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25 May 1984

Dr. George Gerbner
Dean
Annenberg School of Communications
University of Pennsylvania
3620 Walnut Street C5
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
U.S.A. 19104-3858

Dear George:

Re: Suggestions for an "Advanced" Issue
of "Ferment in the Field".

At our discussion in Philadelphia you requested that I put my thoughts on paper with respect to a follow-up issue on Ferment in the Field. These comments reflect the benefit of discussion with both Robin Mansell and Dallas Smythe.

Perhaps a good premise for the follow-up can be taken from Stevenson, Ferment, p. 269:

"What we need at this point is a willingness to profit from the criticism directed at both the critical and empirical schools of research. We can recognize that data without adequate theory are intellectually sterile, but we also must recognize that theory, unless subjected to rigorous and wide-ranging empirical tests, is merely polemic."

There is no doubt that the "ferment" in the field in communication will continue as it will in other disciplines. But there is also no doubt that scholars will continue to develop a corpus of theory and research in the communication field. The following outlines issues and areas in need of further amplification in the form of a sequel to the "Ferment" volume.

- (1) What are the theoretical and empirical building blocks that have been established by the intermingling of critical and administrative tradition, i.e., the corpus of knowledge? Papers addressing positions



on problems of major concern to communications scholars could usefully integrate the predominant position in the previous volume. A series of papers could address the current status of theory and research produced by those whose thinking and methodology derives predominantly from:

- (a) psychology/social psychology;
 - (b) anthropology/sociology;
 - (c) economics and/or political economy;
 - (d) political science/administrative theory.
- (2) From an "administrative" perspective, what are the critical tasks ahead for communications theory and research? What possibilities exist for the development of a conceptual framework for analysis? What central questions require further elaboration vis-a-vis media effects, communication structures, information technology, etc.?
- (3) From a "critical" perspective, ask the same questions.
- (4) Analysis of the constraints on problem formulation, theory and research:
- (a) from the administrative perspective on "critical" research;
 - (b) from a critical perspective on "administrative" research.

Papers could be focussed on specific issue areas, e.g., international information production, dissemination; national communication planning; media effects; telecommunication and broadcast industries, etc.

Within the broad areas indicated above, there are additional specific topics that are raised in the "Ferment" issue but which need further amplification within the context of the above, but probably as separate papers. These include:

- (1) The conceptualization of information as an exchange process;
- (2) The role of political and economic power in the evolution of communication/information institutions;
- (3) The problematic of the development of "a" theory of communication in the context of "a" theory of society;
- (4) The relationship between technology and society and the role of communications research as interventionist, or even negative;
- (5) The emerging role of the public and private sector in the information economy;

Dr. George Gerbner -- page 3

- (6) The internationalization of the information economy and the strengthening of dependencies;
- (7) The need for analysis of production and structure, balanced with distribution and consumption of communication/information.

Upon reflection it seems that the above proposal is perhaps a bit idealistic unless you are capable of commissioning papers to get the best people to devote the time and effort necessary to do a piece that will be a contribution to the field. I think that the potential is there and that it could be a significant contribution. But perhaps you know better than I on the basis of your experience with the "ferment" whether it's possible.

In any event, this will give you some food for thought for future activities.

Yours sincerely,



William H. Melody
Professor

WHM:lcm

P.S. I was happy to learn that Robin will be working with us here for at least the next year.

July 9, 1984

William H. Melody
Professor
Department of Communication
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC CANADA V5A 1S6

Dear Bill:

Back from Europe and other places and to your letter of May 25. Marsha and I discussed it and agree that your list of topics sound like the series of articles and symposia we should have for the next five years or so. Of course, we are in no position to commission articles for the Journal but will suggest these and other topics to people we think are most competent to write on them, beginning with you and Robin.

Anything you can write or stimulate to be written by others will be held for the follow-up feature in a forthcoming issue of the Journal, which will be more definitely scheduled as soon as at least some follow-up pieces to "Ferment" are in hand.

Thank you for your excellent suggestions. I look forward to seeing you in Prague.

Sincerely yours,

George Gerbner
Editor

GG:ab



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3 June 1985

Dr. George Gerbner
Editor
Journal of Communication
Annenberg School of Communication
University of Pennsylvania
3620 Walnut St. C5
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
U.S.A. 19104-3858

Dear George:

I will be happy to continue to serve as consulting and contributing editor of the Journal of Communication for another term of two years. The Journal continues to improve, thanks largely to the efforts of you and Marsha. I was sorry to hear of the difficulties over the UNESCO issue. But I admire your courage and hope that there will be no long-term detrimental effect.

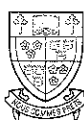
Yes, I am going to England. I am taking a leave of absence from Simon Fraser for two years. The position is challenging and hopefully will lead to some solid research, at least some of which hopefully will be published in the Journal of Communication. A copy of the university's announcement is attached for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

William H. Melody
Professor

WHM:lcm

Enclosures



DR. W. MELODY APPOINTED
DIRECTOR OF NEW ESRC PROGRAM IN LONDON

Dr. William H. Melody, Professor in the Department of Communication, SFU, has been granted a two-year leave of absence beginning 1 September 1985 to take a position as Director of a major new research program for information and communication technologies at the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of Great Britain in London.

The Council noted that at present, "the level of research support for the social science aspects of information and communication technologies does not match the importance, scale and speed of current changes in this field." The new program is designed to establish a national network of U.K. research centres. Dr. Melody's task will be to assess the current state of research on the information and communication technologies in Britain, to develop a program for the funding of substantial research activities in four or five centres of excellence, and to co-ordinate the overall research program and the publication of its findings. The program will reflect the all-pervasive impact of the information technologies, encompassing economic, social, cultural, educational and organizational issues. An important element in the program will be the training of men and women able to research the information technology field.

Dr. Melody, a native of Hamilton, Ontario, came to SFU from the University of Pennsylvania in 1976 as Chairman of the Department of Communication. He has published widely in the field of information and communication technologies, and is a frequent advisor to research centres and government agencies, both in Canada and internationally. He was the C.E. Ayres distinguished scholar of the Association for Evolutionary Economics at the Allied Social Science Association meetings in Dallas, Texas, last December, and is guest editor of the Spring issue of the journal, Media, Culture and Society on the implications of the new information technologies. He is President of the Communication Technology Section of the International Association of Mass Communication Research, and has authored five different articles in the forthcoming New Canadian Encyclopedia.

Journal of
Communication

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Name: Dr. William H. Melody
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SFU until 1 August 1985.
After that: Economic and Social Research Council
Research Program for Information & Communication Technologies
160 Great Portland St.
Phone: London W1N 6DT, England
01-353-5252

Yes, I will serve as a Consulting and Contributing
Editor for the JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION for 1985-1987.
 No, I am unable to serve during this term.

Areas of special interest:
Political economy of communication; policy and regulation;
telecommunications; regulation and policy; international
communication; communication and development.

Suggestions for other reviewers:

Name: _____
Address: _____

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Areas of special interest:

Please return this form to Marsha Siefert, Associate Editor,
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