36.



by social, economic, business, and avocation parameters.<sup>8</sup> It is these parameters which predominate political affiliations and voting behaviors as well.<sup>9</sup> Hence, if the magazine does nothing more than strengthen group identification or increase group communication, it affects politics. The audience perceives the values and opinions of the magazine as those of the rest of the group to which it relates. It is because the magazine is seen as a communication within the group with which the individual most readily identifies that the opinions found there meet with the least resistance and come to be those of the audience.

### Newspapers

Newspapers are generally limited geographically and, in some cases, (to a smaller extent than magazines) also limited by social parameters. Newspapers are conglomerates of information about local, national, and international events. They are printers of several points of view. The owner-publisher determines the official stand of the paper in its opinions.<sup>10</sup> The editorial staff frequently is selected on the basis of agreement with the publisher, but occasionally may agree or disagree on specific events or

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<sup>8</sup>V. O. Key, op. cit., 1967, p. 378.

<sup>9</sup>Lester W. Milbrath, Political Participation (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1965),

<sup>10</sup>Rivers, op. cit., p. 64.

issues and the positions the paper should assume.<sup>11</sup> The editorial staff determine what content shall be admitted to the paper and what opinion articles shall have official sanction. The staff of the paper is comprised of people of different backgrounds from that of the publisher; generally, the reporter and his behind-the-desk cohorts are not of the same viewpoint as the publisher.

In 1960, 57 percent of the daily newspapers reporting to the Editor and Publisher poll supported Nixon, and 16 percent supported Kennedy. In contrast, there are more than three times as many Democrats as there are Republicans among the Washington newspaper correspondents; slightly more than 32 percent are Democrats, and fewer than 10 percent are Republicans.<sup>12</sup>

Because of this the reporter selects different items as news, his reporting style favors (in its outwardly disinterested or objective manner) different views, and his depth reporting presents different interpretations from those of the editor and publisher. It is this difference which accounts for the oft reported misconception that a Republican always has the support of the press, while the candidate may have to face quietly a completely biased press corps of Democrats.

The newspaper faces the problem of integrating the different levels of the news--local, national and international--and placing some degree of priority for the reader to interpret and relate to. However, the far larger task of the newspaper is that of integrating all the activities of the world and deciding the priority of politics to pole-vaulting and comedy to commentary.

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<sup>11</sup> ibid., p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> ibid., p. 64.

## Radio

Radio was the first of the electronic media. It extended the audial faculty of its audience and provided for instantaneous coverage of events. It was not limited to groups defined by social parameters and was barely limited geographically. When it was the only electronic medium, it was responsible for providing more people than ever before with information about the activities of their government and interpretations of these activities.

From the pioneer broadcasting done by Harding, the development of the medium went forward by leaps and bounds. Aside from technical advances, the whole atmosphere of wonder and excitement that surrounded this modern miracle undoubtedly redounded to the President's advantage. This was a fascinating new toy. Set owners sat far into the night listening to anything and everything, writing down gleefully new stations picked up. The quality of the programs was less important than the sheer joy of hearing voices and music coming through the ether. This was a day of captive audiences, which, held to the earphones by a kind of hypnosis, devoured the programs offered and cried for more. To the would-be exploiter of the medium it meant, one imagines, a dependable audience that required little of the skill that later audiences demanded.<sup>13</sup>

As it has been relegated to the secondary medium, however, it has provided its listener with only minimal overviews of events and with little or no interpretations or perspectives.<sup>14</sup>

Radio has mastered the technique of headlining. It provides immediate flashes of important happenings, but it seldom undertakes the task of follow-up or analytical reporting.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the individual who glances

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<sup>13</sup>Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), pp. 89-90.

<sup>14</sup>Rivers, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>15</sup>ibid., pp. 1-2.

at the headlines over coffee is exposed to headlines only on the radio and has difficulty placing perspective on one-line blurbs of world action. The typical radio station spends more time per hour on ads than on news, more on patter than on perspectives, and more on entertainment than on all other activities.<sup>16</sup>

Radio presented government with a new and complicated problem concerning freedom of speech. Since radio is dependent upon air waves for its transmission and, since the range of audio waves limited, the prerogatives of individuals who wish to use them must be limited. The government in the 1930's settled on assigning frequencies and broadcasting times through licensing specific stations to broadcast in the public interest. It is the responsibility of the station to prove there is a need which exists in its area for a station with the programming which will meet this need and that broadcasting will conform to governmental standards of fairness and public interest. As the position of radio has changed, so has the interpretation of public interest. Public demand or the ability to create a marketable commodity—whether news or entertainment of high or low level—is the present interpretation which governs the licensing of radio.<sup>17</sup>

Because market and demand are the essentials of radio broadcasting, the medium has become an ever-pervading environment in which the average

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<sup>16</sup>ibid., p. 487.

<sup>17</sup>ibid., pp. 465-468.

citizen carries on his daily activities. It has also given him a false sense of knowing what is going on through its headlining every hour on the hour the world's most up-to-date news.

#### Television

The newest of the media, television, is also the least limited in audience range. Because of the high cost of producing programming network shows predominate and the geographical limitations of the local stations appear only in the early morning farm reports or the late night news while the network holds nearly exclusive prime-time rights.<sup>18</sup> Television not only presents world events in black and white or living color, as our case may be, but it brings them live and, on the spot, into our living room. It is not handicapped by still or no pictures; it emphasizes action. It demands action. It cannot tolerate dead time. It also requires and receives the attention of the viewer.

Because television has the most universal audience and, because there are only three major networks, it makes daily decisions dictating the values of American life.<sup>19</sup> It attempts objectivity in its reporting.

We can't achieve total objectivity because we all have our prejudices, bias, and position. But we are professional journalists and we have been taught integrity, truth and honesty, and we practice it.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Network Programing", T.V. Guide, (June 30, 1969) p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Johnson, "The Silent Screen", T. V. Guide (July 5, 1969), pp. 6-13.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Cronkite from William R. Graves, "Cronkite Hits Agnew's Views", Kansas City Times (November 22, 1969), p. 9A.

It occasionally attempts analysis of its news. It places perspectives. It produces pictures of life which most of its audience would never come upon in any other way.

Television supercedes all other media in range, in perspective, and in power. It can reach more people faster with more information and greater involvement than all the other media. It presents uniformity and consensus as its continuum while presenting disunity and discontent as its commodity.

Perhaps most important for the political consequences, television keeps controversy at bay. Controversy on any level disturbs someone in the audience.<sup>21</sup>

In their efforts to keep the show interesting (Conventions), the networks have developed the habit of cutting away from droning platform speeches to more lively incidents on the floor or outside the convention hall. In doing so, they have been accused either of not covering the meaningful part of the convention or of manufacturing 'events' to stimulate the audience. That charge usually comes from party officials who would prefer not to have the national audiences witness spectacles of party disunity.<sup>22</sup>

Television has presented government with even greater questions of freedom and the First Amendment than radio brought. The cost of television is so high that it does not have the difficulty of determining who will broadcast (though in most instances there are competing groups when a station is awarded). Instead, the difficulty is that of a monopoly and of maintaining sufficient competition in the medium to retain a reasonable presentation of the diverse American viewpoints. The medium is faced

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<sup>21</sup>MacNeil, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>22</sup>ibid., p. 101.

<sup>23</sup>Victor G. Rosenblum, "How to Get into TV: The Federal Communications Commission and Miami's Channel 10", in The Uses of Power, ed. by Alan F. Westin. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1962), pp. 173-228.

with censors on all sides.

This whole problem of a limited number of people making news judgment is absolutely true, I don't know any to beat that...We have a committee system at CBS, and I think NBC does too....But if we're going to have a committee I want to make sure it's a committee of professional journalists and not bureaucrats. Would you have a (news selection) committee of politicians, bureaucrats or sociologists? These people are not journalists. They would first decide whether it would be good for you to have this news and second whether it would be bad for them.<sup>25</sup>

As the personal quality of television becomes more apparent and, as information on the impact of media on government becomes more explicit, the problem of censorship becomes more significant. Thus, the politician inevitably finds himself concerned about his relationship to the media and, most particularly, to television.

In a broader sense the political process as a whole is influenced by access to the means of communications. Questions about the ease of access and the existence of limitations on the use of mass media touch upon some of the most important issues determining the character and the stability of political life in any society. Indeed, an examination of the conditions for obtaining access to various forms of communication usually is a highly rewarding way of comparing political systems, for such an approach can not only reveal how control and power are distributed in different systems but also can provide information about the very character of power itself in each society. From such an approach we can readily perceive fundamental differences between totalitarian and authoritarian systems...<sup>26</sup>

### The Human Network

Of all the media perhaps the human network is the most difficult to characterize and to pin-point. The human network is any group which

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<sup>24</sup>Johnson, op. cit., also Joan Barthel "The Panic in TV Censorship", Life (August 1, 1969), pp. 51-54; Harry J. Skornia, Television and Society (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1965), chap. 6.

