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**TELEVISION TOWN HALL MEETINGS:  
Publicity and Democratic Deliberation in the Public Sphere.**

**A Case Study of the  
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's 1996  
*Town Hall with the Prime Minister.***

by  
Bernard Beckhoff

A Thesis Submitted to  
The College of Graduate Studies and Research  
Through the Department of Communication Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
1999.



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of 'television town hall meetings.' The term television town hall meeting (TTM) refers to television programmes that feature political discussion between political leaders and a live studio audience of citizens. Public participation in this type of discursive forum appears to represent a democratization of the process of political media coverage and the process of public opinion formation itself.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the television town hall meeting as a genre of public political interaction within the public sphere. Livingstone and Lunt (1994: 4) suggest that the mass media are attempting three roles with audience discussion programmes such as television town hall meetings. First, they can "act as spokesmen for the people to both government and experts, conveying opinions, experiences, information and criticism upwards to the elite." Second, they can "allow the public to hold politicians to account directly, rather than by proxy." Finally, they can "provide a social space for communication among the lay public itself, both in the form of the audience and in its relation between studio and home audiences, and thus give everyday experiences and opinions a new and powerful legitimization."

This study examines the contributions of television town hall meetings to 'deliberative democracy' in the public sphere according to their ability to promote public advocacy, command political accountability, and provide an adequate social space of public communication.

# DEDICATION

To Suzanne, your love has made all the difference in my life.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee; my advisor Dr. Myles Ruggles for his guidance and understanding, and Dr. James Winter and Dr. Deborah Cook for their comments and attention to detail.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Television, Town Hall Meetings and the Public Sphere

Televised debates between political party leaders can be dramatic and polemical events in elections. In recent elections, television debates have taken new forms, and one of the most significant of these is the Television Town Hall Meeting (TTM). TTMs are unlike conventional television debates in that participation is not restricted to political party leaders and journalists, but includes a live studio audience of citizens. The public participation of an audience of citizens in this type of discursive forum appears to represent a democratization of the process of election media coverage and public opinion formation itself.

TTMs were popularized during the 1992 Presidential Elections, most notably through the campaigns of Bill Clinton and Ross Perot, and from the participation of the audience in the second Presidential Debate. In Canada, TTMs were also a feature of the 1993 Canadian general election. As part of its nightly news programme, *Prime Time News*, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) produced four one-hour long 'electronic town halls.' According to executive producer Tony Burman, the programmes were part of an overall objective of providing election coverage that presents useful information for audiences, while also addressing the sense of alienation that people feel about the political process.

These town halls were successful in the measure that they received favourable ratings. Approximately 1.01 million people watched the final town hall (Lumb,



1995:111). Moreover, the town halls received more responses to the CBC “viewer talk-back line” than any other form of election coverage. Burman felt that the town halls were worthwhile in that they indicated a real attempt to get public views on the agenda. However, in providing useful information to the electorate, the town halls were perhaps less effective. Lionel Lumb describes the town halls as having “turned private citizens into instant pundits, challenging and discomfoting politicians [...] many participants went far beyond asking questions of the captive politicians [...] venting open hostility and listing grievances.” (1994: 107). Burman acknowledges that the programmes provoked partisan comment, but argues that the hostility reflected the mood of the public and was not caused by the format. The purpose of the forum, Burman would contend, is to reflect the current disposition of the public rather than showcase partisan perceptions.

Following the popularity of television town hall meetings in the 1993 election, the CBC produced an annual series of programmes called *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*. These programmes featured the Prime Minister directly answering questions from a studio audience of Canadians from across the country. Previously, the CBC had mainly produced television town hall meetings in relation to particular political events (e.g., elections and referendums). The *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, on the other hand, was produced annually so as to provide a regular review of the government’s performance and this may be why these programmes received little press coverage. Only one major daily Canadian paper reported on the 1995 *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, and questions from the studio audience were not mentioned in the article (Winsor, 1995).

The fourth and final *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, broadcast on Tuesday, December 10, 1996, was an exception. At the time this programme was produced, Prime

Minister Jean Chrétien was about to begin the fourth year of his mandate. Since being elected as Prime Minister, Chrétien had consistently maintained strong popularity in public opinion polls. As a result, many people were openly predicting an early election -- perhaps as soon as spring. The annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* thus presented itself as an opportunity for Chrétien to exercise his public relations skills in the lead up to an election campaign. However, it was also an occasion for a critical review of Chrétien's record over his 1993 campaign promises.

Although Chrétien himself steadily enjoyed high approval ratings, his Liberal government had failed to deliver some key election promises. Job creation was a central theme of the Liberal Party's election platform. At the time of the 1993 election, the official national unemployment figures stood at eleven percent. The Liberals promised 'jobs, jobs, jobs,' but after three years of being in government, national unemployment figures persistently hovered around ten percent. Part of the reason for the steady rate of unemployment is that once the Liberal government was elected they did not initiate policies of job creation but rather undertook an aggressive campaign of reducing the federal government's deficit by cutting back on the budgets of all federal departments (except aboriginal affairs) and reducing provincial transfer payments. Maude Barlow observed Paul Martin's pledge upon being sworn in as finance minister, "to give top priority to growth and jobs [...] to his [1995] budget speech, in which all else was subordinated to the one overriding imperative of cutting spending, seemed unfathomable" (Barlow, 1995: 126). Indeed, the pace and extent of cuts to social spending significantly strained the provision of social services, particularly in the areas of health care, education and social welfare across Canada.

In addition, the Liberals had been promising for years to do away with the Goods and Services Tax (GST), an unpopular tax introduced under the previous Progressive Conservative Government. During the 1993 election, Liberal candidate Sheila Copps, who later became Deputy Prime Minister, made explicit promises that she would resign if the tax was not abolished. After three years in office, Liberal government had not abolished the GST but only harmonized it with some provincial taxes. Copps was forced to keep her word and resigned, but was re-elected by her constituents in a by-election. Then, Finance Minister Paul Martin openly admitted that apart from harmonization the GST would remain unchanged. Despite these acknowledgments, Prime Minister Chrétien had steadfastly refused personally to account for what had become a broken election promise.

Finally, the Liberal government performed poorly on the national unity front. In 1995, the Quebec government launched a referendum seeking a mandate to negotiate Sovereignty-Association with the federal government and came within one percentage point of obtaining a simple majority approval. Chrétien was criticized for not having seriously countered the threat of separation until the final weeks of the referendum. Since then, the Liberal government has considered a “contingency plan” in case of a possible mandate by Quebec to secede from Canada.

With speculation of an early election circulating, Chrétien faced pointed questions on each of these issues in the fourth annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*. As with the 1993 electronic town halls, the political guest was challenged and discomfited, and again the audience appeared hostile. This time, the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* caught the attention of opposition parties and journalists who contended that the attitude

of the studio audience properly reflected the concerns of the public and the Prime Minister's corresponding ambivalence towards them.

In reaction, government sources rumoured that the CBC had manipulated the programme to entrap the Prime Minister. This compelled the CBC to defend the legitimacy of the programme publicly in a series of press articles. A public debate over the programme ensued between politicians, print journalists, and television producers that revealed much about their views about the appropriate relationship between the media, the public, and the state in a democratic society.

