REPORT OF THE AUSTRALIAN VIDEO ACCESS PROJECT

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On the premise of an evaluation

The Film and Television Board of the Australian Council for the Arts has invited me to participate, along with Professor Fred Emery and Bruce Abrahams, from the Centre for Continuing Education at the Australian National University, in a "project panel to advise on the rationalisation of the video centres". The terms of reference of this panel are:

1) to assess the degree of mutual involvement of each video centre with its local (or specialised) community
2) to recommend on the appropriate manner of increasing the level of local involvement in the policy, practise funding and management of each centre
3) to recommend on any desirable degree of rationalisation of the centres

Now I firmly believe that the most effective, and most accurate of evaluations must be done by the participants or stakeholders in a project, although this process can be catalysed and encouraged by outsiders. So as Bruce and I travelled to each of the video centres and spoke with centre staff, users, Board members, the Australian Film Institute members, we attempted to generate self-evaluations on these various levels and to seek to discover a consensus. It is within this context that our reports are written.

The Challenge for Change ethic

Now I also believe that a report has some of the characteristics of a film or videotape: people lend their voices and their information, which are then incorporated into a document prepared by a third person. And just as the basic ethic in Challenge for Change is to elaborate the document with the participation of the subjects,

and to present a final document that has been agreed upon by the subjects, so my ethic in- preparing this report has been to elaborate it in full and open communication with the video centres, the API, and the Board, and to respond to my ethical obligation to return the material to the people who helped me compile it.

the word "rationalise"

Since the word "rationalise" was used, I looked it up in the dictionary:

> "to rationalise: to use and rely on reason in forming a theory".
> "reason: reason comprises conception, judgement, reasoning and the intuitional faculty".

In proceeding with our work over the preceding five weeks, we have done our utmost to utilise those faculties.

On the design and initiation of the Video Access Centres

The philosophical basis upon which the Film and Television Board based their commitment to the centres has been admirably expressed in a document entitled "Community Access Video Centres — Interim Policy and Operational Statement", dated May 10, 1974.

1. Objective
   To support, or encourage social interaction and community development, using "Community Access Video" as a catalyst and as a creative sociological resource.

2. General
   It is the hope of the Film and Television Board and the Australian Film Institute that the Video Access Centres will stimulate awareness and involvement will increase.

3. The Centres
   Each Centre will be conducted as autonomously as possible through the Australian Film Institute according to principles established by the Film and Television Board of the Australian Council for the Arts. This autonomous and independent status is vital to the success of the centres. They should not be part of a rigid, formal structure; rather they should blend into and be of service to the community in which they operate.

Ideally, the community will soon recognise and accept the Video Access Centres as a community resource.

4. Director
The "Centre Director" will be totally responsible for the day to day operation of the centre.
An important function of the Director will be to animate and activate the community towards the use of video as an agent of social change.

5. Access
The facilities of the centres will be made available without bias or prejudice to any group or individual in the specified community.

good design and good personnel

The Film and Television Board must be highly commended for their bold recognition of the potential and possibilities of community use of video, and for their creative and energetic action in making the potential a reality. The design of the scheme is basically sound, and the areas selected, with the collaboration of the Department of Urban and Regional Development in the case of five of them, offer a broad opportunity to learn about the practice of community video in a variety of social, environmental and cultural situations.

The key personnel, the Centre Directors, were selected by a panel of Board and AFI Members with great skill and perception. They were chosen for their community experience and talents, more so than for their media skills, so that they have very rapidly become experts in the community use of media, and a valuable resource to their communities. The meetings we had with centre users reaffirmed this time and again.

what about an invitation from the community?

How it could be theoretically argued that it is rather odd to plonk down a video centre where no one has asked for it. But in fact, if citizens have never heard of the community use of video, they can't very well ask for it. So it is perfectly justified to establish centres in potential areas, if one is convinced of the importance of community participation in the media as a vital factor in a healthy

democracy. The key factor in this process is the skill of the director in working quietly and sensitively to draw people individually and in groups to the use of video or other media, without being an imposition. This the centre directors have done with quiet strength and sensitivity.

the question of scale

It could also be argued that starting out with twelve video access centres (including two that have an artistic and technical resource function as well), was taking on rather a lot to start with. A combination of circumstances, including the collaboration with DURD, was the reason for going beyond the initial plan of five.
Yet, the Video Access Project has worked well in each centre, and has offered a wide diversity of experience that would not otherwise have been attained, so that within less than a year, Australians are able to learn very broadly from the experience. The fact that twelve communities in Australia have integrated video access centres into their daily lives and have expressed strong interest in their continuation carries considerable weight. The Project as a whole has become greater than the sum of its parts.

but is it Australian?

Although the Video Access Project was inspired by the Canadian Challenge for Change experience, and has integrated the important ethic of the right of the person on the screen to see her/himself and approve the editing, the plan has been well adapted to the Australian situation. Having learned what was useful from the Canadian experience, they went on to design a project that could fit usefully into the Australian social fabric, and indeed into the specific locality. The proof of that is in the fact that, if the centres were "grafted" onto the body politic of their communities, the operation has taken nicely, and none of them has been rejected.

the support structures

The past nine months of operations have been a learning experience on a number of different levels. The communication, administration and support structures of the Film and Television Board and the Australian Film Institute have passed through phases of change

and growing pains since the centres were established. There is need to tidy them up. The whole question of management structures will be broached later in this report.