<sup>25</sup>Cronkite, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>26</sup>Lucian Pye, Communications and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 58.

transmits thoughts and ideas from an individual to an audience. That individual may be a participant in another medium, that is, he may be a reporter for a paper, an editor for a magazine, a commentator for television, or a disc jockey for a radio station. That audience may be family, a group of workers, a country club, or individuals in each who come upon the information in different ways at different times. The people who transmit the ideas, that is, those who pass on the information, comprise the network. There are few laws concerning the human network. There is not much general concern about its fairness or its policy. There is no attempt at objectivity or public interest. It is, nevertheless important in the formation of public attitudes and opinions.<sup>27</sup>

#### Hot and Cold Personalities

McLuhan has attempted to define the changes in the style of form of the media and the respondent changes in the personalities who successfully use them. The difference is in terms of hot and cool media. A hot medium is one that extends a single sense in high definition. That is, a hot medium provides explicit data and allows less participation on the part of the audience either actually in the sense of participation (as in a lecture—hot—compared with a seminar—cool) or in the use of the imagination of the audience to fill in the missing information with their feelings and attitudes. A cool medium, then, is one which sends the message in low definition because so little information is given and so much is required of the audience to make it complete. Radio

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<sup>27</sup>Katz and Lazarsfeld, op. cit.



and the modern printed media are hot because they supply the receiver with a large quantity of information and require little participation from him. Television, on the other hand, is a cool medium because it allows the viewer more freedom to interpret what he sees and hears and, therefore, requires his participation. Hot media imply the fragmenting of the senses and, hence, the fragmenting of life and of roles. Cool media bring unity and the inclusion of the audience with all senses and imply the unity of life. Thus, there is a shock when a hot medium meets a cool medium. By the same token, a cool personality is one that allows the public to furnish with its imagination the data necessary to make the person real and engenders a relationship between the audience and the individual. A hot personality, however, gives to the public all his relevant attitudes, actions, and information and requires the public to be merely passive observers. Consequently, there is a basic conflict when a high definition personality attempts the use of the cool medium of television. If two personalities are presented, as in the 1960 Presidential debates, the cooler personality will be more effectively transmitted by the television medium. Likewise, issues which are not totally dealt with, questions which are not completely answered (or are not answered in detail), campaign slogans rather than messages, and spots rather than depth reviews, are all more easily translated into the cooler television medium.

For the political system, I would suggest this participation required by the medium is translatable in another way. Those who have become used to the participation of the television have the need to participate in politics, to supply their own attitudes and actions rather than to passively accept the

actions and opinions of others. Thus, it seemed the generation of the 1950s, which was raised in the hot environment of newsprint and radio, was a passive generation which allowed politics to proceed with merely occasional observation. In contrast, the generation of the 1960s, raised in the cooler television environment, appears to be a generation of activists which participates and voices its opinions. Because of these differences, conflict and misunderstanding between the two generations and a general inability to communicate across generational boundaries have developed.

The political system in the United States has long rested on the political myth of participation. This myth lasted through the long period of hot medium and hot politics (the smoke-filled rooms and political machines) which the public observed, but in which the public felt no need to participate. Although the cool generation is prepared to test the myth of participation at all levels, it is not prepared to make exceptions while their activities are being translated from their cool medium into the hot medium of the present system. The problem is that, while the public has long been taught the functions of government, it has seldom been called upon to participate; thus, the machinery of committees and bureaucracy served well to separate the observer from the action. Now, however, the cool generation desires a piece of the action and would prefer to participate (Vista, Peace Corps, Teacher Corps, Job Corps, White Hats, etc.) rather than to sit and assume the role of the casual observer. The system is going to have to share the action or to make allowances for the involvement elsewhere (Black Panthers, SDS, etc.).

We have seen that the various media have specific audiences and are perceived in various ways. The media perform the function of transmitting information between the public and the government. It is important to government that magazines, newspapers, radio, and television have different audiences as well as different styles of presentation. Perhaps most important is the human network in aiding the individual in his ordering of the information he receives about his world. In the next chapter I shall examine more closely the relationship of the individual and his information.

## SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN

Schoolbell go ding dong ding  
 The children all line up  
 They do what they are told  
 Take a little drink from the liars' cup

Momma don't even care if what  
 they learn is true or if it's even lies  
 Just get them through the factories into production  
 Oh get them into line

Late in the afternoon  
 the children all come home  
 They mind their manners well  
 Their little lives are all laid out

Momma don't seem to care  
 that she may break their hearts  
 She clips their wings off  
 They'll never learn to fly  
 Poor Momma needs a source of pride:  
 a doctor son she'll have  
 no matter what the cost  
 to manhood or to soul

Sun shine down brightly, shine  
 down on all the land,  
 shine down on the newborn lambs  
 The butcher's knife is in his hand

Oh Momma keeps them unprepared  
 to meet the enemy common to all  
 Teach them that evil dwells across the sea  
 Lives in a mountain like they see on TV  
 Down in the heart of town  
 the devil dresses up  
 He keeps his nails clean  
 Did you think he'd be a boogiemán

Poor Momma's stuck with sagging dreams  
 She'll sell a son or two into some  
 slavery that's lucrative and fine  
 Just teach them not to criticize  
 to yes the bosses, impress the clients.  
 O Teachers of the world,  
 teach them to fake it well

Schoolbell go ding dong ding  
 The children all line up  
 They do what they are told  
 Take a little drink from the liars' cup.

—Buffy Sainte-Marie

## GROOVING

As social scientists perfected their techniques of investigation and became interested in opinion formation, they discovered some interesting facts about human communication. The time-honored American myth declared that each citizen was exposed to news and drew from his exposure the information necessary to appropriately weigh his final judgment and make his individual decision. However, research has shown that not only does the average citizen not appropriately weigh all the information which comes his way, or make a carefully considered individual decision (or, sometimes, even a final judgment), but the average citizen may not even allow himself first-hand exposure to information through the various media.

Katz and Lazarsfeld, in their classic study Personal Influence, discovered that media information is accumulated by an attentive public, or opinion leaders, and is then passed on through the human network in discussion groups among friends and co-workers. Several things happen in this process. Those whom the group has identified as having access to more information, having more interest in observing the information, or having a greater talent for relating to and placing in personal perspective are the ones whose opinions are sought and whose views are retained and relayed. These opinion leaders must be people whose status and interests are sufficiently close to the rest of the group that the group will recognize them as essentially the same in order for the opinions to be valued by the group. The leader does not merely relay the information: he interprets it, relates it to the daily lives of those

to whom he is speaking, gives his personal emphasis and perspective to it, and adds his own misperceptions and social values to it. Since the information is given in the group context with all free to comment on it, it carries with it the apparent group approval of the interpretation finally accepted. The group situation produces greater conformity on the part of all members to the opinion which is voiced.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the individual is faced with a situation where, if his thoughts and opinions are to remain in keeping with those of his friends, he must subscribe to the same interpretations of the news in which they have all shared.

Karl Deutsch views this process of social communication as a measure of the cohesiveness of the society.<sup>2</sup> To the extent the society shares the same norms and values, the news will be transmitted similarly with little distortion in the process. However, the extent to which the values and group norms differ will increase the differences in interpretations, and hence, the distortion of the information. In this way Deutsch provides a means for the measurement of the effectiveness of the human communications network. Even more important for politics, this measurement reflects the agreement or consensus on the item of the news, the message. When there is relative agreement on the interpretations of the message, the ability of the government to act decisively is

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<sup>1</sup>For discussions on the tendency to conform in group situations see: F. H. Allport, "The J-Curve Hypothesis of Conforming Behavior", Journal of Social Psychology (1934) p. 141-183; Asch, Solomon, Social Psychology (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952), pp. 450-501; R. L. Gordon, "Interaction Between Attitude and the Definition of the Situation in the Expression of Opinion", American Sociological Review (1952) Vol. 17, pp. 50-58; Muzafer, Sherif, "A Study of Some Social Factors in Perception", Archives of Psychology (1935), no. 187; Muzafer, Sherif, "Group Influences Upon the Formation of Norms and Attitudes", in G. E. Swanson, T. M. Newcomb, and E. L. Hartley Readings in Social Psychology (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1952), pp. 249-262.

<sup>2</sup>Karl Deutsch, The Nerves of Government (New York: Free Press, 1966); Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 19

increased; on the other hand, as the distortion of the news increases, the power of government to act decisively decreases.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the means of human communication and the effectiveness of the human network as a medium ultimately determines the fate of the message it relays. More importantly, the condition of the medium and its effectiveness, in the end, determines the condition of the political system and its effectiveness.

A direct relationship exists in all societies between the structure and organization of communications and the character, tone, and, even to a degree, content of political expression. The politician's role both as articulator of the collective identity and as champion of specific interests is invariably conditioned and limited by the media of communications available to him. No leader can rise above the restrictions of the specific communications networks to which he has access, and at the same time none can escape the consequences of being surrounded by a communications system.<sup>4</sup>

The discovery of opinion leaders in each social group also allows for a slightly different definition of attentive public than that which is usually used. Frequently, attentive public is a term used in the definition of specific social and economic groups which have vested interests willing to mobilize public support for their views should governmental decisions move in a detrimental direction.<sup>5</sup> However, if one is willing to shift his view-point to define the opinion leaders as the attentive public, the attentive public becomes a cross-section of all the social and economic groups. It interprets for the rest of the public, the events in which it is interested, and relates and gives meaning to the

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<sup>3</sup>Karl Deutsch, "Mass Communications and the Loss of Freedom in National Decision Making: A Possible Research Approach to Interstate Conflicts", Journal of Conflict Resolution (1957), vol. 1, pp. 200-211.

<sup>4</sup>Pye, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>5</sup>Harold Lasswell, American Foreign Policy and Public Opinion (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958).

general political involvement in specific areas of personal concern.<sup>6</sup>

### Opinion Formation

Media usually gets secondary attention in the area of opinion formation since it is not considered a primary source of opinions. The socialization process presents the individual with his basic sets of attitudes and beliefs which he will use to interpret events and construct world views for the rest of his life. Those basic attitudes which the individual does not acquire from his parents, family, and school, he accumulates from his friends, fellow employees, business superiors, and social relations.<sup>7</sup> What is left is what is usually considered the realm in which the media can work its persuasion.

Perhaps if we alter our perspective we can see media as the technological extension of the other processes of socialization. The individual is raised in a general family environment which not only includes the family attitudes and activities but also includes an environment of media. The media are selected because they coincide with the family positions and attitudes.<sup>8</sup> Thus, as the child learns to read, his attention is channeled and his opinions reinforced or challenged by the newspapers and magazines which he finds available at home to read. Before the

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<sup>6</sup>Richard R. Fagen, Politics and Communications (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), chap. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt, Political Socialization (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1969).