It is the intent of this study to investigate the 1996 *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* as a case study in whether a TTM can function as a genre of deliberative or discursive democracy. A deliberative democracy depends, "on the one hand, on institutionalizing the necessary (but not sufficient) procedures and conditions of communication and, on the other, the interplay between institutionalized decision making and informally yet rationally shaped public opinion." (Chambers 1995: 247).

The idea of deliberative democracy is central to the concept of a democratic public sphere. According to Habermas (1974: 55), the idea of the public sphere turns on the notion that public opinion is formed in conversation between private citizens who have come together as a public. In theory, interaction within this public is directed neither by market forces nor state bureaucracies. Rather, it is conducted according to the immanent discovery of the principles of publicity and association, privacy and legality, originally imputed to civil society by Hegel (1970).

In a large public body political opinions and information are transmitted and acquire influence through the publicity of mass print and broadcasting media. Television is

the dominant medium of the public sphere, even though 'public sphering' is clearly not television's dominant purpose (Dahlgren, 1995:148). This is because television's purpose and role within the public sphere are in large part conditioned by its institutional logic. The institutional logic of television, and that of mass media in general, are not directed at publicizing interpersonal public debates between private citizens. Rather, mass media publicity tends to restrict itself to the public representatives of politically influential institutions. In other words, mass media tend to publicize precisely those opinions that have become public by way of market and state administrations.

What then are we to make of the institutional logic of the TTM as a form of political communication?

The TTM is characterized by a live studio audience of citizens asking questions directly to political leaders. As a type of television programme, it represents a political variation of what Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt (1994) call "audience discussion programmes." Audience discussion programmes are like daytime talk shows where "lay people and experts [...] discuss a topical question, social problem or matter of human interest under the direction of a programme host." (Livingstone and Lunt: 1994, 1). However, what distinguishes the TTM from the conventional daytime talk show format is that it allows citizens to discuss matters of political interest with state officials.

Livingstone and Lunt (1995: 5) suggest that the mass media are attempting three roles with audience discussion programmes such as television town hall meetings. First, they can "act as spokesmen for the people to both government and experts, conveying opinions, experiences, information and criticism upwards to the elite." As spokespersons, the programmes provide a public advocacy role in presenting the testimonies of the studio

audience on behalf of the public. Second, they can “allow the public to hold politicians to account directly, rather than by proxy.” In instances where politicians are present in the studio, the programmes provide political accountability by placing politicians in defensive roles against the critical inquiry of the studio audience. Finally, they can “provide a social space for communication among the lay public itself, both in the form of the audience and in its relation between studio and home audiences, and thus give everyday experiences and opinions a new and powerful legitimization.” In this function, the programmes provide a public space of communicative interaction among citizens.

This study examines the contributions of TTM to democratic deliberation in the public sphere according to their ability to promote public advocacy, command direct political accountability, and provide a social space of public communication.

## 1.2 Plan of Discussion

The roles of public advocacy, political accountability and the provision of a social space in the TTM are defined in the study's second chapter. First, the TTM is situated in relation to other similar fora of democratic public discussion. These fora include traditional town hall meetings, electronic town meetings, audience participation talk shows and the town halls of the 1992 US Presidential election. Then, drawing on the literature of media studies, TTMs are examined in detail according to the media roles of public advocacy, political accountability and the provision of social space

The third chapter then develops a theoretical perspective on democratic deliberation as an aspect of the public sphere. This theoretical perspective contains two aspects. It begins with an analysis of the public sphere as presented in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas: 1989), and is followed by a theoretical analysis of rational debate according to *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas: 1987).

The analysis of the public sphere examines the historical roles of the mass media as institutions of publicity. Then, a concept of public opinion is defined as emanating from a critical publicity that mediates communication "between institutionalized decision making and informally yet rationally shaped public opinion." (Chambers 1995: 247). Rationally shaped public opinion debate is considered in relation to the *Theory of Communicative Action*. (Habermas: 1987). The theory of communicative action addresses the *content* and *functions* of everyday communication. Within any discussion, speakers implicitly raise claims that what they are saying is true, that it is appropriate according to

social norms, that they are sincere in what they say, and that what they say is comprehensible or capable of being understood. Agreement over the validity of these claims is a prerequisite to rational consensus and mutual understanding, which are in turn required for the maintenance and reproduction of cultural knowledge, social norms and the identities of individuals.

The fourth chapter outlines how the preceding social and theoretical analyses have been formalized, or 'operationalized,' in an approach to analyzing the roles of the TTM according to the principle of publicity. This approach begins by examining the structure of the TTM to determine whether it is organized to permit rational-critical debate. In the context of a TTM's structure, the principles of publicity are defined according to the inclusiveness of the forum, the freedom of expression it affords, and the autonomy that its participants enjoy. Rational-critical debate is considered in terms of the procedures for validating claims made by the participants in a TTM debate.

This is followed by an investigation of the publicity of TTM. Publicity in this sense refers to making public the interaction between the participants so that the TTM is linked to the public sphere. This calls for an analysis of how the publicity of a TTM contextualizes and concentrates processes of reaching consensus and understanding between participants about the roles of state institutions, public organizations and the mass media.

Finally, the publicity of the participants in a TTM is examined to determine how much is revealed about the political and economic relations of power and dependency between them. This analysis concerns the functions of a TTM in relation to party politics of the state, the economics of television production, and representations of society. This



theoretical approach is applied to a case study of the 1996 annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* in chapter five.

Finally, in chapter six, the study concludes by summarizing the findings of the case study. Alternative models of the TTM format are then presented that, if adopted, might more closely reflect both the theoretical criteria and objectives for public participation in democratic political journalism.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review: Television and Town Hall Meetings**

#### **2.1 Television Town Hall Meetings**

The term “Town Hall” evokes the idea of a communal forum of democratic deliberation and decision making. The eighteenth century settlers of New England developed town hall meetings as fora of local democratic governance. These fora were typically held at least once a year when electors gathered at the town hall to review the public affairs of the town and adopted resolutions for the following year. Citizens were expected to attend these assemblies and understand the issues, which usually concerned local matters such as public budgets, taxes, education, infrastructure and laws. In principle, any person from the community could speak or be elected to moderate a meeting, and final decisions were voted on collectively by the community. (Haley and Horn, 1995; Nuquist, 1980; Zuckerman, 1970; Zimmerman, 1967). According to Zuckerman (1970: 90), the communal convocation of town meetings “gave institutional expression to the imperatives of peace: in them consensus was reached, and individual consent and group opinion were placed in the service of social conformity.”

Despite the utility of town hall meeting as a form of democratic governance, Michael Schudson (1996) argues that participation in public deliberation was not a defining characteristic of American politics in the colonial era. He suggests that the “politically oriented riot was a more familiar form of political activity than learned discussion of political principles.” (Schudson, 1996: 160). Schudson estimates that the attendance of town hall meetings in eighteenth-century Massachusetts was between 20

and 60 percent of eligible citizens. The political interests of citizens deteriorated to the degree that by the 1820's "the vast majority of citizens had lost their interest in politics" (Fromisano, 1983: 17). Finally, by the mid-nineteenth century, few men in the northern states were interested in politics, and fewer still actively participated in political affairs (Gienapp, 1982). Nevertheless, traditional town hall meetings are still regarded as a model of participatory democracy where public authority is not conferred to elected representatives, but is rather achieved through the approval of a majority of citizens.