on the need for commitment to long-term continuity

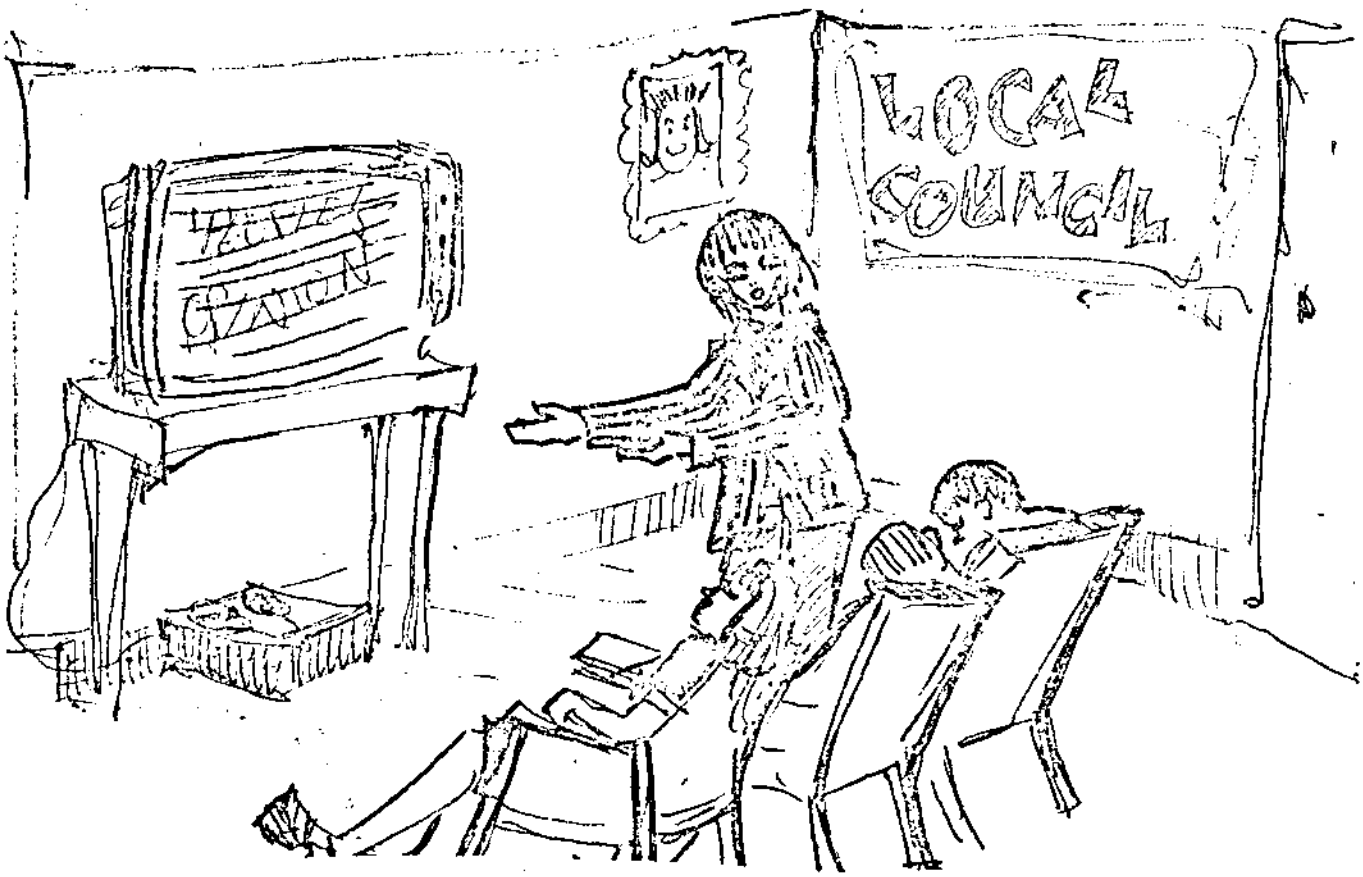
Although I have affirmed the basic health of the video centres in their communities, it is important to underline that they are still at the beginning of the potential in their respective areas, and cannot be considered long-established after nine months. It is of the utmost importance that the funding agencies be committed to long-term funding for at least an initial period of the first three years. Some centres in some communities may never be self-sustaining. Most will always need a certain amount of outside funding.

The responsibility to the communities and to the centres on the part of the initiators and funding agencies is very important. Over the next two years the centres will be making every effort to obtain supplementary and alternative funding and support from local, state and federal sources, and to establish management committees on a local level. But this process must proceed at a pace adapted to the individual community, and cannot be rushed without jeopardising the project.

on the locations of the centres

These are Brisbane; Sydney: Paddington - resource and access, Blacktown, Parramatta, Fairfield and Green Valley; Melbourne: Carlton -resource and access, Footscray and Altona; Whyalla Adelaide; Fremantle/Perth.

Both the centre directors and the users have given considerable thought to the effects moving would have on the current activities of the community. They were unanimous - and in fact adamant - that the centres should not be moved from their present locations, and that harmful social disruption would be likely to occur at a time when the video process is integrated in the community. The centres have grown to be meeting places and a physical focus for much of the social activity in their areas, and this important function will continue to grow.



on the activities of the centres

At each centre we met lengthily with centre staff and participated in meetings with a cross-section of users.
We were impressed with the wide variety of activities and styles that characterised the different centres. Each was responding to the real needs of their localities as they emerged. We were also impressed with the respect and admiration the users had for the centre directors.
Throughout the centres there were certain kinds of activity that kept recurring.

resident action groups and environmental groups

These ranged from embryonic community developmental groups trying to help people identify their needs, their strengths, and their common bonds, to highly organised anti-freeway groups, or the group in Balmain fighting container trucks, who made an appointment with the Minister for Transport to show him their tape at the airport. There are too many kinds of activities to enumerate here. There were groups fighting for community centres, or leisure centres for children, and there were groups fighting against environmental pollution. Some environmental groups are trying to discover which media are most appropriate - videotape, slides, super 8 or multi-media package. They are showing their tapes to city councils, state bodies or wherever it is appropriate to obtain action.

A number of activities have been carried out by tenants unions within housing commission estates, and in some cases they are obtaining their own equipment.

community radio or university radio

A number of radio groups have gravitated to the centres as an appropriate place to work with like-minded people.

city councils, public libraries and community arts centres

City councils, some of whom were hostile to the centres at the beginning, have come to appreciate the possibilities of improving their communications with the citizens. One council, that has responded very well to tapes made by citizens, has a permanent monitor in the council chambers. Other councils also have responded favourably to video petitions, and others have learned to use video as a powerful tool in encouraging citizen participation in the community planning process. They are also looking at practical aspects like a tourism tape for the local tourist information booth. Some city councils are enthusiastic enough to be willing to offer such things as low-rent accommodation for the centre in the future.

Some community arts centres have also been engaged in mutual collaboration with the centres. These will probably grow in the future in many places.

Public libraries have become involved in many of the centres. Some have made tapes, explaining the library's services, to be played in the library or in other public places. Some have bought their own equipment, and give access to the public when the centre is short on its equipment. The advice of centre directors has been invaluable to the libraries.

historical societies and local festivals

The participation of centres in local festivals has considerably enhanced the festivities on many occasions, and given a broad spectrum of the community an occasion to see or handle video gear, as well as creating a record of the event.

Historical societies have learned to use the equipment, or have asked for help from the centre staff, and have made records of local history and old historical buildings that are already a precious record in the community, and will be used in classes in local schools as well. These are an interesting element in the development of a community identity.

health commission, AAP and DURD

In New South Wales the health commission staff have been working closely as a team with the centres. In some cases they have initially used centre equipment, but have then bought their own equipment, and continue to collaborate closely with the centres.

They have used video in many ways as a tool for getting people together, as a tool in group therapy (here the need for confidentiality of tapes is particularly obvious), as information for migrants, and as a way of educating doctors about the migrant experience. They have helped people make tapes to lobby - in Canberra, or in other centres of power.

Local Australian Assistance Plan councils or staff have been involved in the centres, and would like to be more so. Here one of the problems is that they are so busy, they really need a crew to shoot the tapes they need. In other areas, a drop-in centre that

was founded and supported through people working in the centre is to be funded by the AAP. In the future I believe the centres will become even more of a resource to the AAP, and the AAP will become more of a resource to the centres.

Local DURD committees have often been meeting in centre meeting rooms, and have found the centres useful and effective in the community development process with the citizens in the DURD regions. I believe more will also grow out of this collaboration as well. Already the tapes made at DURD seminars on child care, employment and transportation are being used extensively with groups of citizens throughout the region as a source of information.

trade unions and industry

A certain number of trade unions are using video equipment, for uses as varied as information tapes in a union-community health centre, training for shopstewards' classes, to opening unions to other issues, like inflation, housing, or taping a DURD seminar, or discussing democracy on the shop floor.