<sup>8</sup>Key, op. cit., p. 367.



child learns to read he has heard the radio carrying the sort of entertainment and news which the family prefers. Now, all children are also presented with a world through television. Their viewing is either selective and supervised by parents as an integral part of the family socialization process or is unstructured and presents constant challenges and contrasts with the family socialization process. Consequently, the child is socialized into the media of his environment and is socialized by the media in his environment. As the child enters school he is generally introduced to specific periodicals, to the radio stations which his friends prefer, and to the television programs which his teachers or schools may require him to watch. Thus, the media are an extension of the educational socialization process.

c As the adult identifies with his co-workers, his social groups, his employer, and his friends, he comes to recognize different media as speaking the different views of these groups. To the extent which he wishes to get ahead, he must read the periodicals his employer approves of. To the extent which he wishes to identify with his co-workers he watches the programs they watch. To the extent he wishes to converse with his friends and social acquaintances, he will read the same papers they do. In these ways, the media reinforces the relationships which mark off the life space of the individual.

What of the individual who wishes to expand his life space? Or the individual who does not completely adhere to the social identifications of the media? When different opinions find themselves within the reach of the individual, which does he see as truth, which does he select to listen to? The problem of cross-pressures does not include just the

media, but also includes all the parameters of an individual's life. When he finds himself in an economic position superior to that in which he was raised, he is faced with a problem of re-evaluating his perspectives and changing his world view. To the extent that the media are an extension of these other socialization processes, to that extent are they likely to be re-evaluated and kept or discarded with changes in position and parameters along with other values and beliefs (which are the extension of life-styles) in a new situation. However, when the individual does not change his media habits, when he changes his position, or when his media habits are inconsistent with his position, the media are subject to the same adjustive and selective perceptions the rest of the individual's habit face. The more central the media values (the closer the opinions presented and the interpretations presented by the media) are to the central values of the individual, the more likely they are to be retained. By the same denominator, the more peripheral the media values are to those of the individual the less likely they are to be retained. Since media habits become a part of an individual's world as an extension of all the other social forces which direct him, they are likely to retain that position as an extension, and extensions are notoriously peripheral. Thus, it is not unusual that the media should be regarded as of secondary or tertiary relevance to socialization or that it becomes quite difficult to isolate media influences from other social influences. The fact that media are impressions, imprints, and mirrors of the rest of life places them in that position in opinion formation.

## Issue Discussion and Issue Orientation

The media, however, hold the unique position in social forces of focusing attention on the world's activities. That is to say, the media limit the issue discussion.

Part of the old American myth of the informed voter-citizen was that he was concerned, above all else, with the issues relevant, at the time. The candidates, it was said, selected the issues which they were willing to discuss on the basis of those which were most important to the citizens at that time.<sup>9</sup> Once again, the old fiction must be shelved in the face of the new facts. Most citizens, it seems, are not concerned with the issues.<sup>10</sup> Most issues are not short-term discussion items but long standing social concerns. Most candidates choose their issues from those which the press have focused attention on or avoid issues on the same basis. The problem with issues is that they are related to the deep-rooted social values and norms of the various groups within society.<sup>11</sup> Economic issues affect the livelihood of segments of society and will crystalize opinions along economic parameters. Social issues are related to the world-view and the self-view of the individuals and run into the carefully constructed self-protective devices which enable individuals to order and operate in their social contexts.<sup>12</sup> International

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<sup>9</sup>Robert W. Johamnsen. The Lincoln-Douglas Debates. (New York: Oxford Press, 1965) p. 3-4.

<sup>10</sup>Milbrath. op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>11</sup>Agnus Campbell. "The Passive Citizen" Acta Sociologica. (1962) vol. 6. p. 9-12.

<sup>12</sup>Brewster Smith, Jerome S. Bruner and Robert White. Opinions and Personality. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964). chap.3.

issues relate both to the world-self dimensions and to the religious and ethnic dimensions of the individual. Thus, issues polarize society deeply. This is not the usual strategy for a vote seeker who desires to unite the greatest possible majority in order to assure victory at the polls for both himself and his party. However, media which serve as extensions of human attitudes and opinions utilize these dimensions for their ability to focus attention and to draw interest.<sup>13</sup> The media, rather than the man, determine the issues to be discussed usually long before the man to be discussed has been decided. Most of the media audience, however, is not attentive to the current issues but remains within the long established parameters and gathers a general feeling about the issues in terms which they measure their life-space. Although the general public is not issue-oriented in terms of specific issues and events, in the long run it tends to identify its interests and gather impressions by which to direct its actions from the media discussions of those issues which the media has this time selected to discuss.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Robert Lane. Political Life. (New York: Free Press, 1959). p. 294-298.

<sup>14</sup>Herbert McClosky. "Consensus and Ideology in American Politics" The American Political Science Review (June 1964).p. 361-379.

In this chapter we have discussed the role of the media in the socializing environment. The information may be distorted, selectively perceived, ignored or accepted by the individual depending upon the attitudes he uses to order his world. However, as the individual acquired his attitudes, he also acquired his media habits. Thus, throughout his life the attitudes and habits reinforce each other. Ultimately it is the media which focus attention and make salient the attitudes of the individual upon the specific subject of the moment. From this general outline of the role of media in general I shall turn in the next chapter to the revolutionary changes which the form of the media brings to the individual and his perception of the world.

## IF I HAD WINGS

If I had wings no one would ask me should I fly,  
The birds sings, no one asks her why  
I can see in myself wings as I feel them  
If you see something else keep your thoughts to yourself  
I'll fly free then

Yesterday's eyes see their colors fading away  
They see their sun turning to grey  
You can't share in a dream that you don't believe in  
If you say that you see and pretend to be me,  
You won't be then

How can you ask if I'm happy going my way  
You might as well ask a child to play  
There's no need to discuss or understand me  
I won't ask of myself to become something else  
I'll just be me

If I had wings no one would ask me should I fly,  
The bird sings, no one asks her why  
I can see in myself wings as I feel them  
If you see something else keep your thoughts to yourself  
I'll fly free then.

——Peter Yarrow and Yardley

## PROBE

## Media Revolution

Marshall McLuhan believes that the electronic medium is the first significant change in the world since the invention of movable type.<sup>1</sup> Movable type allowed for the segmentation and repetition of experiences and ideas as well as the segmentation and repetition of men and their lives. It allowed and implied the growth of the mass public. From this technology man has adopted the style of specialization, with every man being dependent on all others for his completion and his ideas.<sup>2</sup> The electronic media, however, imply the totality and uniqueness of experience and require the individual put a part of himself into his world. In this way, the electronic media imply the retribalization and decentralization of political man. Man is learning to draw a total meaning from the mosaic existence he has come to live. Selective impressions and perceptions have given way to a search for total impressions and mixed media perceptions.

Our time is a time for crossing barriers, for erasing old categories—for probing around. When two seemingly disparate elements are imaginatively poised, put in opposition in new and unique ways, startling discoveries often result.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>McLuhan, op. cit., (1964), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, The Medium is the Message (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p. 10.

If McLuhan is correct, the political implications will be noticeable and far-reaching. There are those who argue that the present trend toward centralized government has nearly reached its conceivable end for the United States.<sup>4</sup> A McLuhan interpretation is that retribalization requires a decentralizing political trend. The movements for Black Power and Student Power initiated by those approaching the television age are movements toward local power, a strong decentralizing trend. Whether these movements will grow and whether other decentralizing trends will follow remains to be seen with the coming of age of the television generation.

Bureaucracy is another desensitizing aspect of the Guttenberg age which should be reversed if the electronic age is to open politics up to participation. It has already been noticed that the television generation is particularly turned off by the concept of accepting a fate similar to that of the generations before that of becoming another part in the bureaucratic machinery.<sup>5</sup> The confrontation tactics used on campuses and off Broadway are those meant to give the bureaucratic system short shift and come directly to the position of power with the problems.<sup>6</sup> The politics of demonstrators have always been the antithesis

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<sup>4</sup>James Q. Wilson, The Amateur Democrat (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966).

<sup>5</sup>Joseph Katz and Nevitt Sanford, "Causes of the Student Revolution", Saturday Review (December 18, 1965), p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>Jerome H. Skolnick, The Politics of Protest (New York: Ballantine Books, 1969), p. 93.



of the bureaucratic system. They were the first to be adopted with the opening of the 1960s. There have been demonstrations before in the United States; but if a view of the 1960s were taken it might appear that it has been the decade of demonstrations. The Confront the War-Makers protest of 1967 drew between 100,000 and 200,000 demonstrators to the Pentagon. Less than a year later a similar crowd was drawn to Washington in the Poor People's direct appeal to the government. 1969 has seen the monthly escalation of the Viet Nam Moratorium which mobilized well over half a million protestors in Washington in the second month of the movement. Across the nation demonstrators on campuses daily increase and campus unrest has inclined from the first sit-ins to the now strikes. Participation is impatient with bureaucratic processes.

#### Mosaic Impressions

In the days since Guttenberg, a great many changes have taken place in the realm of public information. Not only has paper become more easily accessible but the general level of education has risen. In the United States reading is almost a prerequisite to living. The literacy rate has reached a level which far exceeds the dreams of our Founding Fathers. As a result, the American has become dependent on the printed media for the information necessary to carry on his daily activities.

Literacy is a technical requirement for media consumption. But literacy, once acquired, becomes a prime mover in the modernization of every aspect of life. Literacy is indeed the basic personal skill that underlies the whole modernizing sequence. With literacy people acquire more than the simple skill of reading. ...The very act of achieving distance and control over a formal language gives people access to the world of vicarious experience and trains them to use the complicated mechanism of empathy which

is needed to cope with this world. It supplies media consumers who stimulate media production, thereby activating the reciprocal relationship whose consequences for modernization we have noted. This is why media participation, in every country we have studied, tend to be the heaviest consumers of movies, broadcasts, and all other media products...Thus literacy becomes the sociological pivot in the activation of psychic mobility, the publicity shared skill which binds modern man's varied daily round into a consistent participant life-style.