Electronic Town Meetings (ETMs) represents a revival of the ideals of the traditional town hall meetings in forms of representational governance back. The idea behind ETMs is to use electronic communication such as computers, telephones, television and radio, to extend participation in the forum beyond the local setting to potentially larger and remote areas. Coincidentally, experiments with electronic town meetings in the United States have been pioneered in the remote states of Alaska and Hawaii. For instance, during the 1980s, Hawaii implemented a *televote* project in which a select group of citizens was given brochures and asked to telephone their votes. Likewise, the Legislative Teleconferencing Network and the Legislative Information Network transmitted the Alaska assembly statewide while also allowing citizens from remote areas to participate through *videoconferencing* or by sending *Public Opinion Messages* (Grossman, 1995: 156-157). Although these projects encourage citizens to communicate with the elected representatives, citizens did not actually vote on policies. Elected officials made the final decisions. Televotes merely provided non-binding measures of public opinion.

Haley and Horn (1995) contend that the purpose of the ETM is not to arrive at a resolution but to increase deliberation and consensus building among citizens, experts, and politicians during and between elections. The citizens in ETMs are selected to be representative of a defined population and moderators will assist with the development of deliberation and consensus. An opinion tally is usually conducted “through a scientific sampling of residents or voters in a given area, before, during, and/or after the face-to-face discussion, to indicate the direction of consensus emerging and to provide advice to elected officials.” Finally, a summary of the results of the deliberations and polling results is prepared. (Haley and Horn, 1995: 3). However, such polling is not only taken to give the appearance of being responsive to public opinion, it is also an important process to developing communication strategies. (Nelson, 1989). Governments will often conduct polls to “identify problems with their policy initiatives and shift their communication strategies accordingly [...] Polling is extremely powerful in identifying and manipulating voter opinions, so parties with access to it have a huge advantage.” (Barlow, 1995: 56).

It is this act of polling opinions that distinguishes the ETM from other fora of mass media discussion of debate such as “electronic forums”:

In contrast to an electronic town meeting, an electronic forum is an event, on television, radio, or computer, in which political leaders meet with citizens to answer questions about their policies and programs. It has a definite place in our public discourse, and will develop even further as talk-show hosts explore policy more deeply. There is no scientific sampling of citizens to participate, no systematic pre-post session polling, and no specially trained facilitator. The interaction is direct between politicians and citizens, sometimes mediated by a talk show host. (Haley and Horn, 1995:2).

The idea of ETMs was popularized during the 1992 US Presidential Election. Its main proponents were Democratic governor of Arkansas Bill Clinton and the independent candidate Ross Perot.

As early as the 1968 election, Ross Perot collaborated with Roger Ailes in developing "Ask Richard Nixon," a series of television programmes that used the town hall format to campaign for Nixon's candidacy. (Kenner Muir, 1994: 342; Nimmo, 1994: 208; Harter, 1993:3). The format of these programmes, known as the Hillsboro Format, featured host and football coach Bud Wilkinson. According to Nimmo (1994:208), these programmes redefined Nixon's image as someone "warm, caring, [and] capable of establishing personal relations with voters." This was possible because Wilkinson and Nixon seemed "to respond spontaneously to questions from a panel of seemingly ordinary citizens [even though] the "seemings" were carefully contrived: the audience stacked, the panel carefully "balanced." Nixon's responses crafted."

As a candidate in the 1996 Presidential Elections, Ross Perot advocated the establishment of regular national electronic town meetings as a means of increasing public participation in representative governance. Specifically, Perot envisioned that each week millions of Americans would follow a one hour discussion on a single topic and then send in cards indicating their "vote." These votes would then be tabulated and broken down into districts so that the public would be made aware of their voting preferences. (Denton and Holloway, 1996; Fishkin, 1995: 138; Kenner Muir, 1994; Harter, 1993). However, it was democratic candidate Bill Clinton who most exploited television talk shows during the 1996 Presidential election. Clinton began appearing on talk shows early in the primaries. At the time, he was a relatively unknown Governor of

Arkansas and his efforts in attracting media attention were marred by reports that he had had an extramarital affair lasting twelve years. His campaign then sought publicity by other means than conventional reporting. Talk shows allowed Clinton to evade the pointed questions of reporters while appearing to be more accessible to the electorate. They also allowed campaign organizers to target audiences that seldom read newspapers or watched the evening news. Most importantly, the length and flexibility of the format allowed Clinton to tailor discussions so that he could repeat key campaign messages. In short, talk shows gave the Clinton campaign “more control over message, audience, and context of interaction” (Denton and Holloway, 1996: 30).

Clinton’s appearances on talk-shows began with the daytime audience participation talk show *Donahue*, but extended to include call-in television programmes like *Good Morning America*, *CBS This Morning*, and *Larry King Live*. Clinton even appeared on the late-night entertainment talk show *Arsenio Hall* donning sunglasses and playing a saxophone. However, the preferred type of talk show for Clinton, the format that provided him with the most control, was the televised town hall meeting. Clinton made use of this type of television programme early in the primaries:

We’d done a couple of local town hall meetings in New Hampshire, and there was a huge disconnect between questions the press was asking me and those the voters were asking. [So] I just took that [town hall] idea to television in the final weeks of the primary (Goulson and Range, 1992: 17-19).

Soon enough, local television stations, cable operators and specialty channels began producing television town hall meetings. They appeared on syndicated network

television and even became part of the Presidential debates. One of the Presidential debates was even conducted in the style of a town hall meeting.

In terms of their format, TTMs are more likely to resemble an “electronic forum” than an ETM. With most national TTMs, final decisions are not taken, opinions are not tallied, and reports are not prepared. Instead, they appear to be talk-shows in which politicians answer questions from an audience of citizens. This is unlike ETMs which are either associated with legislative assemblies, or allow citizens to vote on public policies. TTMs are only fora of mass media discussion between citizens and the representatives of legislative assemblies.

This format has particular benefits for television producers as well as politicians. First, it attracts viewers but is relatively inexpensive to produce. Second, and what is perhaps more important, it can make television broadcasters and participating politicians appear to be open and accessible to the public.

According to Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt (1994:5), media institutions assume three roles in producing audience discussion programmes like town hall meetings. First, they can “act as spokesmen for the people to both government and experts, conveying opinions, experiences, information and criticism upwards to the elite.” In providing the means for the public to communicate with state officials, the producers of the TTM assume a public advocacy role. Second, they can “allow the public to hold politicians to account directly, rather than by proxy.” In presenting itself as a means by which the public hold state officials to account directly for their actions, the programmers assume a role in providing political accountability. Third, they can “provide a social space for communication among the lay public itself, both in the form of the audience and

in its relation between studio and home audiences, and thus give everyday experiences and opinions a new and powerful legitimation.” By providing public communication where people can discuss everyday experiences and opinions, the programmers assume a role in providing a social space of public communication.