In many areas local industry representatives, who have video equipment, are anxious to share their resources in return for expert advice from the centres, or as an exercise in public relations or participation in local affairs.

personal or sporting activities

With the centre doors flung wide open to access, football leagues and judo clubs flocked to the equipment, and have tremendously enjoyed playing back the football match in the local club. Families have made home movies, and people have generally played with the equipment. These are activities about which the centres have mixed feelings. On the one hand, they demystify the media, give pleasure and self-confidence, and can lead briefly to more serious use in a community issue. On the other hand, when there is heavy pressure on the amount of equipment available, it has seemed more sensible to give the games low priority. Once that decision has been communicated to the football clubs, they have agreed to it with no further problems. It would be nice if the clubs eventually bought their own equipment, and then lent it to the citizen groups when the equipment was available.

political use

Most of the centres have shied away from political use of the equipment. One centre did make a five-minute tape on each candidate in a municipal election, but they were not used effectively by the candidates, and all the other centres have not allowed electioneering with the equipment, although they will lend it if a political group wants to explore a social issue. One centre has a particularly strong policy on "no electioneering and no blue movies".

women

Although the vast majority of the users overall have been men, women have used video with great effectiveness. A women's health centre and refuge was conceived by a group of women using video, and they proceeded to use video to make their case and obtain the financial backing for the project. Other women's centres have also grown out of the use of video, women's media groups have arisen, day care centres have been obtained, and self-help groups have found video a valuable tool.

aboriginals and other black groups

A number of black groups have been using the centres. In one case a grant from the Aboriginal Arts Board has allowed a full-time staff person to work with video in her region, with great imagination and effect. For instance, a tape of a football match where the black team won over a white team has been used to build self-confidence among the black community. In other places special work has been done with an aboriginal centre, and in others blacks have used centres to make tapes about their people.

In this area there is a strong need for special project budgets to cover costs of teams moving between urban and rural communities, in order to use video as a positive link between the people, and build up more solid networks of mutual support. There is a need to adapt all the equipment to run entirely on batteries, or off a van generator, so that tapes can be shown in places where there is no electricity.

I heard some superb songs written and sung by blacks, and admirably expressing the pains and dilemmas of a people. These should be distributed through a network, or used as a base for videotapes or slide shows as a consciousness-raising tool.

Although there in a great deal to be done, it needs to be built at the pace of the people who are presently involved in this type of project, and not imposed as a massive project. There is enough real experience already on which to base future projects. The important thing would be for sources of funding to make themselves known, and distribute this knowledge widely throughout the centres.

schools

Schools are places that have almost universally been catalysed by the video centres. In some cases the schools did not have video equipment, but after pupils or teachers had become actively involved in making tapes, the schools have found the process valuable enough to buy their own equipment. In other cases the schools owned equipment, but were afraid to use it: the mystique of the "professional". Then, after pupils, teachers or school media consultants had used centre equipment, they were confident enough to be able to ask for and use their own equipment. Sometimes the pupils have learned video in the centre, and then gone back to their schools to teach the teachers.

The importance of an active use of video in making tapes as a part of the educational process cannot be under-estimated. Too many schools are being sold video as a passive teaching tool - send them a tape designed to fit the curriculum, and set the kids down in front of it, and have them listen passively. That does indeed perform a useful function in transmitting information, but is far less exciting than the creative possibilities that are unleashed in the young when they get their hands on video equipment. Some of the most amusing, and the most poignant of videotapes are made by young people between the ages of 10 and 17.
This fact is being recognised by departments of education, and one of the jobs the centre staff have had to perform lately is to help design pilot programs that will allow schools and departments of education to knowledgeably develop their own video capacities. Hopefully, this will be like casting bread upon the waters, as in subsequent years schools begin to open their doors and equipment cupboards to members of the community.

schools and the community

Many schools are using video as a means to reach out into their communities, and to develop responsible use of video in social interaction. In one institute of technology film and television course, the students are being taught "reportage" in the community, by learning how to find out what the people want to see reported, and by sharing editorial control with the people. If this idea spreads we might have a whole new approach to journalism within a few years!

In at least one school of social work, students are being sent out with video as part of their community development course, and are using their own presence and the video to catalyse action. At first they simply served to bring people together, as they played with the video, in a group of housing commission flats. Soon the people built up confidence, as they saw themselves better, and learned what they could cope with TV. Armed with new self-confidence, they decided they needed an adventure playground and a drop-in centre for the young people, and they used videotape as part of their petition to get action. They got rapid results, and proceeded to tape the construction of the adventure playground, and the delight of the kids in its use. Subsequently tenant unions from other areas, have come to them for advice, and the technique is spreading to other flats. The final step in this process occurred when the residents brought their tape to the social work class to demonstrate the process and the action. This is one example among hundreds of useful interaction between schools and the community.

Another example is a group of secondary school students who are producing a set of materials demonstrating social processes for the Social Education Materials Program.

the problem with the schools

The major problem in the middle of all this excitement is that the schools could easily use up all the time of the three meagre portapac video outfits in each centre. Most centres have had to ration use of the equipment by schools. This has been accepted with good grace, but the sooner the schools have developed functional training for teachers and students, and have acquired their own equipment, the sooner they will be able to work with the centres mostly on the level of exchanging ideas, or extending facilities further out into the community.

migrants

The schools have been a good medium through which to reach the migrant communities. When children make tapes and then take them home to show them to their parents, an important method for dialogue with newly arrived Australians begins to evolve. This has been successful in a number of different centres.

As mentioned previously, health tapes made in a number of different languages are being used to reach migrant groups, and these have been followed by tapes about other problems migrants need to deal with.

Many already organised migrant groups have found their way to the centres, and are using videotape to help their fellows in whatever way they can.

Video can be an ideal tool to help newcomers understand their new country and learn how to use its resources, as it is relatively easy to dub a sound track in any language.

Migrants can also make a tape in their own language, and have a dub made in English, if they wish to express themselves to the appropriate government body.

Youth

Outside of the school system, youth councils or just roving bands of young people have used the centres with great imagination. In some of the areas with no services for young people whatsoever, like Sydney's western suburbs, video, along with young people and their adult supporters, could break through the barriers leading to solutions. Tape exchanges could help this process along.

On process and product

In come of the cases cited in the preceding pages a video product will be finished that is of such quality, technically or conceptually, that it can be distributed far and wide, and the finished product becomes a document with a life of its own, beyond the people who have made the tape for their own purposes.

In many other cases the process of discovery and human or organisational development that the video has catalysed will be the principal reason for the exercise, and it would waste the time of the people involved to try to make a finished tape that can be distributed elsewhere.
Because the centre directors were hired for their knowledge and respect for social processes, they have encouraged users to follow their own processes, rather than pushing for finished product. The important thing is to be able to counsel people in identifying their real needs with regard to what video can offer them. As time goes on there will be more and more people capable of making really excellent tapes, but it will still be important to put the access on process, rather than becoming mini production centres. It would be a disaster if people were pushed to product, to the detriment of social process.

a first glance at distribution

At Challenge for Change we try to use the word "utilisation", rather than "distribution", because then the accent is on the effect the tape has on the people who see it, and not on the mere quantities of viewers. We feel that one small group of people who act on what they have seen is a more valuable audience than a large group of people who neither discuss nor act on the information they have received.

Unfortunately, or fortunately as the case may be, it takes just as much work to get a tape seen as to make it in the first place. Once people know this, they will start planning the utilisation before they take the first shot.

target your audience

First, you decide on your target audience. Is it the people on the street, all the people interested in pollution in your area, the principal of your school, the city council, the head of the housing commission, a Minister in Canberra? Keep in mind who you are aiming at while you are making the tape. The tape may incidentally be useful with other audiences at a later stage, or it may be incorporated into a different tape for another audience, but basically it has to be made with a clear audience in mind. And incidentally, make it short as possible.