With so many dependent upon this source of information, the people in the business of seeking and disclosing news have increased proportionately. With so many people looking for information, much more information has been gathered. Consequently, the average citizen finds himself swamped with the amount of information available to him on any subject, on any day, in any medium. In order to make some order from this over-load of information the average citizen has been forced to construct a world-view which gives meaning and priorities to the information he receives. The world-view of the individual may well exceed this original function and aid its ability to keep the world orderly by providing the person with selective perceptions. That is, with all the information constantly surrounding the individual, in order to avoid becoming completely atrophied, the individual allows perception of only those items which will contribute to the stability of his world-view and ignores-or does not allow to register-those bits of information which would challenge his view or unbalance his equilibrium. In this way, when people become prejudiced, the prejudice serves a function, namely, to enable people to continue to operate in a world which they cannot totally comprehend. The prejudice resists information which would destroy or challenge it and accepts

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<sup>7</sup>Daniel Lerner, "Toward a Communication Theory of Modernization", in Lucian Pye Communications and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 341.

that information which is compatible with it.<sup>8</sup>

This desensitizing is the result of technology which extends man's senses at an uneven rate.<sup>9</sup> The new electronic media, like all media before it, requires a sensual re-ordering to accomodate the new extensions.<sup>10</sup> Since television is a more total medium than those which preceded it and since it expands the senses more uniformly, it requires a more total receptivity.<sup>11</sup> It is not compatible with the prejudices which were sufficient with the hot media. It will, in all probability, develop its own prejudices in favor of unity rather than segmentation, in favor of mixed experience rather than isolated experiences, and in favor of participation rather than passivity.

The television generation has already opted for happenings over selective impressions and for experiencing and experimenting over selecting and observing. The movement to allow everyone to do his own thing is a general moral dictum which has shifted the terms of the battlegrounds of the preceding movement. The objection to the war in Viet Nam for the television generation is both the concept that the United States is interfering with a small nation's doing its thing because that thing happens to be incompatible with the rigid morality of the past, and the

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<sup>8</sup>Lane, op. cit., pp. 294-297.

<sup>9</sup>McLuhan, op. cit., (1964), chap. 4.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., p. 59.

<sup>11</sup>ibid., p. 36.

concept that, by not allowing dissent from the draft, the United States is prohibiting its own from deciding what their thing is. This is the new individualism and resistance to centralized thinking that the electronic medium implies. In a very real way, the television generation is prepared to force this nation to live up to the promise of American life.

The electronic media, then, have re-ordered man's perceptions and with them his relationship to his world. The individual has been forced to extrapolate from his mosaic impressions a total picture. As he becomes use to this extrapolation of information he may well be willing to submit his life style to the same open form of experiences. But how has this media revolution actually affected the relation between the people and their government-what real changes are identifiable: In the next chapter I will view the most obvious changes-those in conventions, campaigns, presidential image and press conference, and those in the official role of the press which government has required in turn.

## HE'S A KEEPER OF THE FIRE

He's as heavy as a lead weight, baby  
He's as skinny as a wire  
He's a prophet of a new day, baby  
He's a keeper of the fire

He's got a funny kind of voodoo, baby  
You oughta see him at the zoo  
He's got a heavy kind of hoodoo, baby  
And he can lay it on you

He can say it like an angel, baby  
He can say it like a brute  
He can see your seven devils, baby  
And he don't even give a hoot

Been honed like a razor, baby  
He's been tested in the blood  
He's a walker on the hot coals, baby  
And he's heavenly bound

I saw him walking in the valley, baby  
I could see him through the trees  
I saw him talking to the moon there, baby  
He was walking on his knees

He can play it like a rainbow, baby  
He can play it like a clown  
He can play it like a river, oh baby  
And he can follow you down

He's as heavy as a lead weight, baby  
He's as skinny as a wire  
He's a prophet of a new day, baby  
He's a keeper of the fire.

——Buffy Sainte-Marie

## WHERE ITS AT

The most obvious effects of this sensual re-ordering are in the easily traceable changes in presidential politics. A brief look at conventions, campaigns, and presidential images will focus the environmental effects on these political traditions. A longer look at the evolution of the presidential press conference will show the ways in which these men have attempted to cope with the impact of media revolution.

### Conventions

Chicago, 1968, brought an explosion between the hot generation and the cool generation over whether hot politics or cool politics would prevail in a hot city as the nation watched over the cool medium. Among the conventioners were hundreds who had been turned on by the cool medium and they and their non-official supporters were more than prepared to participate. However, the police and the political machinery of Daley do not allow for participation; the convention city has a history of conventioning which allows for the smoke-filled rooms and separation and seclusion from the public, not participation.

The convention has come a long way in the last hundred years. It was the first attempt to remove the selection of candidates from secret bargaining to the view of the public. The transition was aided by increased media coverage. The convention allowed for observers, for participation from groups, for appeals, and for open voting. As the television began its coverage of the convention, the original implications of openness and participation were emphasized with the more complete observation. Though television has not yet discovered

a means to maintain the participatory interest in its coverage through two conventions, it has managed to involve the general public in its political process.<sup>4</sup> The public looks to the convention as a show and does not allow for the dead time between meetings, for dinners, and during routine business. The audience does not allow for private action which the conventions of previous years required. It does not allow for easy solutions to publicized differences. It expects the participants to participate, the demonstrators to demonstrate; and, it does not receive well the implications of those who chose to quiet either.<sup>5</sup>

The participants in the convention have also changed over the past century. Originally chosen at home in back rooms to win their patronage for their home state, they bargained more than they participated and caucused more than they conceded. Now, however, the conventioneer may well be the longest standing party worker in his area; but across the aisle may be a newcomer whose interest is in the candidate he has come to support above the party he has come to participate in. The newcomer perceives his representing his constituency and no brief calls to the local boss can change his stand. He expects to be informed; he expects to participate. He firmly believes that all politics should be open politics. He has brought with him the other supporters of the same

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<sup>4</sup>MacNeil, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p. 197.

candidate from home whose sole function is to participate and to demonstrate so that those who did not come will know that they, too, have participated.<sup>6</sup>

The convention is a cold experience. The television medium is prone to total coverage. The convention or the form of the coverage is going to have to be changed in order to maintain an audience. Either the medium needs the opportunity to participate in the closed meetings or the closed meetings may need to be replaced by a more participatory forum for the audience.

#### Campaigns

The major campaign problem of the past has been reaching the people or reaching the greatest number of the people. Television has simplified this problem. It may well have over-simplified this problem. The candidate of the past was able to go to the different sections of the country emphasizing different ideas, playing on local sentiments. Today, however, television video tapes not only allow for a contrast of speeches on the evening news but party ads require a uniformity of content on the network. The party now concentrates on repetition of basic information: the candidate's name, the party, and the election date.<sup>7</sup> This simplifies the problem of becoming known, transmits well over the cool medium, and allows the audience the maximum of participation in definition and

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<sup>6</sup>Wilson, op. cit.; Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1960 (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1961); Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1964 (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1965).

<sup>7</sup>MacNeil, op. cit., p.xviii.



and action. The days when the campaigning was dictated by the distance between train-stops has been replaced by the strategy of television advertising.

As the campaign begins on Labor Day, the audience has some residual feelings from the saturation coverage of the convention and the pre-convention politics. The issues were probably selected by the press over a year before and the party and candidate stand have become well defined.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the strategy faces several immediate problems. The issues cannot be so explicitly defined that the public loses the ability to shade the opinions of the party and candidates to coincide with its spectrum. The candidates and issues cannot receive too much attention or the public attention span will be exhausted and a numbing process will begin to take over. Consequently, strategy is planned with well-spaced television programming and with gradually increasing minute and two-minute spots designed to peak with a saturation level the week-end before the election. The candidates gradually are revealed as personalities rather than as stand-pat opinion-makers. The public is allowed now to integrate the information concerning the man's public and political life with its impressions of his private and play life. Each party attempts only one daily event to capture headlines in order to avoid over-exposure. The candidate must seem to be a reasonable man who allows for a variety of opinions and attitudes.<sup>9</sup> He must, that is, be a cool personality, in order to allow his public to involve itself with him.

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<sup>8</sup>White, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Ithiel de Sola Pool, Candidates, Issues, and Strategy, (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1964).

## Presidential Image and the Press Conference

Once the election is won, however, the media problems have just begun. The President receives the most press coverage of any happening in the world. In order to combat this over-coverage and maintain a cool image, the President must carefully time his information releases. Every policy must have the attention of a carefully planned campaign. The government maintains twice the number of information officers as the public does reporters in Washington for the purpose of planning these policy campaigns for every governmental agency.<sup>10</sup>

The press conference must serve the two-fold purpose of keeping the press corps supplied with information and keeping the presidential image intact. Teddy Roosevelt would converse with a favorite reporter or two while his favorite Negro barber was giving him his shave. That was his presidential press conference. John Kennedy faced 419 reporters, an assorted variety of television and press cameras, and a dozen microphones for his presidential press conference.<sup>11</sup> Richard Nixon pre-empts prime time for an hour discussion of specific issues, brings no notes, uses no podium, and addresses the nation for his presidential press conference. Teddy Roosevelt gained fame from his ride with his Rough Riders. Richard Nixon gained public notice from his crusade on televised Senate hearings. John Kennedy gained public

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<sup>10</sup>MacNeil, op. cit., p. xvii.

<sup>11</sup>Rivers. op. cit., p. 159.

favor from his television debates with Richard Nixon. As the role of the press has changed, as the form of the press has changed, so have the role and form of the presidential press conference.

Since Teddy Roosevelt moved the Washington Press Corps inside the White House on an inclimate day, it is natural to begin the over-view of the press conference with him.

