Chapter V

THE US RESPONSE TO THE NWICO
The call for a NWICO by the Third World reflected two major international patterns of change. They were, the substantive changes in the communication environment and the changing substance of the ideological debates. Inevitably, these changes also influenced the American response to NWICO. The NWICO was primarily seen by the Third World as an offensive against the American dominance in the field of information and communication. In its ideological manifestations, it criticised the imbalances that existed in the economic and communication field. In its pragmatic form it sought to evolve cooperative media institution within the Third World and to bring about favourable changes in the field of international communications, with the help of the West.

As the US is a nation with the greatest communication activity and with its impact on the rest of the world, its own perceptions and arguments in the debate on NWICO clearly reveals its ideological, political and economic stakes in the present order. Further, it has led to the important question, namely, how can America handle communication issues in the coming years?

While examining retrospectively the American communication activities of the post Second World War period, it is now obvious that the Cold War concerns have been major factors in determining its style and contents.
American overseas communications have stressed ideological concerns persuasively by advocating its national values and life-style. But with the call for NWICO comes the question: Can the US continue with the same policy despite the changes that have taken place? How has it responded to these changes? An examination of the US response to NWICO will provide vital clues to the changed orientation of the American international communication policy.

**US Response and the UNESCO**

To understand the American response to the NWICO it would be necessary to keep in mind its participation in the UNESCO. Indeed, the value of the UNESCO to the United States can be estimated in terms of the US interests which are complex but overwhelming in their pursuit. They involve private as well as public actors. They are better served by what the UNESCO does in its multifarious activities. The idea has been floated that the US participation in the UNESCO has strongly been motivated by its national interest in terms of peace as an objective of foreign policy.¹

¹ The theme of peace through understanding is repeated, not only in the utterances of the US official representatives in the UNESCO, but also in the rhetoric of congressional resolutions urging the creation of the UNESCO. The relevant documents are to be found in the USA Department of State, *UNESCO and the National Commission for UNESCO; Basic Documents* (Washington, D.C., 1977), Revd. edn.
In the later years, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, its role has often been described as a country which is "more interested in preventing evil outcomes than in effecting good ones". The issues primarily deal with the exploitation of the UNESCO as a forum by the Third World in their broader mobilisation against colonialism and racism, particularly in Southern Africa. Thereafter, restricting the activities of the countries like Southern Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Portugal became a major part of the Third World strategy. But it is the inclusion of anti-Israeli resolutions in the UNESCO that has forced the United States to take a stand. Though the issues involving Israel have not been central to the UNESCO functions and mandate, it nevertheless exposes the opposition from the organised domestic constituencies in the United States towards the "bias" against Israel in the UNESCO. This condemnation of anti-Israeli resolutions has led many of them to take formal actions against the UNESCO and has led to the Congressional decision of 1974 to withhold the payment of American dues to the organis-

Thus, the United States had considered stringent measures against the organization in response to well-timed questions from the pro-Israeli lobbies at home. Nevertheless, the UNESCO was considered by many, as a minor skirmishing ground unlike the General Assembly of the United Nations. It was perceived to be one of the many fronts on which the campaign on broader issues were being waged.

As the NWICO debate progressed in the UNESCO, it became a focal point in which the US demonstrated its opposition to the proposals against the free flow of information and freedom of the press. The US also opposed other proposals by the developing countries in "related fields such as "radio spectrum" and "geo-stationary orbit" as the debate continued.


The US perception of the challenges posed by the critics of the "free flow of information" has gone through

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3 The major issues involving Israel at that time were the questions of archeological excavations at Jerusalem and the exclusion of Israel from the European group. Later the persistent condemnation of "Zionism" as equal to "racism" by many developing countries made the US regard it as an central issue. The influence of many domestic interest groups was a major factor in the US approach toward the issues relating to Israel. For details see, US House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on International Organization, 94th Congress, 2nd session, Hearings, UNESCO: Challenges and Opportunities for the United States (Washington, D.C., 1976), pp. 34-35.
several phases. It was first believed that this opposition rested primarily on the wishes of the totalitarian states to shield their people from outside information and perpetuate their own rule. This belief was strengthened when the Soviet Union presented a draft on the controlling of Direct Broadcasting by Satellites (DBS). However, it overlooked the fact that most countries with the exception of the US, and, to a lesser extent, Belgium, Japan and the United Kingdom, appeared to have deep and honest differences with the US approach. They were alarmed at the prospect of direct foreign television broadcasts via satellite into home receivers with no provision for host government control or prior censorship. But the Americans viewed the issue primarily in terms of fighting the Soviet viewpoint, and did not appreciate the fact that the bulk of media information originated in the US and DBS would reinforce this one-way flow if it were not controlled in some way by the receiving coun-

4 A distinguished British scholar voiced the concern of many foreign governments and intellectuals when he said that DBS may "enable a few to speak to and apparently for the many, and unless powerful safeguards are constructed, it could drive out more varied and authentic voices that are the true discourse of any society and of humanity". Raymond Williams, "On High and Popular Culture", in New Republic, 23 November 1974, p. 16.
tries. The "East vs West" approach of the United States persisted in the first half of the seventies, obscuring the growth of media issues in international forums. It also led the US to perceive its evaluation of the Soviet strategy as the very basis for its future actions. The vote against DBS demonstrated to the US that the great majority of the nations do not believe in a free media for the world. And this applies not only to the openly totalitarian powers, but to most of the nations which operate under some semblance of democratic government. (6)

Explaining the US stance on the DBS issue, Leonard H. Marks, former Director of the US Information and Communication Agency, stated before a Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, that the exciting possibility of direct transmission of radio and television programmes aroused other countries'...

5 USA, Federal Register, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968-1969 (Washington, D.C., 1970). In a speech to Congress, President Johnson stated that satellites had brought in a new dimension to the telecommunication policy of the United States. He emphasized the crucial role of telecommunications, and expressed his hope that a suitable environment would be created to further the growth of satellite technology. Ibid., p. 490. In recent years, the American view of West European communication policies emphasizes the differences in the approach towards "open competition in broadcasting, and concludes that commercial broadcasting was secondary to government controlled one. For details, see Roland S. Homet, Politics Cultures and Communication: European vs American Approaches to Communications Policy Making (New York, 1979).

anxieties. This was because "... their citizens might receive facts and opinions contrary to those reported by their national news outlets. The Soviet Union took the leadership in arousing these fears." According to Marks, the US refusal to accept the resolution reflected its determination to protect the cherished tradition of unrestricted flow of information. This policy was consistent with the past policy. Thus, the American attitude revealed that in their view, it was more an ideological question that needed to be settled with the Soviet Union. There was little enthusiasm to pay attention to the various changes that had occurred in the UNESCO where the issues regarding communication and information were being looked at with a new perspective. The Montreal meeting sponsored by UNESCO in 1969 had made it very clear that "one-way flow" was detrimental to the developing countries and that there must be effective change in the flow of international communication.