Then you have to invite your audience to see your tape (and here the pleasant meeting rooms of the video centres are a great advantage). If it is the people in your street, you can print a leaflet and you and your friends can distribute it door to door. If it is people over a larger area, perhaps you still use leaflets, or you put posters all over public areas, or you advertise in the paper or get a public announcement on the radio. Make it clear what it is all about so you attract people to your event. Get word of mouth going.

If it is the city council, or the principal of your school, make arrangements well in advance to put you and your videotape on the agenda, or ask him if you can bring the tape to his office. Make it clear what it is you are trying to do.

If it is a Minister in Canberra, perhaps you can get help from the department people locally, and perhaps you will just have to go direct (especially if you are fighting the local department people).

Follow up the screening of the tape with some concrete proposals that can be acted upon, and try to lead a discussion that can move towards action. If the tape is to be used for consciousness raising, try to help the discussion along.

Once people have gained some experience in stimulating and organising tape utilisation, they will have gained a valuable skill, and will have a lot of fun doing it, too.

create networks

Sometimes tapes are about a subject that other areas of the country are concerned about. If a tape isn't too badly shot, or lit, or edited, or if the sound isn't too bad, then perhaps a tape can be of help to other people. Often the addition of commentary here and there can make a big difference to an outside audience. And if you have had any results from showing your tape, then for heaven's sake tell people about it in a commentary or supplementary sequence at the end. Then a central tape distribution library with a comprehensive and widely distributed catalogue can be invaluable. This question will come up in a later section.

broadcast

After close circuit utilisation of tapes, and putting them in a tape exchange network there is sometimes need to reach a mass audience in the community with a message. Thoughts naturally turn to broadcast.

First, it must be noted that if you want to broadcast a tape, and therefore you won't be sitting with the audience to answer questions and discuss the tape, that the production qualities and the clarity of a tape have to be much higher. It has to be comprehensible and attract attention from an audience that has never heard of you and isn't particularly interested in doing so. And from an audience that is used to the quick slickness of the mass media. Deadly hours of boring conversation do not rate well with an audience that after all does expect to be entertained by the boob-tube. It takes a lot more effort and skill to prepare a tape for broadcast to a mass audience than it does to prepare a tape for discussion at a meeting, even a group that uses tape regularly will probably only occasionally want to try to reach a mass audience. But then it may be very important that they reach a mass audience. How can they go about it?

your local broadcast station?

Don't laugh. In Canada, as more and more citizens had access to half-inch video and to cable television, more and more of the local broadcast stations have invited people to come and tell their stories in their own way, or to make a tape about their situation. This is growing piece-meal, and in far from universal, but nonetheless, it is a hopeful sign that local broadcasters are

beginning to trust their constituents. So why not take your best-made tape, and trundle off to your local TV station, and convince them of their interest in showing the tape. After all, you can't lose anything, and if you go in as diplomatically as you can, you may get somewhere. If you go in saying, "All right, dammit, why aren't you guys going to broadcast our tape?!" I have no doubt what the results will be.

Parenthesis on the Canadian cable experience

1) Cable stations opened their studios to real-time programming on their community channel. (The community was cabled because people wanted to receive the Canadian or American broadcast stations being cablecast over the other channels). It was first-come, first-serve, almost no censorship. Little or no support was given for portable equipment, so people were constrained to studios.

Results: it was crashingly boring, and seldom watched. Most groups into changing their communities wouldn't even use it. Just occasionally, after making a tremendous effort on radio and the papers to drawn an audience, they generated some interesting phone-in discussions live on cable, after a well-made tape on the situation had been shown. This happened often enough to prove it was possible, but seldom enough to prove how much work it was.

2) Video access groups committed themselves to an hour or three a week, in a regular time slot, over the community cable channel.

And instantly, they became so involved in preparing good tapes for the cable channel that they no longer had the time or equipment to help people use video as a process in their communities. It took from four to six staff people a full week to prepare a good selection of community programs. They got extremely good at. it, and some of the most entertaining and informative TV I have ever seen was made by a cable access group of that kind. But they had less and less time for the citizens in their community, and could no longer teach them or help them. They lost their support. Some groups closed down completely. Others, when they realised what was happening, rescinded their commitments to regular cable programming, and went back to helping their communities. Then, when a mass audience program was needed by the community people, they were invaluable in helping make the kind of production that would attract attention and reach a wide audience.

3) Quebec cable access groups have worked extremely well. And that is for the very simple reason that teams of highly skilled community organisers (social animators, in Quebec language) spent a good year organising the community, including all its various factions, into the kind of good solid community board committed to the responsibility of making the community channel work. It was a massive organisational job, and it happened independently in towns big and small in Quebec, and has been very successful. In St. Jerome, a similar organisation, covering all the factions in a city of 35,000 people, has been put together to run a low-power broadcast station using half-inch video equipment. Budgets, a mixture of federal, provincial and local funding, have been ample to hire the staff required to organise, as well as produce programs or help citizens with production. Unless this kind of effort can be made, extreme caution should be used before throwing fledgling video groups into the broadcast arena.

travelling broadcast van

It is with these lessons in mind that the idea of a travelling van with low-power broadcast transmitter should be explored. There is indeed a great need for citizens to reach a mass audience, and a low-power transmitter is ideal. For one thing, it costs much less than cable does to install. For another it can go out to the poor, who couldn't afford cable even if it was in their neighbourhood (which it probably isn't). And thirdly, it is ideally suited to rural and semi-rural communities (where word-of-mouth will probably generate a quick audience, too).

Since there is a proposal for a travelling broadcast van in the wind, I suggest that it be encouraged to explore the kind of relationship it could build up with communities. Should it try to do regular weekly broadcasts from various Sydney suburbs? Or shouldn't it rather explore travelling more broadly, going to rural areas, being on demand to video centres and other communities. There is so much to explore and discover, and it is very important experimental work that needs to be done. But I do suggest caution, because broadcasting can be a heavy weight on the communities it purports to serve. Extraordinary sensitivity and commitment will be required to make it a success. And the access centres, who will be interested in collaborating in the experiment, should have a large voice in its management.

on the centre directors and staff

All this activity has been generated, catalysed and encouraged by three portable video outfits that are constantly on the blink, one rather primitive editing system, a few odds and bods of more or less useful equipment items, a centre director, and some part-time staff. The staff's functions come under the following headings:

1) Book equipment and hand it out to people.
2) Send equipment in for repair, and keep a close eye on that rather depressing process.
3) Keep accounts and administration in order.
4) Train individuals and groups in the use of video.
5) Counsel individuals and groups in the potential use of video in their social situations.
6) Help users prepare proposals for support or funding from other agencies.
7) Arrange for production of tapes where a user group cannot make the tape itself. In some cases, where an event is of some importance, this means shooting a tape themselves.
8) Go out into the community and seek out potential users.
9) Find local support and local funding.
10) The unexpected.
11) And, oh yes, write monthly reports.

Now all of this has been carried on in each centre, at hours that have tended to be 10am to 10pm seven days a week, by one full-time director and one half-time staff person, according to the original budget. Recently, in view of the total impossibility of surviving at that rate, part-time assistants have mostly become full-time (they were working 50 or 60 hours a week anyway), and another part-time person has been added at some of the centres.