Presidents before Theodore Roosevelt rarely felt that the press must be catered to or wooed. T.R.'s overriding contribution was a vivid realization of the potentialities of leadership via the newspapers, and, hence, realization that access to this potential must be pursued actively and continuously. Rather than merely releasing information and letting the press make the best use of it they could, or leaving it up to the reporters to dig out the news, he took the offensive and made news himself, calculating carefully the best ways and means of timing for its release.<sup>12</sup>

One of his hobbies was to keep informed on office gossip of the new staffs. By so doing, Roosevelt managed to establish a personal rapport with the press corps which had never been done before. But Roosevelt's personality carried his relationship with the press well beyond personalization; he brought drama and energy to the presidency and focused attention on the White House. His model of presidential opinion leadership has generally been followed by all his successors, with only media technology imposing changes.<sup>13</sup>

Theoretically, Wilson agreed with the Roosevelt model of presidential opinion leadership. However, Wilson faced a problem in actually dealing with

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<sup>12</sup>Cornwell, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>ibid.

reporters similar to that of Stevenson in the 1950's, namely, the projection of images of passive resignation and of intellectuality images which made it difficult to reach the people. Wilson's active interest in opinion leadership found other channels, i.e., direct appeals by personal speeches, committees for the dissemination of public information, and addresses to Congress. Wilson did not follow the Roosevelt practice of meeting only with personal friends but allowed unlimited attendance. The press took advantage of this access by badgering the President until it received an answer or evidence of his annoyance. The Wilson of the second term was quite different from the Wilson of the first, partially because of the change in the world situation and partially because he became more aloof, rarely having the bi-weekly press conferences which were the rule of the first term, begging off due to the increased world involvement.<sup>14</sup> It might also be noted that the ability of Senator Lodge to dominate the press coverage of the discussion of the League of Nations proposal was evidence that the press had not yet solidified around the office of the president, a solidification which has since caused both concern for the possible distortion of powers and congratulations for the aid to the centralization and focus on the Presidency.

Coolidge was the last of the Presidents dependent upon the newspaper press and the first of the Presidents to use radio as a mass medium and a direct line to the people. His innovations and changes in the tone of the press conference, his broadcasting of speeches

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<sup>14</sup> ibid.

to the public during campaigning, and his use of the press conference as a means to prod Congressional action made him a major innovator. For Coolidge, the press conference existed mainly as an off-the-record opportunity to meet with the press and answer their questions. This sort of meeting became institutionalized under F.D.R. as a 'backgrounding' to provide the correspondents with the information necessary to intelligently relate their news. Most of the comments were not for public consumption or, if publishable, only with attributions of "a White House Source" or a "high governmental official". The presidential staff was beginning to expand to accomodate the new medium with the most obvious addition, a press secretary. With the exception of Hoover's formalization of the categories of attribution in backgrounding, little of significance was done with radio until Roosevelt.<sup>15</sup>

Radio was still being used, and would continue to be until 1933, either as a kind of intriguing novelty or stunt device, or as a mere adjunct to the traditional formal address before a live audience. Radio as a presidential tool would not and could not come into its own until it was realized that only speeches prepared exclusively with an unseen radio audience in mind would make possible full exploitation of the medium. Addresses contrived for delivery to a live audience, and only incidentally broadcast, could rarely rise above the level of an interesting bit of news coverage.<sup>16</sup>

There is little question that F.D.R.'s Fireside Chats has a significant effect on public morale during a long period of national disasters.

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<sup>15</sup> ibid.

<sup>16</sup> ibid., p. 113.

Nor is there any question but that Roosevelt consciously used the new medium successfully and dramatically as a tool of Presidential image-building. With radio, the President appealed directly to the people, informed them, educated them, and gave them confidence in their government. At the same time, Roosevelt used the presidential press conference as a private meeting to educate the working press which was somewhat bewildered both by the events taking place and by the new role of government. He used the earlier Roosevelt's method of personal rapport with the press by treating them as individuals, establishing a sympathy with their working problems, i.e. deadlines, etc., and seeking their sympathy for his policies.<sup>17</sup> It was Roosevelt's use of the conference to educate this corps that established it as an elite in the profession and that aided in informing the public in terms which would be sympathetic to the President's innovations. As he did the rest of the nation, Roosevelt subtly managed the press conference to his advantage by the introduction of a statement which frequently began the meeting and by the rephrasing of questions into a form he was willing to answer.

Though the Truman era saw the formalization of the press conference, it did not see the welcoming of it by the President. Truman generally regarded the weekly meetings as tests of wit and did not employ the subtle manipulative tactics of Roosevelt. Rather, he frequently rested with a simple yes or no reply, thereby accepting, in essence, the reporters' words as his own. Informal contacts became more difficult to maintain as the press became more sensitive to the professional advantages and status these implied. The meetings were eventually cut to once a week and the less defining contact became apparent in the image which the media

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<sup>17</sup>ibid.

transmitted.<sup>18</sup>

To some extent his humanity, his determination and fighting spirit came through, but there was a less attractive side to the image projected. At times the President seemed impetuous, ill-informed, cocky, and quarrelsome.<sup>19</sup>

Eisenhower became the first Television President through the convention coverage and campaign coverage, then, through the presidential speeches, and, finally on January 19, 1955, through the filming of the press conference. This evolution brought with it a great many complications. Though it was the ultimate formalization, it deprived the press corps of the background and off the record information which had aided them in their interpretations of the news. Though it provided total coverage, the networks were hesitant to utilize the entire time required to show a taped press conference. Consequently, segments were shown on news round-ups. The printed media found that they simply could not devote the front-page space required to the diverse discussions which resulted. The conferences became less frequent, though all meetings, including background dinners, flourished at the departmental level. Because of his personality, Eisenhower was nearly immune to the influence of the press, which chose to avoid his disfavor by avoiding unfavorable statements. Eisenhower willingly experimented with the direct appeal to the public with a variety of formats. As a result, the image became the subject of analysis.

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<sup>18</sup> ibid.

<sup>19</sup> ibid., p. 163.

<sup>20</sup> Gene Wyckoff, The Image Candidates: American Politics in the Age of Television (New York: MacMillan Co., 1968), p. 212.

The Eisenhower image was that of a man of honesty, sincerity, and above politics.<sup>21</sup> His Vice-President, Richard Nixon, on the other hand, was the politician and was the one seen in the midst of angry mobs around the world. The President, hereby, used his Vice-President as an antithesis for his own image. The Vice-President had come to fame and saved his career in its critical moments through television, however, and did not intend to remain the antithesis forever.

The 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debates changed the format of U. S. politics and campaigning. The American public was able for the first time to see two men side by side answering the same questions from the same men. The unique discovery that the expertise in formal debating of Richard Nixon did not match the cool and personal style of John Kennedy in the minds of the American people not only surprised both staffs but called attention to the change the medium had brought. The ability of Kennedy to prove his competence in handling the press in a manner which the general public approved of overcame his inexperience (relative), his lack of public attention, and his youth.

We are left with the paradox that most commentators think the debates harmed Nixon, but with no objective evidence that they swung the election to Kennedy. Perhaps, if the result had not been so close, the effects might have shown up more conclusively in the surveys. It is remarkable that more adult Americans watched the first debate—the average estimate is 70 million—than actually voted. ..Both Kennedy and Nixon thought that the debates had decided the election.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cornwell, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> MacNeil, op. cit., p. 170.



It was most apparent that the medium which carried the debates, however, determined the outcome.

There has been no attempt, however, by students of the debates to suggest that Kennedy 'won' because of any forensic superiority. Some people who only heard the debates on radio thought that the two candidates had scored about evenly. Even among his close associates, the focus was on the way Kennedy had closed the maturity gap...<sup>23</sup>

The difference was that Nixon was a hot personality compared with Kennedy who was cool. The greater directness in providing complete information in reply to questions was Nixon's hot style which did not transmit well over the cool medium as did Kennedy's less explicit and indirect appeal to the general public rather than direct answers to the questions. The 1960 campaign proved that the American public had made the transition from old-style politics of whistle-stopping to the new-style politics of television exposure. The high cost of television time was balanced by the greater ability to reach the greater populations and the need for shorter messages with fewer ideas. Campaign strategy changed to the strategy of television timing, saturation viewing, slogan, symbolic ads, and shorts versus spots.<sup>24</sup> The days of the machine and the back-room were largely (well, with one exception in Chicago, 1968) replaced by the days when the messages would be delivered to individuals in their homes and should be salable to the entire family unit. The days when a man like Lincoln whose voice and profile were not pleasing to the public could win over a man whose style and showmanship were carefully

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<sup>23</sup> ibid., p. 169.

<sup>24</sup> MacNeil, op. cit., p. 194.

polished were relegated to another era. The 1960 televised campaign apparently served to increase the legitimacy which might come into question in such a close election.

Sam Lubell, an acute student of public opinion, notes a further benefit, the Debates made 'both the candidates and the election result more acceptable to the electorate.' The Democrats saw that if Richard Nixon won, it would not be a catastrophe; Republicans could not help noticing that John F. Kennedy was an intelligent reasonable human being.<sup>25</sup>

Kennedy's television cool did not end with the election. He went the final step of allowing the press conference to be telecast live, giving the networks incentive to broadcast it in its entirety. Kennedy also had a personal rapport with the press and managed to maintain friendships in spite of unprecedented turnouts for his press conferences. His aides met with the White House Corps daily providing mimeographed copy. The President even managed a subtle way to give backgroundings without inviting the entire press or discriminating by giving them during Christmas vacation when only the dozen or so corps members were present. However, the second of these was an embarrassment both to the President and to the corps when a British correspondent broke the ground rules by giving direct attributions.

These, then, are the qualities that the television era demands of political candidates: personality above all else—a personality not too specific and not the least abrasive, a personality which is pleasantly neutral enough to be built upon; a pleasing appearance with no features which may light unflatteringly on television; assurance—a way of comporting yourself that suggests with modesty, that you know more about anything than anyone else and could handle

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<sup>25</sup>ibid., p. 164.

any crisis; articulateness—an ability to put anything you say even if it is "I don't know what we're talking about", in such a commanding and authoritative way that your grasp and leadership qualities will flow through into every living room. In other words you should be an actor.<sup>26</sup>

President Johnson, the great political actor, reveled in the medium of television. He knew intimately, from his family ownership of a station, the operation of television and became intrigued with its potential. Johnson also reaped the problems of over-exposure. It has long been realized that saturation of an audience with a product will lead to lessening the receptivity of the message (the product becomes too well defined) by the audience. By the same token the frequent appearances by President Johnson brought a familiarity and a smaller audience. This combined with Johnson's open information policy brought the public into a problem of information over-load in late 1965, which became known as the Credibility Gap. The public has never had such a quantity of information, or so little governmental ordering of it, as it had on the Viet Nam war. The problem was that the media which usually assign priorities and order to the world events for their audiences had discovered vast amounts of extraneous information which it opened for public view without assigning priorities. Johnson did not attempt presidential management of the information which characterized every other war in American history. The media found itself with an information-overload which it blamed on the President; the public found itself with overheated media resulting from the complete analysis on a cool medium. Never had an audience viewed a hot war nightly over the dinner

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<sup>26</sup> ibid., p. 162.

table. The public and the press responded with selective inattention—hence, the credibility gap. This situation points to the impact of presidential style in handling a situation which can cool down an overheated situation or keep it cool depending on the crisis.