There was one area in which some progress was achieved. In the pursuit of detente with the Soviet Union, the

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Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe agreed on a specific proposal relating to free flow of information among the member states. This step was viewed as moving away from Cold War confrontations and towards peaceful cooperation. It was viewed as an new equation which better balanced the traditional opposition between the Eastern and Western conception of the role of information in international relations. Yet, in the UNESCO, US position reiterated that the Soviet proposals were unduly restrictive and do not in essence, protect national sovereignty.

Debate Within the U.S.

The American position on unrestricted flow of information which was not subject to any regulations was criticized by scholars in the US. In main, two major inconsistencies were pointed out. Firstly, the long-standing view that freedom of expression required freedom from government restrictions was challenged. The Americans often cited the first amendment to the US Constitution as the derivative source for their policy position. However, the domestic communication policy reflected some inconsistencies. The US domestic policy regulations on media were based

on "fairness doctrine", "right of reply", "equal time or rule" among other things. Nevertheless, the US strongly opposed the Third World calls for regulation on the flow of international information, which included some sort of restrictions over "news flow", and other media information originating in the US.

The second major inconsistency was the US condemnation of "apriori" planning in geo-stationary orbits, space frequencies, radio spectrums, and "prior consent" requirement of the Third World and the Soviet Union. Domestically, allocation plans for television and "FM radio" were pre-planned. Further there was some sort of a reservation policy adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to insure access to late comers in the broadcast media. Hence, it was pointed out that these inconsistencies would undermine the US credibility and adversely affect its negotiating strategy.9

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The practical considerations affecting the US policy on DBS also highlighted the inconsistencies. For instance, it was implied that the US had "misgivings" regarding the modification of its stance on the question of "free flow". Any change in its position might be construed as a compromise by the US of its human rights principles in general and Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in particular. It was also felt that the American cooperation with international institutions on this issue might be interpreted to mean its endorsement of government control and censorship. In other words, the question was whether the US international communication policy could draw a principled distinction between participation in the DBS programme controls with the Third World and its commitment to the individual rights to obtain and impart information?

Some have argued that US perceptions were faulty. The main contention was that the individual right to privacy and the right to be free from unwanted communications was recognized by several "broadcast laws" in the US in a number of contexts. Hence, this right was to be incorporated into international policy. America must agree to some controls upon the flow of transborder communication. It meant that the US policy on international broadcasting should respect personal privacy rights, as well as advance the principle of freedom of commun-
Despite the differing views on the continuation of US policy regarding free flow, it was evident that the official response remained the same. On the confrontation over the draft on the Mass Media which was introduced by the Soviet Union, the US advanced the same arguments and succeeded in postponing the final outcome. However, realising that any unilateral decision with regard to the US participation in the debate would enhance the position of the Soviet Union, the United States continued to be flexible. Another reason for the agreement to work further on the resolution was the fact that the US did not have enough votes to defeat it.


11 In contrast, the walkout led by the US at an intergovernmental meeting in Paris (1975) emphasized its willingness to take a strong stand on an "anti-Israeli" resolution. The voting on this issue demonstrated that the Third World was not fully united on this issue as it was on the issues involving the free flow of information.
The US Congressional concern over the role of mass media was somewhat different. For instance, a panel discussion on "Press and Foreign Policy" held by the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, touched on three principal issues: evaluation of current US policy, the role of press in foreign policy issues and the role of Congress in the determination of foreign policy. There was no mention of the threat faced by the US media abroad, nor of the growth of international feeling against US media. Interestingly, during the discussions which included eminent journalists apart from Congressmen, there was candid acceptance of the fact that there was comparatively less foreign news in the US press than there is of the United States in the foreign press. The principal factors that were identified included the essentially commercial nature of the US media, the importance of United States in world affairs and the "crisis orientation" of the foreign news coverage. However, this awareness did not include the events that were taking place in the UNESCO and elsewhere which often listed decolonization in the field of mass communications.


13 Ibid., p. 31.
as a crucial phase in the emancipation process. 14

Others in the United States argued for a more positive role in the UNESCO. Many of them warned that the Soviet Union was alert to the role that UNESCO could play in shaping the world public opinions. The implications for the American policy makers was that, if the Soviet influence grew, it may curtail any leverage that the United States enjoyed in these organizations. 15 Further, the US would become less effective in combating issues threatening its national interest in the areas of civil and political liberties, the role of the press and cultural development. Hence, it was necessary for America to

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14 For instance, both at the non-aligned conference at Algiers in 1973, and Lima in 1975, and the UNESCO sponsored intergovernmental Conference on communication policies at Costa Rica in 1975, officially suggested alternatives implied greater government participation in all the areas of communications. But, in the US, the thrust of the arguments against the UNESCO centered around its actions regarding Israel. A study entitled "The Documentary Study of the Politicization of UNESCO" concentrated on the issues involving denial of membership rights or imposition of sanctions on some countries like Israel and South Africa by others. UNESCO's involvement in communication was not considered as controversial at this time. See American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Bulletin (Boston), volume 29, December 1975.

15 See statement by Millar Upton, member of the US National Commission for UNESCO, to the US House Committee on International Relations in UNESCO: Challenges and Opportunities for the United States, n. 4, pp. 23-32. See also the text of the letter from the President of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (Boston, Mass.), to the academy in ibid., pp. 47-49.
reassess its strategy and play an active role in the organization. One of the ways was to gain support for its objectives by pledging assistance to the developing countries in the areas of communication technology and infrastructure facilities.

In a conference sponsored by the University of Alabama on communications in 1975, the US Ambassador to United Nations, John Scali voiced sentiments to the effect that the US realised the claims of the less developed countries to end economic dependence on the West and that it was imperative to narrow the communications gap within the international community. He felt that the US could sympathise with the concern of the Third World leaders that fundamental changes in the economic system was necessary for them, but "... their decision to use rhetoric and tactics of confrontation in pursuing their objective is regrettable".16

The three separate challenges to the existing international media norms were discernible to the US on the eve of the 1976 Nairobi Conference of the UNESCO. Firstly, the UNESCO's communication policy programmes (which included provisions for the creation of Latin American News Agency,  

16 Official text of speech by John Scali, West, Third World Must Bridge Communications Gap (New Delhi, American Center), 29 April 1975, pp. 4-7.
study of a mandatory international right of reply amongst others) would be put up for approval by the member states. Secondly, the question of the UNESCO's participation as an observer in the activities of the non-aligned Press Pool would be brought up. This could mean closer ties between the organization and the political objectives of the non-aligned movement which would threaten the international flow of objective news. Thirdly, it was faced again with the resolution on the role of Mass Media which contained references to state control and equated "Zionism" to "racism".17

Thus, during the first half of the seventies, the US perception which had begun with an emphasis on the Soviet Union's strategy, slowly modified towards acceptance of the Third World problems as legitimate. The strategy to redress them had pragmatic overtones than ideological stances.