These three roles are examined in the following three sections. Drawing on previous research relating to audience participation talk shows, the media roles of a TTM are examined according to interactions between participants. Much of this examination refers to specific examples of TTM that were presented during and after the 1992 Presidential Election.



## 2.2 The Public Advocacy Role.

What distinguishes TTMs from conventional political talk shows is that they allow average citizens to participate in mass media political discussion with political leaders. People who participate in TTMs convey opinions, experiences, information and criticisms of people upwards to government. In this regard, a public advocacy role is assumed with TTMs.

As a type of talk show, TTMs can be situated in relation to Carbaugh's (1988) distinction between the *personality-type* talk show and the *issue-type* talk show. The *personality-type* program is common to entertainment talk shows in which a personable host interviews public celebrities with the intent of exposing their true personalities. The *issue-type* talk show, on the other hand, is more topical and revolves around social themes and issues of public or political interest. Although there is cross-over between the two types of programmes, they differentiate themselves in the modes of discussion they employ. The *personality-type* employs a dyadic discussion between interviewer and interviewee, whereas the *issue-type* generates a dynamic discussion across members of a group (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:38).

The TTM resembles an *issue-type* talk show in which discussion takes place between political leaders and a studio audience of citizens. The role of the studio audience in such a discussion is to represent the common concerns, interests and opinions of the public. Communication between the politicians and citizens is mediated by a moderator who is usually a political journalist or news anchor. The moderator "stimulates, guides and facilitates discussion, and allows people to speak -- from their

seats, by coming to a podium, or by giving them his or her microphone” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1992). Although moderators may influence interaction in their selection and ordering of participants, their contributions depend on “the flow of the argument and the contributions of the studio audience” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:39).

Unlike other talk shows that deal with any topic of social, political or personal concern, the TTM deals specifically with current political issues. In terms of political talk shows, the TTM can be defined in relation to Dahlgren’s (1995) differentiation between *elite* and *vox-pop* talk shows. The *elite* format describes the conventional talk show in which journalists interview political authorities. These type of interviews are usually occasions for political authorities to promote or defend their policies and positions. The *vox-pop* talk show, on the other hand, presents itself as a participatory forum in which the populace gets to voice its opinions. It revolves around the participation of a studio audience of “ordinary people” who are brought into the visible sphere of action as “protagonists” (Rose, 1985:329). These people are considered ordinary because, unlike the political elite, they are not representative of public institutions. They have no public credentials and thus have no official political authority beyond their rights as citizens. Since they do not appear to have any ulterior political motivations, their opinions appear as more genuine, or unbiased, in comparison to the contributions of journalists and political guests.

As “common citizens,” members of the studio audience do not speak with the authority of organizational representatives. Rather, they speak on their own behalf and thus tend to frame public issues around their own personal opinions, interests, and experiences. Political issues are addressed using conversational modes of discussion

familiar to talk shows such as “debate, diatribe, testimonials and story telling.” (Dahlgren, 1995:64). The presentation of personal experiences emphasizes the human element in discussions about politics and public interests. Thereby, the contributions of the studio audience appear as “emotionally significant [...] being grounded in their personal experience rather than hearsay or scientific facts” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:39). This is significant in terms of political communication because these modes of discussion can give personal experiences and common sense “considerable status” over political expertise, and can “even appear as forms of knowing which are superior to expertise” (*ibid.*).

For instance, one question asked during the second of the three 1992 presidential debates illustrates the dynamics of interaction between politician and citizen. This presidential debate was conducted in the format of a TTM. It featured President George Bush, Democratic Governor Bill Clinton, and independent Ross Perot fielding questions from an audience of undecided voters selected by an independent polling firm (Meyer and Carlin, 1990: 77). The question concerned how the economy personally affected the candidates:

“How has the national debt personally affected each of your lives. And if it hasn’t, how can you honestly find a cure for the economic problems of the common people if you have no experience in what’s ailing them?” (Transcript, 1992)

Ross Perot was the first to answer. According to Stephen Depoe and Cady Short-Thompson (1994), Perot asserted that “the national debt had caused him to put his private life and business on hold and to get involved in the political process.” His response was

direct, but did not offer specific policy initiatives. Rather, he relied on “folksy language and humor to demonstrate that he was a man of the people”(88). President Bush followed, but was evidently perplexed by the question. He struggled to “grasp the personal, emotional import behind the woman’s question” (94). Bush began explaining the economic factors that contribute to national debt when both the moderator and the woman interrupted to emphasize that the question concerned how the national debt affected him *personally*. When Bush finally understood the nature of the question, his response was vague and defensive:

Everybody cares that people aren’t doing well ... I don’t think it’s fair to say, ‘You haven’t had cancer, therefore you don’t know what it’s like ... in terms of the recession, of course you feel it when you’re president of the United States (94).

Clinton, on the other hand, seized the opportunity to present himself as someone who could relate to the economic concerns of common citizens. He addressed his response in terms of his personal relations with constituents in Arkansas who are suffering from economic hardship:

“In my state when people lose their jobs, there’s a good chance I’ll know them by name. When a factory closes, I’ll know the people who ran it. And I’ve been out ... in meetings just like this ... with people like you all over America, people that have lost their jobs, lost their livelihood, lost their health insurance” (Nimmo, 1994:222).

This discussion illustrates the difference in style between the candidates; “Bush’s style asked for deference; Perot’s called for direction; Clinton favored discussion and mutual decision” (Denton and Holloway, 1996: 32). Their individual styles gave the

impression that Ross Perot was “good theater,” George Bush “didn’t get it” and Bill Clinton could “connect with the people” (Owen, 1995: 136).

Depoe and Short-Thompson (1994: 96) observed that “The fact that the question was not worded as precisely as it could have been was not especially important, for the question had come from an ordinary person.” The average person is not expected to pose precise and well-defined questions. Indeed, ordinary people tend to pose general and open ended question that politicians can easily manipulate and recast to suit their interests. In the context of the second debate. The content of questions appeared less important than their form. “What mattered was the questioner’s persistence, the tone of her voice. The woman forced the candidates to confront ... the need to connect with the economic concerns and anxieties of ordinary citizens. In responding to her question, the candidates revealed a little bit of their public character.”

Thus, discussion in a TTM represents debate between the authoritative knowledge of the political elite and the everyday experiences and “common sense” of “common citizens.” As such:

Mass media public discussion constructs a role for the ordinary person who participates in them, a role which affects our understanding of the public as a citizen, consumer, client, social problem, individual or mass. They affect our expectation of social debate, our understanding of its rules and goals, and our skills in taking part (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:5).

In this regard, the public advocacy role of a TTM can be considered in terms of how it represents public interests. An understanding of public interest is constructed in

the role of the ordinary people in the studio audience as conveyors of opinions,  
experiences, information and criticisms to political leaders.

## 2.3 The Direct Political Accountability Role

The TTM assumes a role in providing direct political accountability by presenting itself as a means by which the public can hold state officials to account directly for their actions.

A live studio audience of citizens can pose a challenge to candidates accustomed to the pointed questions of journalists. It may be acceptable, even commonplace, for politicians to contest or even ignore the questions of journalists. However, it is much less acceptable for a politician to ignore or contest openly a direct question by ordinary citizens. (Fishkin, 1995: 142; Meyer and Carlin, 1994: 79).

