

open discussions in communications policy do not necessarily support the effectiveness of that mode of public process. Lindblom's text thus demonstrates his own impairment, namely he takes as given the American values he is socialized into, rather than being free of them!

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Information, A Resource for Development edited by B.G. Goedegebuure, H.R. Arango Sales and G. Sotolongo Aguilar

(Elsevier Science Publishers, Amsterdam, 1991), pp.ix + 235, US\$95.00, ISBN 0-444-89116-1.

These proceedings of the 45th FID (Federation Internationale Congress d'Information et de Documentation) held in Havana, Cuba, September 1990 include two welcome addresses, the Presidential address and 18 invited and contributed papers from the technical sessions. This covers, of course, only a small part of the Congress which provided some 233 papers and 19 keynote speeches.

Such congresses tend to be occasions for the promotion of new technologies and, judging from these published papers, the 45th FID Congress was no exception. However, as the welcome address by the President of the Cuban Academy of Sciences made clear, the Congress theme, *Information, A Resource for Development*, was to be interpreted in a broad sense: information is a decisive element in social and economic change. "Knowledge engineering and information production [may] be on an equal footing with goods production and distribution" in the information society, but "in Third World countries" there is "a battle being fought against underdevelopment, exploitation, discrimination and poverty . . . 15 per cent of the world population has access to 85 per cent of telecommunication services and two thirds of that population have no telephone service available" (pp.4-5). In his FID Presidential address, Michael Hill went further with the reminder that "the use of information for economic development leads not only to new or improved products but also to new ways of working which the individuals involved may not deem improvements at all, especially if the "improvement" results in unemployment" (p.10).

Hill concluded that information professionals have a dual task: "first to provide facts about policies in a constructive and convincing way; and second to help Government with its task of steering society into making greater use of the resource that *information* presents" (p.19. Reviewer's emphasis). From this perspective, national information policy assumes great importance.

K. Harris (Community Development Foundation, UK) sought to provide "Alternatives to the state and commodity models of information policy". He sees the commodity model as a threat because "information is only collected, processed, stored and made available where there is perceived to be a market for it" (p.103). In contrast, the state model incorporates an "exaggerated concern over content and use, leading to restrictions on availability or access due to

straightforward, or indirect, censorship'' (p.105). He argues for a mixed model, with emphasis on collaboration among data providers, information services and communication services. His view that in the 1990s both state and commodity models look "very old-fashioned" (p.105) needs to be challenged. Those who see, erroneously, globalization being ushered in by trade in information in effect contend that the commodity model is the model of the future.

Michael Menon's paper, "Strategies and methods for the development of national information systems in the less developed countries", moves beyond the state/commodity models and, in line with the Congress theme, advocates a shift of emphasis to information resources management. In his national model, the needs of all categories of users are catered for: STI, authorship, publishing, mass communications, and internal factual data or statistical data. He asserts that modern IT is "now able to reconcile the apparently antagonist requirements of unity and decentralisation" (p. 213) and speculates that it may provide "the only answer to the long lasting shortage of skilled manpower in charge of information systems" (p.207).

Other information policy papers discuss the experience in Mexico, Unesco's International Year effort, industrial property, and the contribution of scientific information to economic policy-making. There is, however, a general failure to see information policy as basically concerned with the allocation of resources to information activities.

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Competition and Innovation In Postal Services *edited by Michael A. Crew and Paul R. Kleindorfer*

(Kluwer Academic Publications, Boston/Dordrecht, London, 1991) pp.304, \$AUS84.75, ISBN 0-7923-9147-0.

Crew and Kleindorfer's book is a compendium of thirteen essays with commentaries on each of these. The book emerged from a conference held by the British Post Office Management College in July 1990. It was a rather more celebrity packed conference than usual because 1990 was the 150 years anniversary of Rowland Hill's great innovation, the penny-post.

Rowland Hill, not surprisingly, features strongly in many of the essays. He was clearly a highly controversial and aggressive figure in his time. Perceiving the potential for market growth from price cutting, Hill anticipated by 140 years the famous curve which Arthur Laffer reputedly drew on a restaurant napkin to demonstrate the "Laffer curve" which illustrated how tax cuts could increase revenues. This formed one of the bases on which the present US President castigated the policies of his 1979 opponent Ronald Reagan as voodoo economics.

The former chairman of the Post Office, Sir Ron Dearing, opens the collection with an elegant and down-to-earth essay on the practical difficulties involved in running a tradition steeped Behemoth hemmed in by political restraints. No supporter of radical action, Dearing quotes Machiavelli in support of a prudent do-little attitude and talks with apparent relief about the relative lack of political