Unfortunately, the demands of the first four items and the eleventh have meant it has been difficult, from the beginning, for the directors to spend enough time on the other items. Now however, the users are becoming more and more vocal in their demands for help on items five to ten, and the directors have learned that their talents would be best appreciated in that way. This change has occurred over the last few months, but it has meant consciously cutting down time on the first four items and the eleventh. If a new and functional system of repair and maintenance is started

as opposed to the rather incompetent and unenthusiastic Sony repair system) time will be saved and nerves soothed. Equipment breakdowns are constant with an access type program, and Sony has been known to send equipment back in the same shape it went to them, Unuseable. Some centres went for weeks with no functioning portapaks at all. Some solutions to that are proposed in the section on resource centres.

In spite of the difficulties, the staff are an extraordinary lot - both loved and respected by the users in the community; they have good judgment and warm human skills. We were impressed with them.

On the need for more staff

Obviously, there is need for enough staff to run the centres properly and to their full potential. This would require at least three full-time people, including the director, and a good part-time budget for hiring people on contract for a specific purpose. Some centres might want to arrange things in other ways, like one or two full-time persons and more part-time people, and there should be flexibility in making those arrangements as long as the needs are being filled.

In-some cases the placing of a youth worker or social work student can ease the load on a centre, but this can hardly be counted upon.

volunteers

Some volunteers do work around the centres, and indeed are very useful, but the centre directors were unanimous in disliking the idea of exploiting people, especially as many volunteers are out of work themselves. If the paid staff is sufficient, then volunteers can come and work for the pleasure, but not because the centre can't survive without them.

On the other resources needed for a centre
staff development – travel

Because of the intensity of the job, it is physically exhausting, even though it is intensely interesting. Every effort should be made to encourage centre directors or staff to refresh themselves by visiting other centres, or travelling out and doing workshop in neighbouring regions when the occasion permits, and this activity

should be budgeted for. It is an important part of staff education as well, for they will learn a good deal when visiting other areas, and will offer a good deal as well. (We have been doing this for years in Challenge for Change, and it has paid off handsomely in highly skilled people. We have a high travel budget, and it is one of our most respected investments) On the few occasions over the past nine months where centre directors have visited each ether, both the visitor and the visited have expressed strong enthusiasm for the process.

further training for users – travel

In many cases a user could learn more from travelling to another centre where people are further developed in the social activity she/he is interested in, than if a centre director spent full time for a month with her/him. Direct contact and experience cannot be replaced by a tape exchange, although both can be useful. It is important to have funds to support this. (Again, Challenge for Change has paid travel expenses for many users who needed to learn from people in other parts of the country, and I've never even heard of a case of abuse of this resource).

comment on the design of workshops

Workshops for the centres should be organised closely with the directors, and correspond to their needs and time factors. A technical and production workshop put on by Paddington Resource and the Film and TV School, which had been requested and badly needed for some months, had many attendant on the fact the workshop had been organised without direct collaboration with the centres. The people from the centres learned a good deal from the workshops, and they were sorely needed, but a comment I heard was, "You know, I think we have something to give the teachers, as well as get from them, but they're not interested."

Equipment

All the centres need more equipment than they have. Each does not necessarily need the same amount and it is important that each centre put in its needs separately, so the equipment needs will be filled with precision. In some cases they may be able to turn in little used items in order to add to a more useable stock. Certainly

equipment purchase and modification need to be decided entirely on needs of the centres, and not as it has been up to now, with little consultation.

other media

Many of the centres, or most of them, have been asked by users to provide other types of media equipment: typewriters, printing equipment, photographic equipment, sound recording equipment, etc. It is perfectly natural that people who are preparing a poster to advertise their video screening should want to be able to print it, or those preparing a leaflet to want to type it. In some cases they should do print or radio instead of video. In terms of usage, the media are intricately linked, and it is important to take this into consideration. In some areas the local arts centre can provide some facilities, in others the student association, or information centre, or whatever. But in some cases it will be of the utmost importance that this type of service be supplied by the video centre. Budgets for these items should be elaborated according to need, and be met as far as possible.

Radio is also a medium that is on the verge of becoming very important to citizens in Australia. If the video/cum media centres can train people to make programs, it will make the process of radio access that much easier. In Canada a number of video groups either dropped video to concentrate on radio, or sprouted radio groups that eventually got radio licences and went off on their own. Citizen radio licences have developed all over Canada now, although it is still quite a new phenomenon. It is remarkably successful, and is fulfilling a real need. A video centre can be a good place for radio to grow from. As a matter of fact, one of the results of the citizens radio movement has been that the national and commercial stations have been more willing to buy or utilise programs made by citizens, and they often make them with equipment supplied by video centres.

local transportation

The situation concerning transportation within the centre area needs to be more fair. Some centre directors owned vans already, and they are paid a meagre mileage rate for use of their vehicles. Some centre directors own cars, and they are busily tearing up their upholstery and overloading their cars with equipment and people, for

the same meagre return. Other centre directors had a great deal of difficulty obtaining vehicles, and have had considerable hardship. Since most centres have a good deal of equipment and people transporting to do, it is urgent that a fair and just system be devised so that centre directors are not paying from their own pockets for this essential service.

telephones

Further to the item on staff development - travel, a large long-distance telephone budget will help the staff exchange ideas, and counsel and encourage each other.

Ideally, the Postmaster General could install free long-distance telephone lines for the centres, as his investment in the video access, concept. I am-sure that, in return, he would gain expert advice in the usage of such concepts as cable or other telecommunications.

On resources locally donated

It was observed that many centres have been lent or offered resources from their areas, and it is difficult to measure this in monetary terms. If an institution lends personnel or equipment, if the local cinema lends a cassette videorecorder, if someone does free printing for the centre, it is not easy to tally. Most of the centres are receiving resources of this kind, and this will probably go up as time goes on. In this respect, it must be said that Sony occasionally lends equipment to groups in need.

On the attitudes of users towards the management of the centres

a) Most centre users wanted to relate directly to a director who is responsible for the centre, although they are pleased to meet other users, and give mutual help where possible. On the whole they feel they are too busy using the possibilities of the centre and organizing in their own fields, and don't want to have the weight of management on their shoulders.
b) Some centre users are willing to help a director set priorities through, participation in an informal programming committee of users.
c) One group of centre users was interested in setting up a collective that would be responsible for the centre.

the time needed to move toward local control

On the whole, the centres would require another year and a half to two years to build toward a good, solid, healthy management committee run by local people. It would be a disaster to propose that these committees be set up too soon, because they need to grow at their own pace, and according to local need. If funding bodies insisted that local management committees, be instigated, they could probably be put together. But they would be paper organisations or cliques that would retard or prevent the continued healthy spread of the centres out into the community. I strongly urge that a "go slow and build solidly" motto be observed, for the sustained health of the video access centres.

On relations with other video centres

We asked all the centre directors if they had any relationships with other centres, if they wanted to have the, and why.

The response was an overwhelming yes. They felt that for their own personal and professional growth, they were able to learn enormously from other centres, and they wished to develop and expand these relationships, from the point of view of their own continuing education, and their effectiveness in helping their users.

a collective voice

They also felt that it is important, not only to expand personal and one-to-one interchanges between centres, but also to build a strong collective voice, so that the people involved in the video project can become responsible in the over-all project, and responsibly participate in management decisions. They want to participate in overall policy, and elaborate the needs to be met through a central resource facility. They have founded a Directors' meeting, that will debate fully the issues to be attended to, probably in quarterly meetings, and have elected representatives to speak for the directors as a whole. The question of a management committee will be pursued in a later section.