Indeed, the previous section illustrates that questions asked by average citizens are not like questions asked by journalists or even other politicians. Research by Meyer and Carlin (1994) indicates that political candidates appear less confrontational with each other in the face of an active and participating audience.

However, getting politicians to answer questions in a non-confrontational manner does not necessarily amount to political accountability. Adept political leaders have developed strategies in relating to the studio audience of a TTM. Kathleen Kenner Muir (1994) observed that in the TTMs of the 1992 Presidential election Clinton exploited non-verbal strategies that primarily relied on physical proximity and making direct eye contact. For instance, when Clinton was asked a question, he would “fix his gaze directly on the questioner and provide an answer; rarely did he draw in the other audience members as he answered.” (Kenner Muir, 1994: 355). Likewise, he would “get as close as was physically possible to the questioner. By decreasing the physical distance as much

as the camera would allow, he could, in effect, decrease the psychological distance with the audience member.” (Kenner Muir, 1994: 356).

Kenner Muir also found that Clinton framed questions from the audience as a problem, and provided a three to five point plan as the solution (Kenner Muir, 1994: 349). In constructing his responses, Clinton used a number of “identification strategies” that served to build familiarity between himself and the studio audience. Likewise, he applied “acknowledgment strategies” that acknowledged “audience members in ways which showed his understanding of their problems and his appreciation for their individual accomplishments” (Kenner Muir, 1994: 352). These strategies included the use of personal narratives, identification with the audience, and reference to his work as Governor of Arkansas in presenting his solutions to national problems. Kenner Muir observed that in this way, Clinton was able to “establish credibility by illustrating that he shared common values and experiences with his audiences, that he recognized their hard work and sacrifices as they dealt with the nation’s problems, and that his experience as governor of Arkansas had adequately prepared him to be president.” (Kenner Muir, 1994: 350). These strategies are all the more effective because the format tends to limit the participation of audience members to asking questions, and it seldom allows them to follow-up on their questions.

However, what is of greater significance than discursive strategies are strategies of organizing the town hall meeting. According to Dan Nimmo (1994), the TTMs featuring Bill Clinton shared similar characteristics. The studio audiences resembled focus groups in that their members represented a cross section of socio-demographic groups.

Moreover, the audience members asked questions related to their representative



groupings (for example, seniors asking about social security and health care). The questions tended to complement the Clinton campaign, producing a series of “recitative questions, and recitative answers” (Nimmo, 1994:216).

Denton and Holloway (1996: 31) reveal that in a 1994 production of a TTM, television executives at NBC followed recommendations of White House staff to retain the assistance of Jean Bowman. More to the point, Bowman was hired because “implicit was the notion that retaining Bowman would improve the likelihood of the president’s accepting the invitation.” On a pragmatic level, Bowman’s knowledge and experience would also prove invaluable in producing such a national event with less than seventy-two hours notice.

Bowman consulted the producers on detailed aspects of production planning including audience selection, camera angles and stage construction. She went over Clinton’s personal likes and dislikes. Her services even included a dress rehearsal in which she played Clinton, mimicking his movements, mannerisms, and answers. Finally, Bowman briefed the studio audience.

The rehearsal was so similar to the actual town hall meeting that the producers knew “how and when Clinton would begin to shake hands with audience members at the end of the meeting.” Despite (or rather because of) the attention given to producers and the studio audience, the Washington press corps was shut out of the studio.

The studio space of a TTM, like any space, has an “internal set of rules, roles and procedures” that are “constituted through the particular accomplishments of the actors” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:162). However, actors who can control the space of the

TTM control its internal rules, role and procedure. These actors are not on equal terms of discussion with those who cannot.:

The partners in the interaction, whether it is the audience or the interviewer and [politician], are not equal in terms of control, power, or reciprocity in any phase of the conversation. There is not a mutual exchange of asking questions, voicing opinions, or stating facts. (Denton and Holloway, 1996: 23).

If politicians are held to account direct by the studio audience of the TTM, then they should not be able to influence or control the debate any more than other participants. The direct accountability of the politicians can only be assumed in the context of a mutual discursive exchange between the politicians and the studio audience.

## **2.4 The Role of Providing a Social Space of Public Communication.**

Consideration for “the spaces from which broadcasting speaks and in which it is heard” is a precondition to understanding the communicative character of broadcasting (Scannel, 1991:2). The communicative character of TTMs can give a new and powerful legitimation to everyday experiences and opinions in the degree that they provide a social space for communication among the lay public. This communication takes place in the form of the studio audience and in relations between the studio audience and the viewing audiences.

Broadcasting offers a communicative process that can at once address a large public and individuals in the privacy of the household. It therefore provides a means of integrating common discursive practices and familial discursive environments. This is particularly true of talk-shows that borrow the voices of familial conversation and reintroduce them within the intimate space of the household. As Patti Scannel explains,

The voices of radio and television ... are heard in the context of household activities and other household voices ... It is this that powerfully drives the communicative style and manner of broadcasting to approximate to the norms not of public talk, but of those of ordinary, informal conversation, for this is overwhelmingly the preferred communicative style of interaction between people in the routine contexts of day-to-day life and especially in the places in which they live (Scannel, 1991:4).

Scannel thereby remarks that talk shows are situated at “the interface of the institutional and the interpersonal” (Scannel, 1991: 9). Just as the voices of the television talk show straddle divisions between mass-communication and interpersonal

conversation, the camera of the television talk show also straddles the division between the studio space and the viewing space of the television screen. Carpignano. Anderson, Aronowitz and Difazio contend that the framing of the screen “is not the visual space of the camera but the physical space occupied by the show and to which the public is invited. The camera is not so much a conveyor of a visual reality as the instrument of our presence, the viewer’s presence.” (Carpignano and others, 1990: 46)

Denton and Holloway (1996) observe that the viewers of the TTM type of programme tend to identify with either the studio audience or the political guest depending on the vantage point of the camera. For instance, the camera can present the subjective viewpoints of studio audience members. Conversely, the camera can take the perspective of the political guests. Again, the camera can adopt an objective perspective wherein the audience is witness to the interaction between the political guest and the studio audience as “surrogate public” (Denton and Holloway, 1996:26).

In adopting the techniques of talk shows, TTMs introduce the common discursive styles of average citizens into political discourses while drawing the viewer into the interactive space of the studio forum.

This becomes significant if we consider that research on the “para-social” behaviour of television audiences indicates that viewers can enjoy a sense of social interaction with television personalities. (Horton and Wohl, 1954). This type of interaction is possible because television simulates the conditions of interpersonal interaction:

People gather social information about someone from television in much the same way they do in face-to-face interaction. The public looks [the speaker] in the eye,

watches the subtle shifts of expression, and listens for emotional vocal cues. The visual information creates a personalized context for [the speaker's] words (Denton and Holloway, 20).

In watching other people on television, viewers can develop a sense of personal involvement and social participation. To the degree that television viewers develop such "para-social" relationships with the participants of TTMs, these programmes present the potential for viewing audiences to experience a sense of identification with the citizens of the studio audience.