Kennedy faced the Cuban missile crisis for nearly two weeks before he was prepared to go before the American public with his message. He gave, in brief, the problem and the actions that had been taken and would be taken. He did not involve the public in the details of the discovery or the decision-making. The public faith in Kennedy peaked. Cool man, cool medium, cool message prevented a hot situation from overheating the environment.

Johnson faced the other kind of crisis, one in which the public was oversaturated with the details of the Viet Nam War and the actions of the administration in regard to it. However, in his address to the public in April, 1968, he only briefly mentioned the steps which had been taken and would be taken and then added the new factor, his unwillingness to seek the Presidency again. This new factor allowed the public to participate in speculation on the meaning of the entire speech and policy. This cool address was planned to give Johnson the necessary public favor to open new policy speculations at home and abroad. This was his successful attempt to briefly cool down an overheated environment.

In sharp contrast came President Nixon's November Viet Nam Speech. He added no new information. He did not define away any past information. The national mood mid-way between two Moratoriums was excessively overheated. He had successfully cooled the environment by announcing well in advance that he would address the nation on the subject of the

war. This was a short term effect which was decreased in impact on the environment by the hot addresses of Vice President Agnew concerning the nature of the hostility toward the protestors. Once the President's speech was made with no intervening effect, there was a net gain of increased overheating resulting from the Vice President's speeches.

Nixon is attempting a new method of dealing with the press by means of a series of diversionary tactics. The periodic space missions served to add a new undefined factor to the public consciousness. However, as the missions become more defined through the successful transmission of color televised activities, their impact will decrease. At the same time, the use of the Vice President to make the overheated attacks on dissentors and on the press are negating the space program. The President has considered the space program to be a unifying national project while the Vice President has opted for the polarization of national sentiment.

Richard Nixon, more than any other President, is a television politician. His rise to the Vice Presidency was brought about by his appearance in the senate hearings of the early 50s which set the precedent for televised Senate hearings. When his integrity and his career were brought into grave doubt, his appeal to the American people to support him came through television. The conventions in which he participated were the first to be televised. His trips around the world as a U. S. official were broadcast via video tape. His 1960 campaign was a combination of old-style press-the-flesh and new-style project-the-personality. In the interim between 1960 and 1968, he studied the medium which had brought him success and defeat and discovered the requirements of the medium to be those of personality rather than those of forceful persuasion.

His 1968 campaign and his actions as President since then have presented the most polished television President. He was not born in the television age so his devotion to the electronic media had to be learned. It is reasonable that those born in the television age will have a natural command of the polish that Nixon had to learn, a natural command learned from Nixon.

There have been frequent signs that Nixon has not learned his command of the media happily. The most blatant was his attack on the press upon his 1960 defeat, an attack well forgotten. However, the similarity between the 1960 Nixon and the 1969 Agnew is striking. Since the 1969 attacks relate to the role of the press in public opinion formation they are germane to this paper. Since they are based on false assumptions, it would be well to consider them briefly. The President claims to have the support of the silent majority. Perhaps he actually does. However, the silent majority is generally irrelevant to politics for a variety of reasons. Lacking any definition of this group, there are a great many reasons for silence: lack of interest, lack of efficacy (or sense of efficacy), lack of value of participation, alienation from the system, society, or question, psychological distance from the subject, lack of empathy, lack of information. The silent majority is, thus, silent because of a general lack of concern, hardly a majority with which a politician should be concerned, particularly in determining policy stands. Considering that those who are silent turn up at the polls less often than those who are vocal, this is hardly the majority to seek support from.<sup>27</sup> If, on the other hand, the President is not really

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<sup>27</sup>For a discussion of who actually votes and the influence of the press,

seeking the support of the silent majority, he is taking a risky gamble that he can undercut support for the Democratic party by appealing to working class, southern, and rural prejudices. It is dangerous because the party loyalty of these groups has been relevant for several generations and party loyalty is the most significant determining factor in voting. At the same time, he is not appealing to the largest segments of uncommitted voters, the young, and the extremely poor.<sup>28</sup> He may win a victory in 1972 but the course of the media effects on the television generation will work against this strategy for future candidates.

This brings the Vice President into view. Agnew contends that the media are being biased in presenting the Administration and, thus, are attempting to subvert the American public.<sup>29</sup> The question of media objectivity is a moot point as no individual or group can escape bias.

All writers slant what they write no matter how hard they try. All readers slant what they read. If the slants are the same, the magazine is called 'unbiased'. If not, its accused of bias.<sup>30</sup>

Nor does the information provided by the media reach the public in any total sense due to selective perceptions. Having reached the public in part, the media information does not act alone but rather, faces the entire life interactions of the individual in its receptions, acceptances, and distortions. If American democracy is based upon the

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<sup>27</sup> particularly television, on voter turnout see: Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, Politics and Television (Quadrangle Books: Chicago, 1968); also Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, Voting and Nonvoting (Blaisdell Publishing co., Waltham, Mass., 1968). There are significant methodological problems which mar the validity of both these works, however, they are among the few which deal with the political aspects of television in a scientific manner.

<sup>28</sup> Milbrath, op. cit.; V. O. Key, op. cit., (1967).; V. O. Key, op. cit., (1968).

<sup>29</sup> Spiro Agnew, "Des Moines Speech", November 15, 1969.

<sup>30</sup> Rivers, op. cit., p. 62.



belief in an educated public with access to information, then the press has the responsibility to fulfill.

#### The Media: Critic and Director

The problems of overload are difficult for the public, the public officials, and the press to cope with. The public has become acclimated to the cool environment of the 1960s and, yet, is faced with both the hot and the cold media. The members of the press are now divided between the two media forms and have the problem of translating events into both media. The result is the constant cultural explosion in which the press and the public are asked to transmit all events through all forms. The printed media are gradually facing relegation to depth coverage and interpretative reporting which will eventually make of them the critics of the republic. Radio has assumed its position as that of a secondary environment which is a headliner rather than a detailer and, therefore, is able to make the transition into a cooler world. Television is the casual factor of the explosion. It has allowed the public a new nearness in its observer role and has implied the new participation. The television medium may well become the world director of events and policies, while the printed media may become the critics.

#### The Individual

In the end the ability of the individual to relate and to selectively view his environment and his media are the relevant issues. Where a medium will work depends on the audience and its ability to receive the medium. If the audience is hot,—that is, if it is hard-core and opinionated—, if it is set in its ways and not open to new technologies and new ideas, then the medium must also be hot and in support of the positions of the



audience. However, if the audience is cool, if it allows for the interplay of undeveloped ideas and events and technologies, then it requires the cool medium and the participation in the opinion and judgments that come with it. If the individual finds himself in an incompatible environment, then, the effects on both the environment and the individual will be traumatic explosion or implosion. The environment must be compatible with the medium and both with the individual. The entire system, then, is involved in the technological requirements of the hot versus the cold medium. The politics of the system must be compatible with all the other components in an environment where a new search for totality has begun.

The media style has significantly changed the evolution of the political institutions in the United States. The presidency has become the focal point of power as it has also become the focus of press attention. The public has become more aware of the personality of the President. This personalization of the presidency by the press has recently made the corps itself the object of political discussion. The television medium has taken on awesome aspects to those not of the television generation who find it necessary and difficult to adjust to the revolution brought by the alteration of the form of the media. In the final chapter I shall examine what are the changes this revolution is bringing to the political system and the individuals who comprise it as well as the present period of cultural shock and adjustment.

## REVOLUTION

You say you want a revolution  
Well, you know, we all want to change the world  
You tell me that it's evolution  
Well, you know, we all want to change the world  
But when you talk about destruction  
Don't you know that you can count me out -- in  
Don't you know its gonna be alright  
Don't you know its gonna be alright  
Don't you know its gonna be alright

You say you've got a real solution  
Well, you know, we'd all like to see the plan  
You ask me for a contribution  
Well, you know, we're doing what we can  
But if you want money for people with minds that hate  
All I can tell you is brother you'll have to wait  
Don't you know it's gonna be alright  
Don't you know it's gonna be alright  
Don't you know it's gonna be alright

You say you'll change the Constitution  
Well, you know, we'd all love to change it back  
You tell me its the institution  
Well, you know, you'd better free your mind instead  
If you go carrying pictures of Chairman Mao  
Don't you know it's gonna be alright  
Don't you know it's gonna be alright  
Don't you know it's gonna be alright

——John Lennon and Paul McCartney

## ELECTRONIC BLUES

McLuhan draws dire predictions from his impressions. The world of tomorrow, he thinks, will be one of total environmental controls where the government keeps the people on happiness pills and the public pursues their happiness in their tribalized society. He predicts totalitarian politics and uniformity of environment.<sup>1</sup> This is not the logical conclusion from his own thoughts (though he makes no claim for traditional logic as it is a linear process soon to be left behind).<sup>2</sup> The tomorrow I see drawn from the same interpretation of today is one participatory politics and diverse environment. It is the restructuring to reach this society which will be the painful implosion brought by the new technology.

The sensual re-ordering of man is that of allowing him to indulge in the mixed media experience. Hence, it requires the removal of the present device of selective perceptions, and a priority integration of a more total sensual perception. It will lead to the diversity of experience and opinion and will promote the participation of all members of society. Life-styles will shift from the present carefully planned and premeditated movement from beginning to goal to end, to a happening and unstructured

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<sup>1</sup>Marshall McLuhan, "Playboy Interview", Playboy, (March, 1969), pp. 70-74.