The nineteenth General Conference of the UNESCO witnessed a definite development of the US position regarding

17 The Western countries viewed the fifth non-aligned Summit resolutions with anxiety and uneasiness and considered them hostile to their interests, Times of India (New Delhi), 23 August 1976. As the Colombo Summit specifically opposed the present information order as inimical to the interests of the developing countries, the Western view of the Summit became significant.
the global communication controversy. The revised version of the draft declaration on the media was presented. Again, it was severely criticised by the US delegation, Western diplomats, politicians and the Western media. Due to the intense lobbying tactics adopted by the Western side, a show-down was averted. The draft declaration was referred to a committee which recommended that the Director-General of the organization would present a revised draft "based on broad consultations" to the twentieth General Conference. 18

Professional Organizations

At this conference, the professional organizations in the Western media world argued that the implications of the draft were serious. They felt that such a draft would have given the seal of approval to making the mass media an instrument of the state. The World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) from America was one of the professional non-governmental organizations to voice the dissatisfaction felt by journalists world-wide on the issue. It condemned the portions of the declaration which could make the media subordinate to governments, and said that it constituted utilization of high ideals for narrow political purposes. 19

19 IPI Report, December 1976, pp. 5 and 11.
The US media also severely criticised the role of UNESCO in promoting the curtailment of the freedom of the media. The most vocal critic at that time was Leonard R. Sussman, Executive Director of Freedom House, a New York based human rights organization. Sussman often stated that human freedom cannot be achieved or sustained without free communications. However, he warned that the present course of the UNESCO was overwhelmingly in favour of government controls of the media. He also noted that the UNESCO policies regarding the critical alteration of mass news media procedures if unchecked, would become a tool for governmental regulation or pressure. Like the other Western journalists, he stated his concern that the


21 See speech by Leonard R. Sussman at the General Assembly of the International Press Institute, Oslo, 7 June 1977. "The Prospects for a Freer News Media", in IPI Report, May-June 1977, pp. 10-12 and 18. Sussman edits Freedom at Issue brought out by the Freedom House, which monitors political rights and civil liberties in every country all through the year. The author has made numerous contributions to books, journals, etc. on the continuing controversies over transnational communications including a monograph entitled Mass News Media and Third World Challenge (Beverly Hills, California, 1977). He is on the Editorial Boards of Survey Magazine (London) and World Press Freedom Committee among others.
UNESCO is already inventing for the world the moral and political authority to justify repression of the press .... And whereas before UNESCO's media program there was an international standard of journalistic performance that leaned heavily on the libertarian mode of the Western press, this may now be replaced by government controlled developmental journalism under the guise of social responsibility. (22)

He argued that in the final analysis, the fundamental issue was not "press performance but press freedom". The result of the media uproar had a significant impact on the delegates assembled at Nairobi. Some claimed that the increasing concern voiced by the media interest groups represented by various organizations like the WPFC, contributed to the eventual postponement of the declaration.

It was also noted that there was a threat to the working of the UNESCO itself if there was an unaltered acceptance of the declaration, and a demonstration to the Third World of how seriously the United States was willing to fight what it regarded as infringements upon press freedom.

An interesting aspect of the Nairobi Conference was the US acceptance of the resolution offered by Tunisia.

The resolution made specific mention of the non-aligned News Agencies Pool and asked the UNESCO to aid it. Even the US supported it. Though to some observers this support seemed to indicate the Americans acceptance of the Non-aligned Press Pool and the UNESCO's support to it, the US and other dissenting delegations saw the Tunisian resolution as a compromise that would provide the parties with more time to deliberate. It also gave them an opportunity to take constructive action to aid the Third World communication structures, and enabled the moderate Third World, notably the black African states, to join the West in seeking less confrontational approaches.23

The US approach at the Nairobi meeting was revealed in the statement of the US Ambassador John E. Reinhardt to the conference.24 He stressed that the US was present at the conference "to work with all nations to find a basis for consultation and cooperation". He said that no one model or one ideology should be unduly advocated, nor one model be unduly condemned. The US based its successful development on growth with "equity and justice", on the "benefits of a free economy" and on stressing "human rights,

23 Sussman, ibid., p. 33.
24 See official text of the speech by John E. Reinhardt, Fores and Open Exchange of Ideas (New Delhi, American Center, 3 November 1977). Reinhardt was appointed Director of the US Information Agency on 25 March 1977 by President Jimmy Carter.
individual freedoms, a free press ... and the free exchange of ideas and information*. He went on to claim that they are values that need to permeate any new system of international relations .... Accordingly, the United States wishes to use this occasion to articulate once more in the strongest possible way its commitment to freedom of information and expression and to the fundamental human rights of every individual to seek receive and impart information and ideas through any medium regardless of frontiers.

In effect, he stressed the earlier view that the United States recognized the vital importance of communications to the developing nations.

Interpreting this response, one may conclude that the US saw several things in the current situation clearly. It realized the disparities in the area of communication between developed and developing countries as the central issue in the years to come. It became aware that there were links between national developments and international structures. It perceived that dependencies exist in an increasingly interdependent world and hence there was a need to bring the disadvantaged groups into the mainstream of development actions and development benefits.25 This

25 See speech by the Secretary of State, Kissinger, to the UN General Assembly on 30 September 1976, as reported by the Times of India (New Delhi), 1 October 1976.
led the US to articulate its task in the conference; namely, "to make the UNESCO an effective organization through which we can cooperate".

In furtherance of this approach, Reinhardt pledges US assistance to develop the Third World communication capacities.

The US recognition of the sensitivity of the issue marked a fundamental difference in their approach. Till then, America had only indicated that it would resist any restriction on the "free flow" intimating at the same time that it would cooperate in providing assistance in building communication structures in the Third World, through the UNESCO. It now made it clear that the UNESCO should play an active role in promoting co-operative structures between nations.

Debate in the U.S. Congress

In the US, active concern on this issue prompted a widely circulated staff study entitled "The New World Information Order" issued by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (in November 1977). The study suggested that the US could be either a major loser or a net gainer from

the "new order" depending on how it is shaped. It could either suffer the introduction of a regime of censorship in the world or gain the world respect for a regime of freedom. Both these forces were contending for acceptance and the United States could play an active role in pursuit of its beliefs in free flow of speech and information.

William H. Read, a communication scholar went on to explain to the Senate Committee what exactly was at stake for the United States in the communications field. He felt that communications policy issues are at the "pre-crisis" stage and that the US government had time to consider the diverse issues that are related to communications. He outlined the issues as follows.