Carpignano and others provide a similar explanation for why viewers identify with the participants of talk-show. They contend that viewers negotiate "textual meaning" with the television screen. In doing so, talk-show viewers subjectively identify with the studio audience and thereby develop a *bond of familiarity* with them:

For, the studio audience is not just participating in the viewing of a text, but also in its scripting. It's not just a reader but a writer as well. Hence the viewer at home monitors a space where negotiating of textual meanings is in progress much in the same way as his personal negotiation with the screen. What then is the difference, apart from the fact that there are different individuals involved? Can in this case the public on TV be considered an extension of the viewing public, a segment of a generalized collective of common discourse? Can their relationship be considered a form of participation? (Carpignano and others, 1990: 49)

This perspective suggests that in as much as the viewing public recognizes a *collective of common discourse* in the studio audience, their textual negotiation with the screen can be considered a form of participation.

In relating this perspective to political communication, Carpignano and others (1990: 35) contend that the crisis of representational democracy is not that politics is a spectacle, but that “the spectacle form itself is in crisis.” In this regard “the crisis of representational politics could be read as a crisis of a communicative model based on the principle of propaganda and persuasion.” In contrast to the controlled environment of persuasive political communication, the talk-show would constitute a “contested space” that invites “new discursive practices” to develop “in contrast to the traditional modes of political and ideological representation”:

If we think about the reconstitution of a public sphere in terms of the revitalization of old political organizations, and maintaining a definition of politics as basically a form of management of the state, then the embryonic discursive practices of a talk show might appear interesting, but ultimately insignificant in the grand scale of political agendas. But if we conceive of politics today as emanating from social, personal and environmental concerns, consolidated in the circulation of discursive practices rather than in formal organizations, then a common place that formulates and propagates common senses and metaphors that govern our lives might be at the crossroads of a reconceptualization of collective practices (Carpignano et al. 1990: 54).

The TTM would thus represent a type of political public sphere in which political opinions are consolidated in the circulation of discursive practices. However, Dahlgren (1995: 66) notes that although audience participation programmes might “give voice to groups in society which previously have been largely excluded from public participation,”

this in itself can be “countered by the argument that such access need not necessarily lead to any changes in power relations, but can simply provide an illusion of participation.”

The social space of a TTM need not necessarily be a case of giving everyday experiences and opinions a new and powerful legitimation. Rather, it could be a means of appropriating the voices and opinions of citizens to legitimate established political relations. Lisa McLaughlin (1993: 46-47) disputes notions that talk shows enable “the transformation of hegemonic discourses” or that their “propagation of “common senses” necessarily produces alternative discourses”; both of which are thought to suggest democratic participation in the public sphere.

First, McLaughlin contends that the perspective shared by Carpignano and others fails to “account for the tendency of a representational apparatus ... to produce and inscribe dominant discourses along with the alternative ones.” In other words, it does not account for the ways in which “audience participation” is constructed within the structure of the programme. As Livingstone and Lunt explain, “communicative interaction between programme and audience depends crucially upon the ways in which the audience interests and understanding are anticipated in construction of the programmes” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994: 6).

After all, the media institutions “define the terms of social interaction ... style and duration of events” (Scannel, 1991:2). The style, duration and terms of interaction thereby define the roles and identities of the participants. The contributions of individual audience members in the structure of TTMs are usually limited to asking questions without the opportunity to follow-up with subsequent questions. This practice confines their contributions to the degree that they cannot adequately present alternatives to the

prevailing political discourse. Moreover, most studio audience members do not have the means of publicizing their opinions to the extent that they can in a TTM. Political guest and mediators, on the other hand, have established means of publicity and can thus re-frame, or otherwise “spin” the discourses of the studio audience to suit their interests. In this manner, resistant discourse can be resolved within the framework of dominant political discourses.

Second, McLaughlin argues that Carpignano and others romanticize the “common senses” of a working class public (McLaughlin, 1993: 53). She questions whether “common sense” is necessarily preferable to “expert knowledge.” Citing Peters and Cmiel (1991: 221) she recalls that it is “wrong to think that wisdom in ‘the public’ can arise independently from public institutions, forums, culture, education, taste, character, and so on.” Rather, the wisdom that is dispensed in talk show discussion is still largely “implicated in the prevailing structure of power and dominance”(Dahlgren, 1995: 66).

Like the mass media in general, audience participation programmes have been accused of being “a trick to capture a passive mass audience through the illusion of influence and involvement,” and that they have “a narcotizing function on their audience, undermining the practice of democracy.” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:15).

Whether everyday experiences and lay public opinions gain a new and powerful legitimation from a TTM depends on whether a TTM constitutes a social space of public communication in which the dominant discourses of the political elite can be effectively challenged.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Theoretical Perspective 1: Deliberation, Publicity and Rational Communication in the Public Sphere**

#### **3.1 Democratic Deliberation in the Public Sphere.**

Livingstone and Lunt (1994: 3-4) suggest that audience discussion programmes such as television town hall meetings allow the mass media to assume three new roles: a public advocacy role; a role in providing direct political accountability, and; a role as a social space for public communication. These roles appear in contrast in Blumler's (1970) four conventional roles of television current affairs programmes, which Livingstone and Lunt summarize as: "acting as spokesmen for the government; conveying information to the public; providing independent comment and criticism; editorializing on behalf of preferred policies or parties."

Their perspective on audience participation talk-shows, along with the views shared by Carpignano and others (1990), suggests that TTMs represent a democratization of mass media political deliberation. However, others such as McLaughlin (1993), would suggest that programmes like TTMs simply reinforce prevailing political structures of domination.

The debate over the democratic potential of mass media discussion can be understood by examining it from the perspective of the discourse theory. Simone Chambers identifies two areas of analysis in discursive theory:

First, there is the recognition and analysis of the real-world processes through which a citizen body generates the recognition necessary to sustain a stable system of justice. Culture and communication underpin this process. This analysis brings

out the consensual foundation to all stable systems of rules and norms. Overlaid upon this social analysis is the theoretical/ethical analysis, which points to the optimal conditions under which this process ought to take place if the outcomes are to represent what is in the common interest. Thus rationalism is introduced not as a rational plan for society but as a process of rationalizing the consensual foundations to society. (Chambers, 1995: 243).

A discourse theory of public participation in mass media discussion would thereby incorporate a social analysis of the mass media as well as a theoretical and ethical analysis of the processes by which mass media discussions rationalize the consensual foundations of society. Both types of analysis analyses can be approached from the perspective of Habermas's critical theory of society.

A social analysis of the media is developed by Habermas in his conception of the public sphere. Habermas defines the public sphere as "a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed" (Habermas, 1974: 198). Access to the public sphere is guaranteed to all citizens and a portion of it arises from every conversation in which private people come together as a public body.

Interaction within this public body is, in theory, directed neither by market forces nor state bureaucracies. Rather, citizens behave as a public body when they "confer in an unrestricted fashion -- that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions -- about matters of general interest" (Habermas, 1974: 198). The concept of a public body is includes the guarantee of a physical freedom to commune in assembly or association, and an intellectual freedom to express or publicize opinions.