It is firmly recommended that the video access program be considered and funded as a whole, and that the centre directors participate in the management of the program.

On the centrally available resources needed by the centres

In order to provide a maximum number of resources for the centres for the least amount of expenditure, it is important to offer a certain number of resource facilities that can be drawn on as needed by the centres. These resource facilities will not overlap, but will be complementary, and are the most efficient way to provide the necessary services.

A number of different kinds of resources are needed by the centres. I have tried to break down these needs into feasible sections: Resource Centre: Carlton; Resource Centre: Paddington; Resource Person(s); Central Resource Budget. The needs listed here were elaborated by the centre directors, but correspond to the needs I would have guessed from my own experience.

Resource Centre; Carlton

distribution of videotapes

Carlton could house the central tape library.

1. People (whether attached to video centres or not) could send in master tapes. Films could also be transferred to tape.

2. They would also send in a good description of the tape for the catalogue, which would be loose-leaf in format so that additions could be sent out regularly.

3. A wailing list would be built up of people all over the country or elsewhere who want to receive the catalogue regularly. (This wailing list could also be used for a newsletter).

4. When anyone wants a tape, they send in a blank tape and a postage-paid envelope, and a copy of the required tape can be made and returned to them. This way one does not get into administratively onerous cash problems.
5. A card index of each tape is kept, so the maker can find out who is interested in his/her tape.

6. The central tape library should be able to make copies on National, Sony ½ inch, 3/4 inch cassette, or other possibilities, including North American standard, so that the flow of information will not be hindered by the technical limitations of the manufacturers.

print materials

1. Newsletter. Having edited the Challenge for Change Newsletter myself for some years, I have a strong feeling for the usefulness of such a document. My point of view was to make it a forum for exchange of experience, and when I learned of an interesting experience going on, whether sponsored by Challenge for Change or not, I spent a good deal of time helping the people involved write it up so they could share their experience with others. From responses we have had from readers, they have been able to use this shared experience to help them work better in their own communities. As an informational and educational tool, a magazine can be very effective. And writing articles for newsletters is a lot more fun than writing up dry reports that are never heard from again. Newsletter readers tend to respond in large numbers, and the feedback is rather heartening, this type of publication is incidentally a good public relations tool, better perhaps than one designed for just that purpose.

   Since Carlton will already be publishing the catalogue, it makes sense that they be responsible for publishing the newsletter, and be the central editing point. Initially the centre directors are prepared to co-ordinate their efforts in editing a newsletter. If this proves too great a task, perhaps a part-time editor could be hired. Only experience will tell what finally is needed. Building and maintaining a good mailing list is important.

2. Technical bulletins. These should be prepared wherever there is the expertise, whether at Paddington, Carlton, or anywhere else. They would be printed at Carlton, and made available from all centres, or by mail on request.

3. A bibliography on video access could be useful.

audio materials

A catalogue and copy system similar to the videotape system could be set up, if the demand was felt.

secretarial backup for centres

Since some of the centres do not have facilities for typing, some

backup facilities could be shared, perhaps by Carlton, perhaps by the A.F.I. office.

colour video facilities for artists

These would be available to people in the whole Melbourne area, and perhaps could extend to people who can travel from Adelaide as well.

access video

Carlton feels that it can carry on resource facilities simultaneously with the access function, under one director, and that they have the capacity to organise their resources efficiently to do this. I concur with this feeling.

Resource Centre: Paddington
Paddington: an integral part of the access program

We asked all the centres whether they needed any relationship with Paddington, and if so, what kind of resources did they need. The list further on is an elaboration of their felt needs, and an expression of the resources Paddington would like to offer.

It is my conviction that in order to best serve both the centres and the rest of the nation, the Paddington Resource Centre must be integrally included in structure and functioning with the other twelve centres. Otherwise how can it be plugged into an information system that will let it know what needs there are to fill? Otherwise how can it act responsibly towards the other centres, unless it is working in full consultation with them? This would not prevent them serving the country at large, but would make them more immediately useful to a broader number of people.

Already Paddington has had difficulty in assessing its duties, because it was not in the contract with the AFI along with the other centres, and has been administered separately. The resulting confusion has considerably reduced its capacity to fulfill its own expectations, or those of the other centres.

The Board's direct administration and often ill-judged directives have exacerbated this problem. One example of this came to my attention, where Paddington had designed an inexpensive, light

shoulder-brace for the portapak camera. Since the camera is badly designed and ill-balanced piece of equipment that encourages wobbly camera work, a shoulder-brace could make the difference between that housewife actually making her tape, or giving up after a short try. But orders came that there was no need for "professional" equipment for the video centres, and nobody has access to that lovely little piece of equipment. The decision was made too far, away from the centres of need.

The centre directors have strongly expressed the desire to be able to count on Paddington resources, as listed further on. Paddington has expressed the desire that the confusion be cleared up.

It would be irresponsible to separate Paddington from the rest of the centres, because then many of its resources would have to be duplicated in order to be available to the centres as needed.

City Access Video should be a separate centre

The present Paddington centre has an extremely active access side. They are serving the inner-city and south-west suburbs, and people are coming from quite far away for help. This centre must, of course, continue, but it should be physically removed from the resource centre, and possibly situated closer to the inner city. Although it has generated a handful of satellite centres, where users have gotten support to buy their own equipment, such as at the Glebe estates, it should be provided with more equipment.

Reasons for removing the access centre from the resource centre are partially because of the sheer amount of activity going on, and partially because of the confusion caused by the amounts of equipment moving in and out of the resource centre for repair or modification. Electronics and design engineers need a certain amount of tranquility.

what resources are needed at Paddington?
equipment repair chief

Since equipment repair is one of the most taxing problems the centre directors have to face, probably the best way to solve it is to engage a Highly skilled repair technician to repair all equipment in the Sydney area, and to co-ordinate repair and maintenance in the

rest of the country. Perhaps one full-time repair man in Melbourne, and one in Adelaide to serve the south and west would be enough. Perhaps a second full or part-time technician in Sydney might be needed. In the long run, and perhaps even in the short run, I suspect this would cost less than the inefficient and unsatisfying service contract with Sony. A contract for service parts could be worked out. At any rate, this idea has been evolving for some time, and it is urgent that it be put into effect.

comment on equipment purchase

I would highly recommend that in future, equipment be purchased in full consultation with centre directors, to avoid such items as 3/4 inch colour cassette video recorders that cannot record, but only play back; so that centres cannot even put their own finished tapes on cassettes for their own use. This would never have happened if the centres had been consulted. I can think of other items that have been bought for all centres that will only be used by a few. Perhaps they can be turned in for more needed items. Gun microphones and lots of 5-hour batteries would help, and I'm sure a more precise list is in the minds of all the centre directors.

technical information

- Printed and verbal information on what technical services Paddington has to offer, to be channeled to the Technical Bulletin.
- Travelling technical workshops - one teacher-technician to travel on request to give advanced workshops on usage, maintenance and small repairs. Whether production techniques could be taught by the same person would be a question of which individual does the job.
- Telephone- consultation on technical problems.

equipment pool for other centres

A pool of extra portapaks and some more complex equipment that is not needed at all times at the centres could be the best way of serving the centres.
It should be remembered that the Paddington Resource Centre should not be an access centre, and should refer requests by citizens to the nearest access centre.

national design engineer

- equipment design - research and development
- equipment evaluation
- modification of equipment
- motional consultation on equipment systems
- media industry relations
- consultation with centres, government and industry

Equipment modification is especially important, in view of the fact that none of the manufacturers has built a portapak that is really well designed to community use. Another example is the editing modification that is under way now, that will make an enormous difference in the lives of the centres since it simplifies and shortens editing time by half. This, in particular, is an urgent necessity.

production resource

- travelling production workshops
- production crew to produce: how-to-do-it tapes
  : tapes for people with no time
  : tapes to gain revenue

There is some question whether this should be a permanent crew, or whether people should be hired on contract to fill specific requests. At any rate a budget should be established to explore these functions.

colour equipment and studio for artists

This is under way, and artists certainly enjoy it.