Some are what might be called "ripening" issues like two disturbing activities of the Soviet Union - Soviet eavesdropping on telephone conversations of Americans at home and Soviet testing of 'killer' satellites. Some are 'traditional' issues like the structure of the American telephone industry .... Some issues appear rooted in 'new technologies' like electronic funds transfer systems and the use of communication satellites to aid the economic and social development of poor countries.

Finally, ... how the government should organize itself to formulate and implement sensible communication policies. Together these issues form a communications policy agenda now before the country. (27)

As Reinhardt, the then Director of US International Communication Agency declared in a prepared statement before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations:

The U.S. and other nations pledged assistance to help the developing world .... Now we must make good these pledges ... because the ideological offensive has only been blunted out not broken, and other nations may not look more favourably on these ideas unless they see real progress toward redressing the imbalance. More important, however, than simply winning a point ideologically is the need to keep faith with our own basic morality and principles. (28)

Other experts who testified before the Committee also voiced their concern regarding the United States' policy in international communications. Some of them underlined the need for coordination and some form of legislation which would create an official forum to debate these issues in advance. It was evident that an awareness with regard to the lack of US policy initiatives in the field of communications was beginning to be identified. Further, it was increasingly felt that representation of US interests by multiple agencies (both official and non-governmental organizations) in the NWICO debates placed America at a disadvantage. (29) Most of them however, recommended that the United States should continue to enunciate

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28 See statement by Reinhardt, ibid., p. 220.
29 Ibid., pp. 8-10.
its basic policy in favour of "free flow doctrine", to illustrate the dangers of government control and to take positive action to help those with legitimate grievances. In this connection William Harley, the media consultant employed by the Department of State said that the threat to the freedom of the press arises when the government controlled news agencies act as the exclusive disseminator of news for a country or region. What was even more " alarming" was

the growing tendency for the Third World countries to emulate the Soviet bloc countries in closing themselves off from outside scrutiny. This brokers (sic) a marriage of convenience between authoritarian communism and Third World nations whose fear of foreign domination can be exploited in the direction of government control of communications. (30)

Commenting on this alliance, he said that the issue would again come up in the 1978 General Conference and it was in the US interests to oppose actions within the UN system that would diminish free communications.

To the Congress, the answer to the question of what exactly the US should do in an "international warfare" over communication issues was reflected in Senator McGovern's

statement that time had come to examine "in a systematic way, the implications of international communications and information". He pointed out to the fact that the developing countries were talking about a "new international information order" as a corollary to the "new international economic order" and that they viewed information issues as important as issues relating to "energy". In his view, it was clear that the Soviet sponsored declaration on the media, the creation of the non-aligned news agencies and other developments, restricted or denied the access of the US news media into countries which influence American foreign policy. Hence, it was time to call for the "bottom line", in this instance it meant a vigorous opposition to the concept of a NWICO.31

The Congressional concern over media issues manifested itself in other aspects. On the domestic context, legislative efforts were made to counter the pressures on the freedom of press due to concentration in the media industry.32 The fundamental debate was on the question whether the convergence of first amendment and the principle


of free competition was against governmental intervention in the form of "non-regulatory anti-trust laws", where monopoly existed. The majority opinion seemed to indicate that most Americans feared the growth of newspaper chains and power concentration in the hands of media conglomerates. The international ramifications of these media conglomerates and the efforts of the developing countries to curb them however, did not find favour with the Congress. For instance, the Congress continued to look at the concept of NWICO in a hostile manner. Congressman Brown (California) felt that the "frustrations of the Third World" caused them to align behind the Soviet sponsored draft on Mass Media and its role in society. He argued that many non-aligned countries have united behind the banner of "a new world information order" in order to press for changes in information and communication flow. He felt that the US strategy to counter the challenges was often "desultory" and "defensive". He cautioned the United States from the danger of ignoring the gap that existed between "information rich" and information poor countries and concluded that the US past position in this debate

was "most alarming", and needed to be reexamined. 34

Many others felt that way to meet the challenges would be to strengthen the process of communication policy making at home. They felt that the creation of an responsible agency by effective legislation would enable the United States to balance its commercial and trade interests with ideological question relating to the first amendment. 35

Labour Organizations

The call for an NWICO also produced reactions from the US labour organizations. In 1977, the then President of the Communication Workers of America (CWA), an affiliate of the American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), explained the implications of international communication for American foreign policy. He stated that while America has stood for an open communication policy both domestically and internationally, it had been opposed by the Soviet Union and some countries of the Third World. He asserted that the communication workers strongly disagreed with the charge


of "cultural imperialism" levelled by the Soviet Union and others and rejected the new concept of "information sovereignty".

He highlighted the "glaring reality" of present-day international communications by pointing out that the governance of the flow of ideas had become politicized due to the differing perceptions of the West and the East. He maintained that the "oppressive regimes" which wanted censorship and control endangered the lives of many trade unionists and workers if they chose to oppose it. At the same time, he emphasized that the US' policy of "free trade" in communication equipment gave other European nations unfair trade advantages. These countries erected stiff barriers of protection in their home fronts but were able to take advantage of the lenient trade policy followed by Americans. Testifying to a Congressional committee, he warned that unless the US reassessed its policy in the areas of "free trade" and "free flow of information", it would seriously jeopardize American interests worldwide.36

U.S. Governmental Agencies

Other public documents also indicated that the defense

36 Statement by Glenn E. Watts, The Implications of International Communications and Information, n. 7, pp. 255 and 274.
of the principle of free flow would be the underlying rationale for the subsequent US positions taken in the UNESCO.\textsuperscript{37} Elucidating the official concern at maintaining this posture, several officials argued that "new ways" must be found to handle these issues to "make possible a reasonably open yet stable new order". One of the options considered was the offer of substantial technical assistance by the US and other industrialised nations to meet the challenges from the Third World.\textsuperscript{38} It was recognised that failure to keep up such promises would cause reprisals from the Third World, which may "make things go badly for us in handling the draft declaration". Evidence also indicated that the US was concerned about the impact of the interim report to be presented by the McBride Commission to the twentieth General Conference of


\textsuperscript{38} For details on the policy options open to the US government, see Memorandum from Charles William Maynes, "New World Information Order: Possible Responses" addressed to the US National Commission for UNESCO, 24 October 1978, pp. 1-5.
the UNESCO. 39

The consideration of possible US response to the Third World problems included another major development. This was a reaction to the document prepared by Mustapha Masmoudi titled "New World Information Order" for the McBride Commission. This document, it was acknowledged, would considerably influence the debates on the draft declaration on the media, WARC 1979 and the general policy debates of the UNESCO. It was recognized that efforts will be made by the Third World to have this concept endorsed at various international forums, especially within the UN system. 40 It was argued that the NWICO concept would not only be backed by the Soviet Union, but also involve other Western nations "who have various political and economic interests to protect or advance in the Third World." 41

Thus, the representation of the US interests in the Paris Conference of 1978 took cognisance of the following: firstly, the debate on the Mass Media Declaration would

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40 Ibid., p. 16.