The publicity of opinions refers to “the task of criticism and control which a public body of citizens informally -- and, in periodic elections, formally as well -- practices *vis-à-vis* the ruling structure organized in the forms of a state” (Habermas, 1974: 198). In this sense, a reasoning public organizes itself in the public sphere as the bearer of public opinion and acts as mediator in relations between state and society.

Habermas recognizes that in a large public body, political opinions and information are transmitted and acquire their influence through the publicity of the mass print and broadcasting media. At first glance, TTMs might appear to embody at least some of the functions of the public sphere. As a form of television publicity, the TTM is arguably a site where at least some number of citizens actually assemble in person, as a public body, to discuss publicly matters of general political interest. It is also a site where opinions are transmitted and potentially acquire influence through the publicity of television.

However, the TTM may equally represent a public forum where political officials, and even television journalists can engage in the public relations work of publicizing private interests. The potential for democratic deliberation in the social space of a TTM depends on whether the content and function communication are motivated towards rational consensus and mutual understanding.

The following three sections examine the role of democratic deliberation in relation to media publicity. First, section 3.2 examines the normative role of the media in relation to the historical development of public opinion formation in the public sphere. This provides a context for understanding the roles of the media in relation to democratic public deliberation. Section 3.3 then presents normative criteria for analyzing the

potential of the mass media in contributing to democratic opinion formation. These criteria serve to define what the role of the media should be in promoting democratic deliberation. Finally, the role of the media in rationalizing the consensual foundations of society is examined in section 3.4. This section draws on Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1987a, b) to present a framework for a theoretical and ethical analysis of the optimal conditions under which communication in a TTM would represent common public interests.

### **3.2 Publicity and Public Communication in the Public Sphere.**

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Habermas situates the origins of the public sphere in a specific phase of eighteenth century bourgeois society. In the high middle ages, there was a representative public sphere that was directly linked to the physical existence of the ruler. Habermas explains that at the time, the nobility and their estates “were” the land, instead of merely functioning as deputies for it. The status of the feudal lords was thus “re-presented” publicly. In other words, the nobility represented their power “before” the people, instead of “for” the people (Habermas, 1974: 199).

This representative public sphere however disintegrated in the late eighteenth century as the authority of feudal lords divided into private and public realms. This division began in part with a change in the position of the church. The so-called ‘religious freedom’ that arose from the reformation insured what historically was the first ‘area of private autonomy.’ Then, institutions of public authority such as the bureaucracy, the military, and in part legal institutions, asserted a growing independence from the privatized sphere of the princely court. Finally, this cleavage extended to the nobility themselves when their public authority took the form of the parliament and the legal institutions.

Meanwhile, those who occupied trades and professions, “insofar as they had already established urban corporations and territorial organizations, developed into a sphere of bourgeois society which would stand apart from the state as a genuine area of private autonomy” (Habermas, 1974: 199).

In the bourgeois public sphere, the private people of bourgeois society came together as a public to engage state authorities in debate over “the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor” (Habermas, 1989: 27). Commodity exchange and social labour are the means of producing the material resources for the sustenance and reproduction of life. They are basically privatized because they have historically been a function of the private household economy. However, with the development of finance and trade capitalism in early bourgeois society, the realm of commodity exchange extended to the point where “the reproduction of life [turned] into something transcending the confines of private domestic authority” (Habermas, 1989: 24).

The emergence of commercial trade as a matter of socially relevant activity was also marked by an increase in the traffic of news letters and political journals between trade merchants. News at the time mainly concerned information about commercial activities, but as commerce became more socially relevant, so in turn did the news. As the traffic in news gained in social significance the press became more than simply a means of tracking the exchange of commodities, it became a valuable commodity in its own right. The value of the press as a socially significant commodity also made it politically significant to state authorities who enforced regulations on the press such that it was subject to censorship while also using the press to publicize state ordinances. The press allowed state officials to remain in continuous contact with the public: a public that in principle included everyone but in reality was restricted to the ‘reading public’ of the literate classes.

However, the continuous state contact with the public provoked the critical judgement of the bourgeois society. This occurred not only because the bourgeois society distinguished a private realm separate from that of the public realm of state authority, but also because society had developed the critical judgement of public reason:

Because, on the one hand, the society now confronting the state clearly separated a private domain from public authority and because, on the other hand, it turned the reproduction of life into something transcending the confines of private domestic authority and becoming a subject of public interest, that zone of continuous administrative contact became "critical" also in the sense that it provoked the critical judgment of a public making use of its reason. The public could take on this challenge all the better as it required merely a change in the function of the instrument with whose help the state administration had already turned society into a public affair in a specific sense - the press (Habermas, 1989: 24).

Thus, the public sphere of bourgeois society was a "sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body, which almost immediately laid claim to the officially regulated 'intellectual newspapers' for use against the state" (Habermas 1974: 199). The press and public assemblies of the bourgeois public sphere were "the institutions of the public and forums of discussion" by which the public of private people appropriated the state-governed public sphere with the use of their reason (Habermas, 1989: 51).

Private people assembled in coffee houses, salons and *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies), to form a public body that applied critical judgment in discussion over matters of cultural and social interest (Habermas, 1989: 30). Habermas indicates that this type of debate required the public body of the bourgeois public sphere to uphold certain institutional criteria of public debate. These criteria are reflected the following principles:

1. they preserved a kind of intercourse that [...] disregarded status altogether [...] The parity on whose basis alone the authority of the better argument could assert itself ...
2. discussion within such a public presupposed the problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned.
3. The issues discussed became "general" not merely in their significance, but also their accessibility: everyone had to *be able* to participate.

(Habermas, 1989: 36-37).

The authority of the better argument, uncoerced and unconstrained discussion, and equal and inclusive access were the principles under which a public of private people "established itself institutionally as a stable group of discussants" that assumed a public voice. Although the public body of the bourgeois sphere assumed a new "form of bourgeois representation" it did not equate itself with *the* public but "at most claimed to act as its mouthpiece, in its name, perhaps even as its educator" (Habermas, 1989: 37).

The intellectual press were used to publicize debates for the education of the public at large as well as the authorities of the state. The publicity of the press also maintained contact between the numerous assemblies and their wide circles of frequenters. It did by reconstructing discussion within assemblies so that "One and the same discussion transposed into a different medium was continued in order to reenter, via reading, the original conversational medium" (Habermas, 1989: 42). Public debate in this manner was the medium through which the bourgeois public used reason to rationalize the interests of the public into a public opinion:



*“Public debate was supposed to transform voluntas into a ratio that in the public competition of private arguments came into being as the consensus about what was practically necessary in the interest of all” (Habermas, 1989: 83).*

In the political realm, the public sphere eventually achieved the “normative status of an organ for the self-articulation of civil society with a state authority corresponding to its needs” (Habermas, 1989: 74). Habermas explains that the attainment of such a normative status corresponded to constitutional rights that guaranteed the institutions, instruments and functions of the political public sphere. The press and parties were the institutions of the political public sphere. The private autonomy of the household (i.e. family and property) were its instruments. Finally, the political functions of people as citizens and their economic functions as commodity owners combined were the functions of the political public sphere. As a result of “the constitutional definition of the public realm and its functions, publicness became the organizational principle for the procedures of the organs of the state themselves; in this sense one spoke of their ‘publicity’” (Habermas, 1989: 83).