<sup>2</sup>McLuhan, op. cit., pp. 84-90.

involvement which places priorities on now as opposed to tomorrow.<sup>3</sup>

The human communications network will shift from a hot to a cool medium. In the sense that prestige is placed in the opinion leader and that conformity to the group opinion is now the norm, the medium is hot; it does not allow the individual participant the maximum participations in his opinion process. To make this network a cool medium implies the re-ordering of norms to place priorities on individual participation and on contrast and range of opinions and attitudes which the individual is left to judge alone after the conversation.<sup>4</sup> This is the sort of considered judgment process that the Founding Fathers saw as the basis for democracy.<sup>5</sup>

The educational, industrial, social, and political systems will be restructured to emphasize individual participation and local autonomy. An imaginative alternative to bureaucracy, or a by-pass of bureaucracy as a power structure, will be needed to support local autonomy and massive individual participation. The power allocations will return to the private citizen, instead of their present placement with emphasis on the centralized body.

Between now and tomorrow, however, we are in the midst of the Electronic Blues, the massive cultural shock caused by the implosion<sup>6</sup> of the two media and two cultures daily confronting each other.

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<sup>3</sup>David Braybrooke and Charles Lindblom, A Strategy of Decision (New York: Free Press, 1963).

<sup>4</sup>Richard Flacks, "The Liberated Generation: An Exploration of the Roots of Student Protest", Journal of Social Issues, (July, 1967), p. 60.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Jefferson, "First Inagural Address", (March, 1801).

<sup>6</sup>Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, War and Peace in the Global Village (New York: Bantom Books, Inc., 1968), p. 16.

The lower class desires participation in the American society at the upper middle class level because the electronic medium has brought the imaginary participation with which the reality of their daily living does not coincide. Were the medium not participatory, the crush of rising expectations would not be so harsh.

The media teach people participation of this sort by depicting for them new and strange situations and by familiarizing them with a range of opinions among which they can choose. Some people learn better than others, the variation reflecting their differential skill in empathy. For empathy, in the several aspects it exhibits, is the basic communication skill required of modern men. Empathy endows a person with the capacity to imagine himself as proprietor of a bigger grocery store in a city, to wear nice clothes and live in a nice house, to be interested in what is going on in the world and to 'get out of his hole.'<sup>7</sup>

The United States has long tolerated economic differences, poverty, ill health, and dissatisfaction. However, this has been contained and put off by the ability of those in dire straits to fail to realize what the rest of the world had that it did not and by the ability of the rest of the world to ignore those problems and construct psychological distance. Now, however, eighteen hours per day, the poor of America see the white collar life style and find themselves separated only by an invisible shield. Now, the rest of America several hours per week sees images of these abject and shares sensually in their problems. Thus, there is rising frustration on both sides and fear of those who are just one step removed from the poverty level as they feel the nearness of participating in that life.

Racial conflict is another aspect of participatory medium. Television preserved a cautious magnolia picture in its infancy in order not to

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<sup>7</sup>Lerner, op. cit., (1963), p. 342.

upset any viewers and to win public support. Of late that picture has begun to change with exactly one in every four individuals on television being black. Imagine, however, what twenty years of being left out of the picture, when the picture means participation and the American way of living, can do. The frustration of continually looking through the window and never seeing a place for yourself has resulted in a deep anger and a conviction that no place will be made in that world.

What the Black American is trying to do, what he is trying to compensate for is that everyone in American society, in American media, he has always been an outsider.<sup>8</sup>

Had the medium been hot and not required the participation of the viewer, had the medium been less than an extension of the society, had the medium been less a total environment, the anger would have been held at bay and active conflict would not have been the result.

As we move closer to the television generation, the problem of measuring the changes and proving the predictions is a concern. The Electronic Blues is presently providing sufficient implosions for contrasts; however, the changes should also be sufficiently concrete that our measurements and methods should apply. The major difficulty remains in how to separate an environmental force from its environment. I am not sure that can be done. However, in general political terms there are areas which will show the change.

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<sup>8</sup> John Henrick Clarke, "Harlem: Making of a Community", Black Heritage, (New York: Columbia University film shown on WIBW, Topeka, Kansas, July 20, 1969).

The television generation should have a greater general sense of political efficacy. This efficacy may not be associated with the system they are presently in but will probably be directed in general terms that what action they choose to take politically is important and can change things. Alienation from the system may well be a possible correlation with this general efficacy due to the impatience with a hot style of politics and a willingness to bring about a cooler style. General participation should increase but, again, not necessarily in support of the system. Perhaps the participation increase would be in the area of demands on the system and show in the realm of demonstrations, rallies, or confrontations.

The general level of political cognition is definitely increasing and should be measurable with those presently in high school and college; this is the result of the increase in political communication and the change of form of the medium which is communicating. The general sense of civic obligation should increase; in the sense that those who hold beliefs should feel the greater need to participate in support of those beliefs, even if they are not generally supportive of the system. The general level of political competence should rise in correlation with participation but, again, not necessarily in correlation with political allegiance to the present system. A general feeling of social tolerance is compatible with the total environment sensory extension and cooperation could be implied from this. However, political cooperation with a hot political system by a cool generation will necessarily result in implosion and will depend more upon the flexibility of the system than on the flexibility of the generation to allow direction into cooperation. The degree that the system is able to adapt and allow freedom to commun-

icate from the cool generation should correlate with the level of cooperation. As the intensity of commitment of the cool generation increases, which it should with age and environmental involvement with the electronic media, the cleavage between the hot system and it should also increase. This is, of course, detrimental to the stability of the present system, and the detrimental effects are heightened by the aspect of increased participation. There is the mitigating norm of tolerance which will intervene to a greater or lesser extent, partially dependent upon the experiences with mixed media. That is, those with the greatest ability to tolerate a mixed media environment should best be able to tolerate a mixed media society.

There is the possibility that in terms of the political culture, the implosion could increase the cognitive orientations (that is, the general knowledge of politics, political myths, and political objects) while at the same time decreasing the affective orientations (the feelings of attachment and involvement in political objects) and imply a reversal of the evaluative orientations (the judgments and values by which political objects and events are measured). In the sense that the television generation is requesting a new political morality and finds the present actions in some instances obscene, there seems to be a direct reversal of the evaluative orientations. The question of affective orientations is a problem of interpretation—is it appropriate to say that the cool generation is attempting to realize the myths of individualism and participation or more appropriate to say, that the cool generation is rejecting the norms of passive observance, interdependence, and non-involvement? It seems apparent, however, that the television generation is not embracing either President Johnson or President Nixon as political objects with which they are prepared to give positive attach-



ments.

Thus, the changes should be apparent in political studies of the political culture as the generation matures. It will be difficult, however, to isolate factors such as increased mobility, increased education, integration, et cetera from those of the media environment or visa versa.

In addition, there is the problem of those who, by age and exposure, qualify for the television generation but who do not share the same effects. The most acceptable answer for this aspect is that those individuals are the ones who cannot re-orient sensually because they have been severely handicapped by socialization processes which produce selective perception and they have lost the ability to increase their perceptual fields. These factors would be measurable in terms of prejudice, tolerance, and family background but would also be apparent if subjected to mixed media experience by their ability to interpret and to relate to these experiences. Nor will these differences be completely banished in one generation since those with selective perceptions allow for only family environments which produce selective perceptions. However, the ultimate revolution of the entire social, industrial, educational, and political structure will eventually minimize those with selective perceptions and fragmented lives just as the past culture has produced them.

Though the present data on the television generation is far from complete, it is worth studying in order to see if the trends predicted do indeed appear. After its significant appearance in 1964 with the Berkley Free Speech Movement (though there were several preceding events, this is generally categorized as the historical turning point) student protest in

frequency, numbers, and strategy to the Columbia Gym Protest<sup>9</sup> but apparently is leveling at this peak with an off-campus diversion to the Mobilization. It is apparent that the general data available before 1964 would not characterize what is meant by 'student activism'; neither would it characterize the television generation since the majority of students before 1964 had passed their period of greatest suggestability<sup>10</sup> and were thus socialized primarily with the hot medium of radio rather than the cool medium of television.

Less than a decade ago, commencement orators were decrying the 'silence' of college students in the face of urgent national and international issues; but in the past two or three years, the same speakers have warned graduating classes across the country against the dangers of unreflective protest, irresponsible action and unselective dissent.<sup>11</sup>

There seems to be little question but that the generation of the 1950s raised on radio is the antithesis of the generation of the 1960s beginning to be raised with television. However, the transition is not clearly demarcated but, rather, gradually shades into each other with some studies stranded in the middle. Immediately following Berkley, the academic explanations were that this generation was forced to rebel because of increased competition, meaningless work, lack of community, depersonalization decline in the in loco parentis status of the university, participation in the civil rights movement, idealism, and increased mobility.<sup>12</sup> Though the last three may retain some degree of validity, the first five

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<sup>9</sup>Skolnick, op. cit., pp. 101-105.

<sup>10</sup>J.A.C. Brown, Techniques of Persuasion (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 25.

<sup>11</sup>Kenneth Keniston, "The Sources of Student Dissent", Journal of Social Issues, (July, 1967), vol. 23, p. 108.

<sup>12</sup>Joseph Katz, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

have been categorically disavowed.<sup>13</sup> There has also been some understandable confusion caused by a 1967 article by James Trent and Judith Craise which claims that only 9% of the student population could be considered protesters and thus that protest was a devent activity which occurred "disproportionately often at select institutions of high quality". Since this profile is based on data from a 1963 questionnaire in 16 communities which are not representative "in the sense of being a statistically representative sample of that age group", and, since some of the respondents entered college in 1959, it is hardly applicable to a discussion of the television generation though it has been referred to in most other descriptions which are applicable.<sup>14</sup> Joseph Scott and Mohamed El-Assal went to extensive trouble to discover that protest movements were related to the size of the university. They also make the assertion that complexity is also related to the student activism. However, in view of the fact that complexity and size are interrelated this does not seem to be an independent or even an intervening factor. This finding can hardly be viewed as unusual since the mere statistical probability of finding activists and protest increases with the numerical group size and, hence, the university size.<sup>15</sup> David Wesby and Richard Braugart discovered in a study of Young Americans for Freedom and

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<sup>13</sup>Richard Flacks, op. cit., pp. 54, 55, 59; Keniston, op. cit., pp. 121-131.