41 Ibid.
primarily be an East-West confrontation, and secondly, to win over the countries from the Third World to the US position, it was necessary to convince them that the US was sympathetic to their media priorities and the concept of NWICO. The US posture also implied that the adoption of the Mass Media Declaration over its objections would "destroy the possibilities of participation by developed countries in exploring cooperative remedies for readjusting the world's information system." 42

The Reinhardt testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs revealed the US administration's attitude towards NWICO after the 1978 conference. 43 He gave several reasons for the US opposition. First, the Americans are opposed to any imposition of order from outside, even from their own government. They would prefer and "risk mediocrity" than any imposed order. Second, they would resist signing any statement of goals that lack precise definition. The preliminary definitions of NWICO issued by the non-aligned was seen by him as lacking proper definition. But this resistance must be contained by

42 Ibid. See also the news conference of the then Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, in USA, Department of State Bulletin, 10 July 1978, p. 18.

assuming a "creative posture" on the elaboration of the "new order" idea. He stressed that active participation by the US in forming the NWICO would not be merely due to the support given by the UN General Assembly.

He also explained the need for the US to take initiative in the efforts to redress the imbalances as "the momentum behind the effort to redress neo-colonial status in the world, to remedy historical disparities and dependencies ... is in any event irresistible". In his view, America may be able to divert or defer this evolutionary process for a while, but eventually it would breakthrough. Hence, he felt that it would be wiser for the US to shape the future course of the "new order" by being "co-architects", rather than by following a policy of detachment. 44

He concluded by noting that America's "overall purpose should be to make the new world information order resemble as much as possible the order prevailing in our own new world - the United States of America."

Response to the Interim Report

At the twentieth General Conference of the UNESCO

44 See John E. Reinhardt's address to the US-Japan Symposium, entitled "Towards an acceptable concept of the New World Information Order", Boston, Mass., 3 October 1979. Text of the address is available in Wireless File (New Delhi: American Center), November 1979, p. 12.
the US delegation professed the view that the Interim Report given by the International Commission for the Study of Communications (McBride Commission) was good only in its description of the imbalances that existed but its analysis, especially the one which implied state control on the operations of the mass media, was not acceptable. The draft on mass media, according to the US, was not in accordance with the constitution of the UNESCO. The following excerpt illustrates this point very well. "It is the state controls that have been primarily associated with the propagation of war and hostility and racism, and that for UNESCO to sponsor a return to this ... would be to turn its back on its own charter".45

The delegation argued that to counteract it, the UNESCO should provide the means for enhancing practical cooperation in education, sciences, culture and communication. Cooperation should be attracted from more prosperous nations, the private sectors in those nations, the multilateral institutions and the disadvantaged countries themselves. The US insistence on the collective sharing of the burden was ascribed to several factors. First, because information was increasingly recognized as a basic resource that is

45 John E. Reinhardt's speech entitled "US to Help Strengthen Third World Media" (New Delhi: American Center), 6 November 1978, pp. 6-10.
akin to energy or raw materials. Second, the recognition of the crucial role of information implied the need to lessen the gap between information rich and information poor countries. Finally, the redressal of imbalances was a common goal to the US as well as the Third World and hence provided the basis for a consensus approach.

After a strenous three weeks negotiations the Conference adopted the "Declaration of Fundamental Principles concerning the contribution of mass media to strengthen peace and international understanding, the promotion of human rights and to countering racialism, "apartheid" and incitement to war."46

The main question involved in the declaration was on the philosophy which should guide or govern the relationship between the government or media. The process of the passing of this declaration was rendered difficult as the three main perspectives; the Soviet, the non-aligned and the West came from different politico-historical experiences. At times, the non-aligned perspective had similarities with the Soviets. But controversy was inevitable as they were all committed to value-systems which, at times, ran diametrically opposite to each other.

46 Two other resolutions that were complementary to the UNESCO's Mass Media Declaration were adopted at the same time. Amendment to UNESCO's Draft Programme and Budget for 1979-80, UNESCO Doc., 20C/5 1979, and Resolution on the Interim Report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, UNESCO Doc., 20C/94 1979.
The West led by America, in particular, objected to Article XII of the Nairobi draft which provided that States are responsible for the activities of the media in their jurisdiction. It was obvious that it was a Soviet backed idea and the opposition from the US and its allies and media men indicated that it was seen as a threat to the fundamental premise of democratic principles of the West which believed that mass media play an important role in building democratic institutions. They felt that under the system of the state control the media would become an appendage of the state and a threat to the economic/financial stakes of the West. Due to their determined opposition, Article XII was dropped along with Article VI of the Nairobi draft which had provided for "legislative action, consistent with the respective constitutional system of States and with relevant instruments and agreements". This would have in the US view, amounted to the ruling elites' interference in the functioning of the media.

In the final phase of the Paris Conference, these contradictory viewpoints were accommodated by the efforts of the group of non-aligned nations which modified the resolution in which all mention of "intervention by States" was dropped. It was replaced by affirmations of freedom and diversity in the flow of and exchange of
information and encouragement of action toward increasing the ability of all the countries to participate in the benefits from new technologies.47

The passing of the mass media declaration was considered as a triumph for the liberal forces of the West and particularly of America.48 In the words of the head of the US delegation, the declaration "... imposes no mandatory constraints. It is a triumph of goodwill".49 He also commended the leaders of the US media community for their advice and participation along with the role of the Director-General in bringing about the compromise. However, to the Third World, the price for the technological assistance from the US was partly paid in agreeing to the compromise. Implicit in the discussion over the debate was the fact that the "UNESCO constituency" in America was very weak. The chances of the US Congress substantially reducing its contribution to UNESCO or withdrawing from the

47 The head of the Indian delegation, L.K. Advani, stressed the role of the non-aligned countries in bringing about a consensus. The US position too reflected a sense of elation in terms of the revised declaration on the media. UNESCO, Records of the Twentieth General Conference, Proceedings, pp. 1070-2.