Resource Person(s)

The following is a list of the skills and functions required as person-resources to serve the centres. Whether all these functions can be covered by one person, whether a team can be built, or whether some of these functions can be delegated to one or another centre director remains to be seen. Needless to say, a relationship of mutual trust is essential if these functions are to be carried out effectively.

- Co-ordination and communication between centres (making sure everybody knows what is going on).
- Counseling in: designing special projects
  community organising
  human relations
  communications
  media
  politics
  industrial relations
- Co-ordination with other media groups
- Locating and hiring consultants and teachers for centres
- Organizing workshops
- Obtaining legal advice
- Backup and advice to grantholders
- Research and Development - special project design
- Relations with rural and non-served regions. Design and find people to fund and/or carry out new projects or centres
- Public relations
- Political relations with Canberra
- Fund raising
- Leadership

This would cover the following items:

- Management Committee expenses
- Directors' Meetings expenses, including travel four times a year
- Fund raising
- Resources: staff and consultants
- Staff development -workshops
  -training
  -travel
- Travel budget for users
- Small experimental budget
- Research and development -rural areas
  -videovans
  -feasability study on travelling broadcast van
- Budgets for resource facilities such as those designed for Carlton and Paddington should be passed by the management committee along with the budgets of the other centres, to ensure that they do indeed correspond to the needs expressed by the centres as a whole.
- Administrative charges
- Overhead
- Evaluation budget

On an appropriate structure for managing the video project
"A good administration is one that can see a need, recognise it, and hire someone to fill it".

recognise the needs

Now in order to see and recognize the needs most accurately, it is important to involve in the administration of a project the people who are actually carrying it out. In this way there will be a forum for discussing problems, and a centre of power for solving them, in which the centre directors can participate.

This system of co-management also has the advantage that the participants are responsible for the decisions that are made, and will hold themselves accountable for carrying them out. In terms of sheer efficiency, time and money are saved when people are carrying out decisions they have participated in.

In this way, two-way responsibility is achieved. In one direction toward the funders and administrators, and in the other toward the users of the centres.

have the power to fill the need

In order to carry out the responsibilities, it is necessary to have the power to make decisions and the budget to back them.

a little bit of history

At the beginning of the video project, which was conceived and established with considerable energy by the Film and Television Board, there was a major flaw. As stated in the Interim Policy Statement of May, 1974, "Each centre will be conducted as autonomously as possible through the Australian Film Institute according to principles established by the Film and Television Board of the Australian Council for the Arts". (That reminds me of the prize-winning entry in a Canadian Centennial contest in 1967: "As Canadian as ...possible under the circumstances.")

The Board saw the AFI as the channel through which it would run the centres. It gave no power to the AFI to carry out its mandate, although it gave it the public responsibility to do so. The centre directors saw themselves with two bosses, and with a number of

incomplete communications systems working at cross purposes. The confusion made things more than difficult.

Examples of this situation include verbal complaints from the Board staff that directors had gone on holiday "without permission" when they had arranged holiday dates through the AFI, and had not double-checked with the Board. It also includes interdiction, by the Board staff for centres to contact certain government department members, like the department of education, who could be of support to their centres, because the Board would do all the contacts of that kind. This could inhibit the centres building autonomous support of the kind recommended by the Board itself.

The most blatant example is the way in which Paddington was hampered in serving the real needs of the centres in equipment and modifications, as mentioned earlier. An odd example is that information about other community media type projects funded separately by the Board has not been offered to the centres, so that new forms of collaboration, where pertinent, could evolve in the field.

In fact, lack of information has been surrounded by an atmosphere of secrecy that has even gone to the extent of giving the AFI orders verbally on what to do, while maintaining secrecy on the minutes of meetings where these instructions were elaborated.

The question is, if the Board had indeed handed the administration of the project over to the AFI, would these things have occurred? Is the Board competent to grill the AFI Director on the travel plans of a centre director, or other such items? Where does financial interest stop and control begin? Decidedly, something needs to be done.

Gradually the AFI has grown to encompass a larger role in the project, and has built a situation of mutual trust, between the AFI and the centres over the last six months. Thanks to the initiative of the Board, the AFI now sees itself in a position to proceed independently, and the centre-directors are asking the AFI to participate in a partnership with them in running the centres and their central resource needs. This will occur through the Access Program Management Committee of the AFI. Since the needs for funds are expanding, they hope to find supplementary funding sources, as

well as the basic funding from the Board and from DURD.
This division of duties, where the AFI takes over completely the management role, and the Board returns to its usual role as major funder, in fact tallies with the Board's basic vocation as a creative funding agency for dynamic film and television projects. The support and encouragement it can give to budding projects are an invaluable element in the healthy development of media in Australia.

How should the video centres be administered?
Access program management committee

The Access Program Management Committee of the AFI would include at least three directors elected by the Directors' Meeting, a representative of the AFI's Executive Board, who would chair the committee, (at the present time it is Tim Read), and a staff member of the AFI. This should be added to as need arises, so that expertise and participation are at their fullest.

Ideally some way of inviting representation from centre users on the committee should be locked for. This is not easy to design equitably, but perhaps a series of experiments should be carried out in that area. At the very least, users should be able to come to the committee to make their views felt.

what are the functions of a video management committee?

This committee would be responsible for securing funding for the program by obtaining grants, for maintaining liaison and information flow with the funding agencies, for establishing the philosophy and the policies of the program, and for assuring that the every-day management of the program is functioning efficiently.

1) Policy and philosophy

2) liaison with government, and presenting grant proposals to funding departments and agencies

3) Budget decisions regarding centres and central budget

4) Management delegation

5) Planning for the future

On the possible alternatives in the event of an interdepartmental committee

In view of the interest shown in Canberra in an interdepartmental committee of the Challenge for change type, this eventuality must be taken into consideration.

a broad range of activities?

My first assumption would be that an IDC would be interested in a much broader range of activities than just the video centres, and therefore they world want to fund or develop a wide variety of projects. Film is a medium with strong impact, and big screens and big halls have a role to play. Professional filmmakers can be an important adjunct to the social process, and special film distribution, as well as television, can have a far-reaching effect on people. Radio has yet to be explored in any depth as a tool in the social landscape. If a number of departments take the trouble to get together to support citizen access to media and experimentation with media in the context of social change, it is worthwhile for them to set their sights very broadly. The whole concept calls far more into question than just the video access centres, although these are an important part of the process. Important research for films, for instance, could come out of the centres. (For more information on the use of film itself, see my article "Films for Social Change; the Hammer and the Mirror".