<sup>14</sup>James Trent and Judith Craise, "Commitment and Conformity in the American College", Journal of Social Issues, (July, 1967), vol. 23, pp. 34-51.

<sup>15</sup>Joseph Scott and Mohamed El-Assal, "Multiversity, University Size, University Quality and Student Protest: An Empirical Study", American Sociological Review, (October, 1969), vol. 34, pp. 702-710.

SENSE (Student for Peace) in an unnamed (presumably Pennsylvania State) university in the East that the students generally followed the direction of their parents' ideological attitudes and that the Democrats had nearly twice the family income of the Republicans. This is hardly surprising to find in Pennsylvania, in spite of the extremely small sample size which make this study unrepresentative (28 SENSE members and 17 Y. A. F. members). However, to suggest that this survey of one demonstration in April, 1965, at one university is indicative of the whole of the generation is hardly tenable.<sup>16</sup> Seymore Lipset not only accepts these studies but attempts to generalize about the university activists from additional studies at Berkley, Columbia, and University of Wisconsin. Not surprisingly, he concludes that upper-middle class, liberal Jews in maternally dominated families are the activists.<sup>17</sup> If one were to survey the entire population of these universities one might discover the same characteristics since all of them are in liberal areas, all have high fees, all are selective in admission, and, it is not unlikely, that the mothers of those of this generation work while their children are in college (which is not the same as maternal domination, though Lipset glosses over it). By the same token, it is not surprising that Flacks found these same characteristics at the University of Chicago, which is the same sort of environment.<sup>18</sup> Since it is not true that

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<sup>16</sup>David Wesby and Richard Braungart, "Class and Politics in the Family Backgrounds of Student Political Activists", American Sociological Review, (April, 1966) vol. 3, pp. 690-692.

<sup>17</sup>Seymore Lipset, "The Activists: A Profile", The Public Interest, (Fall, 1968), no. 13, pp. 39-51.

<sup>18</sup>Flacks, op. cit.

protest is characteristic of only a few of the highest quality schools<sup>19</sup> and, since the values are not found only in protesters or activists,<sup>20</sup> I shall discuss the values found in these studies, if not the characterization of the group background, as trends indicative of the television generation.

Keniston divides the stereotype protester into two non-stereotypic groups: the activist, and the culturally alienated. The activist protests because of injustices, usually to others, but is non-ideological. He is living the values his parents professed rather than rebelling. He is committed to the ideals of American life and to the value of participation.

One of these ideals is, of course, a belief in the desirability of political and social action...To be sure, a belief in the value and efficacy of political action is not equivalent to endorsement of prevalent political institutions or forms of action. Thus one characteristic of activists is their search for new forms of social action, protest and political organization that will be more effective and less oppressive than traditional political institutions.<sup>21</sup>

The culturally alienated, on the other hand, is not committed to ideals, is not likely to accept his parents' values, and does not frequently or actively protest but rather 'drops out' from the culture.

These are not the cultural rejects that are frequently portrayed as activists and alienated students. Rather, they are talented, usually productive, healthy (mentally), advantaged, and educated.<sup>22</sup> The main value themes which characterize the student movement are: romanticism,

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<sup>19</sup>Scott, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Keniston, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>21</sup>ibid., p. 112.

<sup>22</sup>ibid.

anti-authoritarianism, egalitarianism (populism), anti-dogmatism, moral purity, and community.<sup>23</sup> The values that were held in the 1950s and are held by those who differentiate themselves from the student movement are a general commitment to career, family, status, and the pursuit of a degree as the preparation for an already chosen job (which generally precludes graduate study). These students were not generally brought up in the permissive and egalitarian family style which characterizes the activists. The prevailing characteristics of both the activist and the alienated students—which is not characteristic of those who have different values—is the passionate search, the involvement. The activist searches for remedies to social and political injustices, the alienated searches for intensified subjectivity, and many alternate between the two extremes.<sup>24</sup>

As a group, activists seem to possess an unusual capacity for nurturant identification—that is, for empathy and sympathy with the underdog, the oppressed and the needy.<sup>25</sup>

Several factors help explain this sensitivity to world events. For one, modern means of communication make the historical world more psychologically 'available' to youth. Students today are exposed to world events and world trends with a speed and intensity that has no historical precedent... Finally, this broadening of empathy is, I believe, part of a general modern trend toward the internalization of identity. Hastened by modern communications and consolidated by the world-wide threat of nuclear warfare, this trend involves, in vanguard groups in many nations, a loosening of parochial and national allegiances in favor of a more inclusive sense of affinity

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<sup>23</sup>Flacks, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

<sup>24</sup>Keniston, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>25</sup>ibid., p. 120.

with one's peers (and non-peers) from all nations. In this respect, American student activists are both participants and leaders in the reorganization of psychological identity and ideology that is gradually emerging from the unique historical conditions of the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup>

This is, however, not meeting with eager acceptance from the non-television generations or from those of the television generation who usually do not participate in the mixed media environments. Rather, it is meeting hostility and polarization from those who do not understand the motives, the values, or the tactics of sensitive, egalitarian participation.<sup>27</sup> The suppressive tactics used in some cases of confrontation and the polarization of the society cannot be counted on to decrease the movement toward involvement.<sup>28</sup> In the case of Columbia and probably in many more instances these tactics served to radicalize larger numbers of the population.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, it appears the American people are rapidly on the road to some sort of revolution. The television generation is prepared to make real the old American myths of participation, democracy, individualism, self-direction, and communication. The television environment has equipped them to do this with pervasive technology. The American system is being daily forced to confront the impact of myth with reality and the American public is taking sides and assigning priorities. While the culture is struggling to adjust to its new technology, while the people are learning

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<sup>26</sup>ibid., p. 130.

<sup>27</sup>Skolnick, op. cit., pp. 241-268.

<sup>28</sup>Keniston, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>29</sup>Daniel Bell, "Columbia and the New Left", The Public Interest, (Fall, 1968), no. 13, pp. 61-101.

to use their new extension, while the Electronic Blues demand attention, a new form of the American Dream is being transmitted.

Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself in all cases, as the ages and generation which preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Thomas Paine, Rights of Man (Part One: Of the Limits of Constitutional Law, February, 1791).



# THE GREAT MANDELLA

So I told him that he'd better  
 shut his mouth and do his job like a man  
 And he answered listen father  
 I will never kill another  
 He thinks he's better than his brother that died  
 What the hell does he think he's doing  
 to his father who brought him up right

Take your place on the Great Mandella  
 As it moves through your brief moment of time  
 Win or lose now, you must choose now  
 And if you lose, you're only losing your life

Tell the jailor not to bother  
 with his meal of bread and water today  
 He is fasting till the killing's over  
 but he's a coward, he's just playing a game  
 He can't do it, he can't change it  
 Its been going on for ten thousand years

Take your place on the Great Mandella  
 As it moves through your brief moment of time  
 Win or lose now, you must choose now  
 And if you lose, you're only losing your life

Tell the people they are safe now  
 hunger stopped him, he lies still in his cell  
 Death has died his accusations  
 We are free now, we can kill now, we can hate now  
 Now we can end the world  
 We're not guilty, he was crazy  
 And its been going on for ten thousand years

Take your place on the Great Mandella  
 As it moves through your brief moment of time  
 Win or lose now, you must choose now  
 And if you lose, you're only losing your life.

——Peter Yarrow

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ELECTRONIC BLUES:  
A Study of Environmental Media Effects and Their Political Implications

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

To Marshall McLuhan the advent of the electronic technology is the most radical environmental change since the advent of the Guttenberg press and it's movable type. The electronic media require a re-ordering of our senses and with this a reinterpretation of our world. We are faced with a mosaic impression from which we are to draw our meanings. No longer is the individual able to be self-sufficient; his job is part of a new technology which neither allows him the spirit of creation with inception nor the spirit of accomplishment with completion. We have all become specialists, qualified to discover in part but only guessing to make whole.

Our society has the same mosaic impressionism as our media. There is a generation gap. There is an economic gap. There is an educational gap. There is a cultural gap. There is an information gap. There is a racial gap. It is the gap which our minds have come to fill in from our knowledge of what lies on each side (or our lack of knowledge of what lies on either side), for that is the medium within which we have come to find ourselves. From the mosaic that is the pattern of our lives we have come to extract the meaning that was once plainly printed on the page before us with carefully plotted logic. From the vast and continual bombardment of information, we have come to select networks of news. From the masses of humanity surrounding us we have come to form systems of relationships. Our media reflect our life-styles and we in our life-styles reflect our media. It is because of this mirroring and imitation that the media is of interest; how it works, why it works, for whom it works, and what it means. We have long been preoccupied

with the messages in our information; whether they are effective, what they mean, if they are received, who listens to which ones. But to focus upon the content of the media, to deal with the message alone, is to describe history in terms of today's events alone, to view society in terms of the isolated family, to see economics as the bank balance, or to define the world as Hometown. If we are to understand communications we must broaden our horizon from the concerns of which messages are transmitted to which media are transmitting. The form of the communication process rather than the content is the lasting imprint which changes the environment. We have created technology and that technology is in the process of changing us. It is time we deal with it, learn about it, and consider its effect upon us. It is time we study the electronic blues.

This thesis is a survey of the information available on the political implications of the media. After defining the media in chapter two, I shall draw from McLuhan the thoughts on why the media work, then turn in chapter four to specific examinations of media impact on political institutions with emphasis on the presidency. Finally, I shall deal with the cultural shock of the present state of electronic blues and attempt to project the form of the future politics from the present evidences of sensual re-ordering.