49 IPI Report, December 1978, p. 3.
organization was also recognized.

An interesting aspect of the twentieth General Conference was that initiatives in the field of mass communication were subjected to close consultations with major Western Press Organizations and states, the very parties many Third World governments saw as primary obstacles to the implementation of proposals for global media reform. This was due to the effective political and financial pressure by the US in various levels. As the chief of International Communication Agency put it, the ultimate thrust of the resolutions thus reflected US ideas by being more action oriented rather than rhetorical.50

The Media Reaction

The American media however treated the entire debate with hostility. "It should be clear now to every partisan of liberty" said the editor of Chicago Tribune Clayton Kirkpatrick, "that the free press - indeed all free news media are in trouble in the Third World. The scope of the trouble can be measured by the Third World's claim to represent two-thirds of humanity".51 To the delegates assembled at Nairobi, he explained that the mass media in

50 Hornet, n. 48, p. 15.

51 The Implications of International Communications and Information, n. 7, p. 30. See also "What are They Afraid of"? Chicago Tribune, 30 July 1976.
Western nations are "... an early warning device to alert managers of government operating on behalf of the people that the people may desire change and improvement in their stewardship". They operated as a "safety valve to permit protest to be ventilated", and did not function as "a political arm of the state". He said that Western nations totally rejected such a view but warned his readers that the contest over the role of media was not yet over, it would "just shift to a new scene".\(^{52}\)

The \textit{Wall Street Journal} echoing the \textit{Tribune}'s sentiments, cautioned that the US had indicated to the Third World that it would not provide money for subsidized news organizations, presumably of the type owned by Soviet Union. Such organizations would be nothing more than government organs giving out governments' press releases according to the \textit{Journal}.\(^{53}\)

The International Press Institute also voiced its concern. It reported that during 1976, "restraints on the media and the persecution of journalists throughout the world intensified to an unprecedented degree".\(^{54}\)


\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) IPI \textit{Report}, June 1978, pp. 5ff.
Kirkpatrick warned the American Newspapers Association that indifference to this situation would be a mistake on the part of media: "we may find our reporters barred from access to the news in the vast regions of the world. We may find it impossible to send our news into their countries. Even more serious, we may find the virus of authoritarian controls spreading wider and wider with ever increasing threat to us and our fellow democracies". 55

This in general, summed up the view of the American media to the controversy regarding news flow and mass media.

The passage of the Declaration intensified this response. Despite the omission of all mention of state control, the Western media felt that the debate itself was a threat to freedom of the press and that is a dangerous precedent with which the "news flow" may be curtailed. 56

Despite the fact that the United States itself had supported the Tunisian resolution which had proposed the UNESCO funds for a series of studies and research activities, designed to strengthen the communications in developing countries, the media now vehemently opposed it. The Washington Post in an editorial, titled "UNESCO's Assault

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55 Miami Herald, 10 September 1978.

"... this newspaper, which offers its news product for foreign sale, has an undeniable self-interest in nourishing an international climate in which commercial opportunities for Western media are maintained. But this, of course, is no different from the vested interest that the American media - being free, competitive institutions - have in maintaining the same commercial opportunities at home. It is a simple matter of principle coinciding with commercial self-interest, and the principle involved here, ... was set forth ... in the First Amendment to the Constitution. And if it is a sound principle for us in this country, it follows, or so it seems to us, that it is also a good rule to apply to the communication of ideas abroad". (57)

As a matter of fact, the coincidence between principle and self-interest was not "a simple matter" at all. In so far as the media have commercial self-interest apart from their role as protectors of free speech, they may well be subjected to government control in US itself. Article I, section 8 of the US Constitution empowers Congress to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States. Thus, the fruitful coincidence cited by the Post was open to debate even in America, and questioned the applicability of such values in international communication. 58


The US media however continued to attack the UNESCO involvement in the media question. The New York Times warned in an editorial that "if it turns out to be impossible to reject this attempt to tamper with our basic principles, there is always the alternative of rejecting the UNESCO itself". It argued further that "the good it does is not worth the price it demands". Unless the United Nations changed its attitude, wrote the New York Times on 27 November 1978, "it will soon be regarded in many lands as not only irrelevant but inimical".

Other media spokesmen also viewed the criticism on the Western media, as serving narrow national interests in media business. As William Streehan, Senior Vice President for news, American Broadcasting Corporation said: "... it would be ideal from our point of view if these nations could adopt the concept of free flow of news .... But the concept of free flow of news is so foreign to many governments that they have a pathological fear of any reporting which they do not actually control.

59 Ibid., 8 November 1978.
60 Ibid., 27 November 1978. The New York Times felt that the US, for the first time, accepted the notion that "content" is negotiable and a subject suitable for government discussion. Till then the US had steadfastly contended that this was not the case. The compromise had paved the way for the emergence of "dangerous" trends towards "muzzling" the free press.
These various samples of media responses seem to underline the fact that free trade and free flow went together and that any government financed media or any control by the state was hardly "free".

At the ideological level, the confrontation appeared to be between the two views: "the liberal press ideology" which was also called the "commodity approach" and the "controlled press" ideology of the Marxists who viewed communication as a lever of State power. In the US, some scholars supported the view that the market system of the media business gave different but useful benefits to both the sellers and buyers. On the other hand others argued against the media "imperialism" of the West and that international media were the principal means whereby the elites of developing societies were "attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping national policies.

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61 See statement by Streehan, in Implications of International Communications and Information, n. 7, p. 208. See also the Editorial in Broadcasting, 6 November, 1978, p. 49. The journal argued that the UNESCO resolution on mass media would not "damage" American journalism. However, the pattern of alignment between the Soviet Union and the Third World countries may well be repeated at WARC 1979. The editorial hinted that such an alignment would adversely affect the US communications capacity.

that conform with the interests of capitalist expansion". 63

As the economics of the world business system included the media as an important branch of the economy, and the economic interests played a vital role in any decision-making, the decisions of the advanced countries like the US was bound to affect those lacking economic independence. It was but natural for them to try and change the "order" through defining the role of mass media.

Thus, when the United Nations General Assembly, reflecting the concerns of the Third World, passed the resolution on the New World Information and Communication Order, it reflected the US recognition of the importance of the issues. It also provided a small victory for the Third World. The US along with seven allies had abstained on the specific resolution calling the UNESCO to endorse a new and more just and effective world information order at the 20th General Conference of the UNESCO. At the UN, a consensus resolution on this issue developed because the non-aligned states agreed to a formulation of the NWICO concept which made it clear that such a concept must be based "on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information".

It is important to note that it was American negotiators who defined the order as something that would be "more just and effective" so as to denote the evolutionary process building on the present order rather than break away from it. Further, they also succeeded in combining the concept of a "New Order" to the attainment of international peace and understanding based on "free circulation" of information. At this juncture, there was a strong congruence of interests between the American media which declared that "to Americans, there can be no free speech or "balanced" news unless those who advocate racism, and apartheid and yes, war, are also free to speak. We do not negotiate codes of press behaviour with our government and should not be negotiating them with any other." and the US government position on NWICO. This was indicated by the phrasing of the "new order" with regard to free flow, the goal of the new order as one of attaining "relationships of interdependence and cooperation" and the order ultimately called for an "expanded opportunity to hear the authentic voice of differing cultures and societies in a dialogue made progressively more equal". According to Reinhardt, head of US International Communication Agency and head of the US delegation to Nairobi, "this is a statement of objectives sustained by our own

First Amendment, and ... calls for open rather than constriction of avenues for communication.