My second assumption then is that the Access Program - AFI partnership could present its proposals and broad budgets for a year's operation to the interdepartmental committee, and hope to be received favourably. Processes for presenting progress reports could be agreed upon at the time.

This would be instead of going to the various interested departments separately for funding. There may be various other combinations of approaches for support from Canberra for the access program, and these need to be explored,

why an interdepartmental committee?

A number of different departments have a stake in the use of video or film to help citizens participate in the decisions that affect their lives. That is why the interdepartmental concept is so exciting, and why the idea of departments collaborating over and

above their narrow departmental interests can be a healthy phenomenon. All government departments need to carry on successful programs, and their programs will be most successful if they correspond most closely to the needs of the people they intend to serve. They will also be more successful if citizens are participating fully in them. If they can listen, then, to what people are saying about their need, and can encourage participation, they will have done their jobs well. A government that demonstrates that it is open to listening to the citizens' voice is more liable to be appreciated than one that doesn't. This can often be done best outside the bounds of departmental interests.

It is also important for departments to understand that you cannot make citizens make tapes to present to government. It is too much work. They will only do it when they decide that it is important to do so, and when they have seen government responding to other citizens who have done so. It takes a while to build a solid and healthy system of information and response.

I was impressed with the interest I saw in Canberra with regard to an interdepartmental committee. If time can be taken to build a good solid base for a Challenge for Change-type program, you may end up teaching the Canadians a good deal.

On some of the key elements in the Challenge for Change experience with any interdepartmental committee

1. parity between NFB and government departments
   After two years of experimenting with a large interdepartmental committee that put in very little money and had no decision-making power, since all the money was committed by the National Film Board, a cabinet document created an IDC with the power to dispense money, based on the principle of parity between the NFB and the departments. If six departments each put in $100,000, then treasury gave the NFB the matching $600,000. When the number of departments went up to 8, the NFB put in $800,000. This parity in funding guaranteed parity in decision-making. The chairman, a member of the Privy Council, read consensus. The NFB was the administrator of the programme.

2. staff members among NFB representatives
   Since the initial departments had six representatives, the NFB also had six, three French and three English. One was the

executive producer of the Challenge for Change or Societe Nouvelle studio, one a distribution representative, and one elected from the working staff of the program.

This arrangement served a double function. First it assured a broad range of active expertise on the committee, and encouraged direct communication and information circulating between government members and people working in the field. Thus was avoided the usual misinformation that occurs when nobody who is actually doing the work is around. And it allowed government members to gain a knowledge of the dynamics and processes of film and the media.

Second, it assured that the people working in the field with the citizen group had a voice in the decisions that were being made, and also had an understanding of how those decisions were made.

Third, it allowed a broad range of NFB Challenge for Change workers to gain understanding and skills in the governmental and political arena, so that they were then able to go out to negotiate agreements with universities or provincial or municipal governments, with an understanding of the basic processes of government. In other words, it was a great staff development tool, as well.

3. <u>no project to cover less than three departments' interests</u>
This ruling, written into the cabinet document, made it impossible for the departments to do what normally it is their duty to do: fight for their narrow departmental interests. The result was an extraordinarily impressive group of bureaucrats who constantly maintained themselves on a higher level, and really fought for the broader interests as they saw then. I admit I was sceptical that they could do it, yet I saw almost no slips during the two and a half year period during which I sat on the committee. Although they were ready with information gained in their department, they did not try to control the committee for their own interests. The fact that all was not always sweetness and light usually pertained to obstructionist personalities, rather than to a fight for departmental interests.

4. departmental money did not come from information budgets, therefore they were lees tempted to use the programme for doing their needed information tasks.

How does this pertain to the Australia situation?

The second and third elements are certainly pertinent to the Australian situation. The difficulty is with the first one. The importance of the NFB having parity was that it is a statutory government agency, and as such is a little more neutral, a little more distant from the changes in political climate. It was a good balancing agency to the more directly vulnerable departments. In particular this meant that long-term projects could be assured, and that a fuss in the newspapers would not jeopardise the programme.

The question is, is there a similar agency in Australia, and if not, what is to be done? I admit I'm not sure. I believe that the strength and impact of the Challenge for Change programme has partly to do with the fact that we are about one third film production, one third film distribution, and one third video and small projects. The process and the product are interwoven throughout the programme, and throughout the country, for a maximum effect for the money and the commitment. Perhaps a different mix would work in Australia. Only the future and your own creativity will decide. But I wish you luck. May my best wishes remain with you.

management

That the AFI and the centre directors manage the video access project through an Access Program Management Committee of the AFI, and have full control over policy and philosophy, liaison with government and presenting grant proposals to funding departments and agencies, management of the full budget of the program, and planning for the future.

That the video access program be considered and funded as a whole, and that the centre directors participate in the management of the program.

That the AFI Access Program present videotapes and reports in person to funding agencies throughout the course of the year.

resources

That staff be hired to fill the needs listed under the heading "resource person(s)".

That a central resource budget be established.

That Paddington resource centre be an integral part of the access program, and responsible for providing resources to the access centres.

That Paddington have an equipment repair chief, a technical information service, and equipment pool for other centres, a national design engineer, a production resource, and colour equipment.

That Paddington's City Video Access service move to a separate site in the inner city area.

That Carlton set up a videotape distribution library and catalogue as soon as possible.

That Carlton publish a video access program newsletter as soon as possible.

That Carlton publish a technical bulletin and bibliography, and they institute an audio library and catalogue when needed.

That Carlton provide secretarial backup to the centres.

That Carlton remain an access centre as well.

centres

That all the centres, including Paddington and Carlton, be considered part of a whole, the video access program.

That the centres build towards local management committees, but that they take another year or two if they need to, in order to build solidly.

That staff for each centre be increased.

That a travel budget for staff development and for user training be instituted.

That workshops be designed in close collaboration with the centre directors.

That the Postmaster General install free long-distance phone lines in the centres.

or that hefty telephone budgets be considered as part of staff development.

That a fair and just expense system for local transportation be devised.

That citizen radio groups be nurtured in the centres until they can go on their own.

That, schools be encouraged in the active use of video in the hands of pupils and teachers, but that they invest more of their money in it.

That special project budgets for aboriginal and other black groups be developed. That the sources of funding for aboriginal projects make themselves known, but that they let the development grow from present experience, and grow at its own pace.

That the centres continue to place the highest value in the use of video as a social process tool, and that production for production's sake be treated warily.

distribution

That the tape exchange distribution library at Carlton be actively developed by all the centres.

That special distribution networks be organized on special areas such as women, youth, mental health, transportation, housing, etc.

That utilisation of tapes be documented, so that people can be inspired and learn to do intensive and precise tape distribution, and learn to measure its effects.

That broadcast, or a travelling broadcast van be approached with a mixture of enthusiasm and extreme caution. That time be taken to experiment slowly, in rural as well as urban areas. And that access centre directors be involved in the management of the experiment, if they are to be allowed in its functioning.

equipment

That all new equipment be bought only after consultation with centre directors, and they rapidly acquire the equipment they need.

That other media, such as print or photography, be added as needed to the resources in the centres, as an adjunct to the video.

That priority in equipment modification be given to the items most needed in the centres.

That special adaptations be made for the equipment so that it can be used in non-electrified rural areas, with batteries and automobile generators