The statement of George A. Dalley, Deputy Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs highlighted it further.\textsuperscript{65} To him, the evolutionary process of building a new order would involve the cooperation of all the three worlds. The cooperation and involvement of the countries with advanced technology was essential therefore to redress the imbalances. Conceding that there was a certain amount of validity in some of the demands for rectifying "inequities and injustices", Dalley insisted however that the new order as proposed by its most militant spokesmen was not acceptable to the United States. However, as America was the principal source of technical assistance, "... we are prepared to join in efforts to develop the ability of all peoples to exchange information".

Dalley's testimony revealed that the realities of the Third World media required that the US recognized other nations' aspirations. Hence, it was sensible for the US to adopt a cooperative attitude towards these nations as the national interests of the US would be better served if "we seek improvement via diversity and multipli-

\textsuperscript{65} See statement by George A. Dalley, in UNESCO and Freedom of Information, n. 43, pp. 9-14.
city rather than through uniformity or conformity - including our own brand of orthodoxy". 66

The US position on NWICO was thus clear. There had been no deviation from the "free flow" principle; it was prepared to allow that the basis of communication policies of different countries need not necessarily be based on the US model. In fact, the debate had forced America to understand that any insistence on the doctrine of free flow would be vigorously opposed by other group of nations. 67


67 On how the West and the US should cooperate with the developing countries, see Rosemary M. Righter, "Battle of the Bias", Foreign Policy (Washington, D.C.), vol. 34, Spring 1979, pp. 133-8. The author contends that for cooperation over these issues to be a success, the Western Governments must shed the notion that everybody can be bought. Sensitive and serious planning could produce more sophisticated solutions than just offers of more money (such as aid of the order of $ 24 million pledged by the US in November 1978) or greater access to Western-owned satellites. At the same time she insists on the "free press" ideology and claims that there is no middle ground between controlled and independent reporting. According to Righter, the task of aiding international understanding would require a free press, and Western policy should foster this understanding.
The US-based journalist organizations also responded to the offer of cooperation -- which included grants for seminars, workshops, research studies, internships, training programmes for Third World journalists and technology transfer. It also had on its agenda press equipment, broadcast equipment, and a provision for the experienced personnel.\textsuperscript{68} It was essentially an effort of the private sector to strengthen the US official position in the NWICO debate.\textsuperscript{69}

However, a note of caution was sounded by the corporations that were involved in the field of international communications. Most of them required quick transfers of data, money and communication equipment across many nations. Inevitably, these would be hampered if there were challenges to the free flow of information. This was elucidated by statement made by Hugh Donaghue, a leading industrialist of the United States. He said that America would become vulnerable if the principle of free flow was threatened. Hence, it would be in the

\textsuperscript{68} For details on the extent of assistance rendered to the Third World media organizations and individuals by the Western media groups, see a report presented by Warren K. Agee to the International Communication Division of the Association of Education in Journalism, Houston, Texas, entitled "Drying Streams of International News: Journalism Organizations Respond to Threats to World Press Freedom", 7 August 1979, pp. 7-22.

\textsuperscript{69} For a description of the efforts made by the World Press Freedom Committee to help the media of the developing countries, see Backgrounder (New Delhi, American Center), 16 October 1980.
interest of the business community to back the US strategy on the NIMCO debate. 70

**US Reaction to the McBride Report**

Closely associated with the principle enunciated earlier was the American reaction to the McBride Report. In its stand in the UNESCO proceedings, the United States insisted on the balance of information and free flow of information as a key factor. The Third World's assertion of its political interests as exemplified by their stance on World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC) 1979 was also known to America. In fact, the assessment of the WARC 1979 had led many to conclude that the United States had lost some "flexibility in certain key spectrum areas" despite some gains in other areas. 71 Hence they included cooperation with the Third World countries on communication issues as the main thrust while countering the Soviet Union's strategy simultaneously. 72


Subsequently, in other conferences, America reiterated the same position. The US member on the Commission, Elie Abel, provided a clear focus to the American policy at Belgrade in 1980. He remarked that the US did not insist to hold on to its own position for others. It would, however, disagree with the underlying notion that it was the proper role of the UNESCO or other international agencies to propagate a particular model of media development. He conceded that the precise form of national media institutions was a matter to be decided by the people of the country concerned. At the same time, he stressed the American view that "protection of journalists" which was repeatedly discussed by the Commission, was not the function of the UNESCO. In fact he accused the UNESCO of trying to adopt the role of an "international many", a role for which it was ill equipped and was not necessary. While concluding he said: "In the US, the media do not speak for the government, nor does the government speak for the media. That doctrine

may ... strike some as peculiar, but it is not a matter upon which the Americans may bargain or barter*. At the twentyfirst General Conference of the UNESCO in 1980, the US expressed strong reservations on the resolution which had asked for the adoption of the McBride Report. The Americans felt that the report could be used for supporting the government control on the press. Their delegates raised a number of objections on the report citing that it was "ambiguous" in many respects. Later, it agreed with others that the value of the report lay in its stress over the libertarian values which the United States adhered to as a matter of its policy.74

The head of the US delegation Robin Chandler Duke commented that one of the major US initiatives in the communications was the establishment of an International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC). Despite the considerable merit found in the various programmes of the UNESCO, she reiterated that the United States had "strong objections" to some of the "news media resolutions". The issue relating to the contribution of

74 See official text of USICA statements "US Position on UNESCO Communication Activities" (23 October 1980) and "US Statement on UNESCO Press Resolution" (28 October 1980) (New Delhi; American Center). The overriding US objectives with respect to communication issues was to sharpen the UNESCO's focus on pragmatic developmental aspects leading to the evolution of NWICO.
mass media, to promote a new economic order, definition of journalistic standards and their protection, as envisaged by the McBride Commission, and the investigation of advertising content in the media, were the issues that were going to be the basis for the UNESCO programme in the future. Hence it would have serious repercussions in the US.75

Outlining the US position vis-a-vis the NWICO debate, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Rights and Social Affairs acknowledged that the developing countries had legitimate aspirations to tell their story in their own way, notwithstanding the "rhetorical excesses" of the debate. In fact, the US assessed the twentyfirst General Conference of UNESCO in a positive manner. First, the recommendations of the McBride Report were not endorsed or rushed into implementation. Second, the International Programme for the Development of Communications (IPDC) was established in a form which met the American criteria and third, the "Soviet-inspired resolution on implementing the Mass Media Declaration was drastically "watered down". Thus, the American negotiators were reasonably satisfied that the focus in the UNESCO had shifted from "normative,

restrictive philosophical approaches "to pragmatic action programme.76

**The US Media Reaction in 1980**

The reaction of the media was quite forthright on many issues including the McBride Commission Report at the 1980 General Conference of the UNESCO. The Newsweek titled its report "Inching towards Control"77, and Time magazine termed it as the "UNESCURBS".78 In an essay titled "Global First Amendment War", Time called the Report as "good news and bad news".

The good is that the Commission members rejected the wilder extremes of the Massoudi plan. Third World representatives went along with their Western colleagues in declaring that censorship or arbitrary control of information should be abolished and that accurate, faithful and balanced reporting ... necessarily involves access to unofficial as well as official sources of information ....

The bad news, unfortunately undermines the good .... Reflecting the missionary zeal of its UNESCO drafters, the Report is permeated with a preference for guided rather than independent press. (79)

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77 *Newsweek* (New York), "Inching towards Control", 3 November 1980, pp. 49-50.

78 *Time* (Chicago, Ill.), "Unescurb", 3 November 1980, p. 45.

Thus, to *Time*, the Report was openly inviting "discriminatory legislation" by recommending "effective legal measures designed to circumscribe the action of transnationals by requiring them to comply with specific criteria and conditions defined by national development policies". This was "obviously" aimed at the international news agencies. It also noted a key passage of the report which called for "communication policies linked to overall social, cultural, economic and political goals" of the developing world. This would threaten a free press, which was neutral and objective. In main, the magazine expressed the general fears of the Western media. It stressed that while international organizations like the UNESCO could propose, they could not legislate. Nonetheless, even non-binding UN motions, if broadly endorsed, have a certain moral weight and at the very least, they frequently serve as guides to developing states .... Therefore, if a UN body like the UNESCO, however noble its motivation, were to endorse a new world information order restricting freedom, the first and gravest disservice done would be to Third World countries. (80)

The *International Herald Tribune* also voiced similar sentiments. It cautioned that the estimate of the three year budget (£625 million) was excessive. It would probably be used to fund studies into subjects opposed

80 Ibid.
by Western newsmen and revive their apprehension over news control. The New York Times and the New Republic both urged that unless the UNESCO dropped its efforts of licensing the journalists, the US representatives "should simply quit" and "go home".

The American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) recorded a formal opinion on the media issues. It stated that the association would cooperate with the UNESCO on the common goals. However it would continue to oppose actions which undermined world press freedoms and journalistic actions. It described the report as biased "against" private enterprise and in favour of government controls on the press. In a letter to the Director-General of the UNESCO, the association warned that some of the recommendations of the McBride Report would compromise the constitution of the UNESCO. The Chairman of ANPA reflected on the proposals outlined by the McBride Report in the following manner:

81 International Herald Tribune (Paris), 7 September 1980.


Many of these measures strike directly at a free, unfettered press, which history has shown is one of the best methods man has ever devised for the support of civil and political liberties. And it is ironic, too, that some elements of UNESCO and some Third World nations propose these reins on a free press in the name of freedom equal opportunity and a better life for all of the world's peoples. (84)

He argued that the "real aim" of the Third World advocates on NWICO was to undermine the "editing processes in independent hands". In his view, the task of the representatives of "the free press" was to alert all Western governments about the danger these proposals represent. It should also include an unequivocal opposition to NWICO.85 Other organizations like the United Press International (UPI) also registered concern "over a growing trend, particularly in the UNESCO, to use the justified appeal for better coverage of the developing world to increase government control of the media".86

The reaction to the McBride Commission from various media organizations in the US was made public through


85 Ibid.

the World Press Freedom Committee. Notable amongst them were the Inter American Press Association, American Society of Newspaper Editors, Reuters and the National Association of Broadcasters. Almost all of them decried the McBride report's recommendations on journalistic ethics and protection. It was generally felt that the legitimate desires and aspirations of the Third World in building up a media structure was being used by the "ideologists of UNESCO, and McBride Commission, and by a few, but a very few, of the non-industrial countries themselves to support a restrictive flow of information". 87 Most of them also criticised the "new information order" as likely to mean "information to order", and "a new government information order". To the media, the US led Western strategy in the UNESCO was "ill-prepared and defensive". 88


88 Sunday Times (London), 26 October 1980. These views coincided with a report on the Third World coverage of Western news agencies published by Robert L. Stevenson, a distinguished US communication scholar. In his view, it is not true to assert that the Western agencies ignore the Third World in their regional services. Further, he refuted the contention that the Western agencies had singled out the Third World, for a special "biased" treatment. The real problem was that there was "too much information", but it did not increase the public's knowledge of a complicated world. See Robert L. Stevenson, "The Western News Agencies Do Not Ignore the Third World", in The Editor and Publisher, 5 July 1980, pp. 11-12 and 32.
The Western acceptance of NWICO in principle was viewed as "naive" and that it did not put to rest the irreconcilable conflict over the role of the press. The Western policy, according to them, should aim at meeting real Third World needs within the political framework of Western liberalism. For example, the New York Times asked its readers to consider what was the best way to obtain "wider and more balanced" information. The Times advised that the way set forth by the supporters of the more radical version of the new world information order and their allies in the Soviet bloc was in the direction of control of Western news media, in order to allow the media in the developing world grow. The Western initiatives concentrated in the building up the technical resources and skills that would enable the Third World to play a greater role in global information network. In the Times view it would be more sensible if the developing countries do not attempt to block or destroy the existing capacities of the advanced countries, which can immensely assist their own development. The concern over the fact that very few of the American newspaper editors were familiar with the term "new world information order" and the debates that had been taking place on the issue was voiced by a

minority. Some of them cautioned the American press from viewing the UNESCO debates through "narrow parochial eyes instead of taking a broader, historical perspective which would reveal the Third World's growing efforts to develop their own communication systems and gain control of their own resources." For instance the editorial of New York Times of 24 October titled "UNESCO as Censor" was stated to be based on inaccurate information. Some offered a number of suggestions to the American Press. They were asked to carefully evaluate the Third World concerns instead of viewing them monolithically and to report intelligently and more frequently on them. It was maintained that while the term "new information order" was not totally acceptable it would be a mistake for the US to withdraw from the UNESCO at this juncture. According to this viewpoint America needed to worry more about its isolation in the UN and its agencies.

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90 Ibid. It was obvious that by then, the US media highlighted the "media aspects" of the UNESCO debate in a patently negative manner and almost ignored other important areas which were included by the Third World.

91 Lawrence Schneider, "Abel Sets Record Straight on UNESCO", in Editor and Publisher, 8 November 1980, p. 11.

The vigorous debate within the US media provided the grounds for the subsequent official reaction to the NWICO debate. This was illustrated by the US International Communication Agency's analysis on NWICO. It clearly set forth the American stance in the following words:

The United States accepts the diagnosis of imbalances in the world of communications and information capacities. It believes in the need for corrective action and does not recoil from NWICO banner as such .... For the US however, the emphasis must be on practical and not the rhetorical. We believe the debate has now entered a second phase, in which the attempt to impose restrictive measures on communications freedom will be supplanted by cooperative steps to build up communications capacity. (93)

This posture was well illustrated by the two resolutions the US successfully negotiated to acceptance at the 1978 and 1980 General Conference of the UNESCO with regard to NWICO and McBride Report.