In the history of the press, the period of the bourgeois public sphere marked a brief phase in the press’ transition from a medium for disseminating news to a “medium of the consumer culture” (Habermas, 1974: 200). Habermas explains that the eventual commercialization of the “intellectual press” only occurred after the bourgeois constitutional state relieved the press of the pressure of its convictions. Since then, a commercial press “has been able to abandon its polemical position and take advantage of the earning possibilities of a commercial undertaking” (Habermas, 1974: 200).

However, Nicholas Garnham argues that the print market of early capitalism was more commercially oriented than Habermas suggests. He indicates that the bourgeois press was largely controlled by “booty capitalists in search of a quick profit” rather than being directed by “freely discoursing intellectuals in search of public enlightenment.” (Garnham, 1992: 359-360). Likewise, Peter Golding (1995) remarks that although the independence of the press from the state in the bourgeois public sphere is “often portrayed as a heroic battle for freedom of ideas, it is better understood as a byproduct of the growing commercial viability and vitality of the industry” (Golding, 1995: 27).

Furthermore, the bourgeois public sphere in itself was not as inclusive as its principles might lead us to assume. Women and the working classes, amongst others, were excluded from the public sphere because of their lack of family or property titles. As a result, women’s leagues fought for the emancipation of women from the paternal household, which was a principal instrument of the bourgeois public sphere. Likewise, labour organizations fought against bourgeois property owners over the exploitation of the working classes. In opposition to the bourgeois public sphere, these movements formed plebeian public spheres that were organized around values of “solidarity rather than competitive individualism” (Garnham, 1992: 359). Unlike the bourgeois public sphere, these “oppositional public spheres” did not presume to speak for the public but rather spoke for those voices that were excluded from the formation of public opinion in *the public sphere* (Fraser, 1990).

These movements also struggled against the intellectual press of bourgeois society. Golding remarks that “just as the bourgeois public sphere more generally was, in its very essence, a repressive instrument resisting emergent working class organizations,

so specifically, the bourgeois press had been a successful inhibitor of the radical press itself” (Golding, 1995: 27). From this perspective, the press of the bourgeois public sphere function as a means of “propaganda for the bourgeoisie rather than the embodiment of disinterested rationality” (Curran, 1991: 40).

Habermas has come to recognize that the exclusion of women and labour movements contributed to the dissolution of the bourgeois public sphere. With the diffusion of press and propaganda, the public body expanded beyond the confines of the bourgeois public sphere:

In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the universalist discourses of the bourgeois public sphere could no longer immunize themselves against a critique from within. The labor movement and feminism, for example, were able to join these discourses in order to shatter the structures that had initially constituted them as the “other” of a bourgeois public sphere. (Habermas, 1996: 374).

The bourgeois public sphere gradually disintegrated to the degree that the private realm of society became intermeshed with the public realm of the state. As the state increasingly assumed the functions of regulating commercial trade and social labour, society experienced an increasing *statetification*. Conversely, a sustained and progressive *societization* of the state occurred as social institutions assumed political functions in the affairs of the state. The intervention of the state in the form of social policies brought about a kind of *refeudalization* of society.

Initially, the bourgeois public sphere grew out of a society in which critical public debate was dependent on people reading the press in the privacy of the home. The

pseudo-public sphere of the modern welfare state, on the other hand, grew out of a mass society where culture assumed the form of a commodity to be consumed as a leisure activity that does not require further discussion. The commercialization of the press allowed it to be produced in a form that was economically accessible to a mass public, however it also led to a tailoring of the content of the press towards the appreciation and understanding of, but above all ready consumption by, a broad strata of the population. This process was illustrated in the rise of a penny press that maximized its sales by depoliticizing its content. Thus, the commercialization of the press changed the nature of the public sphere:

The mass press was based on the commercialization of the participation in the public sphere on the part of broad strata designed predominantly to give the masses in general access to the public sphere. This expanded public sphere, however, lost its political character to the extent that the means of “psychological facilitation” could become an end in itself for a commercially fostered consumer attitude (Habermas, 1989: 169).

The development of the radio, film and television media precipitated the psychological facilitation of a “commercially fostered consumer attitude” by decreasing, in degrees, the distance between a text and its reader. With the press, this distance had allowed for “the privacy of the appropriation as much as it made possible the publicity of a rational-critical debate of what had been read” (Habermas, 1989: 170). However, in the continuous stream of sound and pictures emanating from the audio-visual mass media, the reader is not afforded the self-reflexivity that is possible in the appropriation of the printed word.

As such, the mass culture of the electronic media does not concern itself with “Discussion as a form of sociability,” but rather fosters a “fetishism of community involvement” (Habermas, 1989: 158). This sense of community involvement is achieved by transforming the public sphere into a “sphere of culture consumption” through which “social forces are channeled into the conjugal family’s inner space” (Habermas, 1989: 162).

Through the commercialized mass media, the public sphere became a sphere for “the publicizing personal biographies” and “reifications related to the inner life” to the point where the sphere generated by the media has taken on the traits of a secondary realm of intimacy” (Habermas, 1989: 171-172). The mass media’s publicity of private biographies personalizes and distorts matters of public interest to the point where it creates a “sentimentality toward person and corresponding cynicism toward institutions which [...] naturally curtail the subjective capacity for rational criticism of public authority, even where it might objectively still be possible” (Habermas, 1989: 172).

What is left of public discussion in this context is guided by neither the authority of the better argument nor uncoerced or unconstrained communication. Rather, it is formalized as an exchange of personal viewpoints that follows pre-arranged rules:

Discussion, now a “business,” becomes formalized; the presentation of positions and counterpositions is bound to certain prearranged rules of the game; consensus about the subject matter is made largely superfluous by that concerning form. What can be posed as a problem is defined as a question of etiquette; conflicts, once fought out in public polemics, are demoted to the level of personal incompatibilities. Critical debate arranged in this manner certainly fulfills important social-psychological functions, especially that of a tranquilizing

substitute for action; however, it increasingly loses its publicist function (Habermas, 1989: 164).

From this standpoint, the mass media have become institutions for publicizing the “minorities of specialists who put their reason to use nonpublicly and the great mass of consumers whose receptiveness is public but uncritical” (Habermas, 1989: 175).

Whereas publicity should make “political decisions subject to review before the court of public opinion” it serves instead to confer public prestige upon a people or issue and thereby “renders it ready for acclamatory assent in a climate of nonpublic opinion” (Habermas, 1989: 201). In other words, political power is exercised between a minority of specialists to the exclusion of *the public*.

The principles of equal and inclusive access that once characterized the bourgeois public sphere thus gave way to the interests of private bureaucracies, special interest associations, parties, and public administrators. Furthermore, the commercialization of the press converted the press of the public sphere into corporate mass media in which publicist functions competed with capitalist functions. The capitalist function of media corporations is primarily to publicize advertisements, and it is the business of advertising to promote goods and services in such a manner that people will acquire the desire to consume them. This capitalist function however adopts a political function in the practice of public relations. Public relations promote interests rather than goods and service. As such, they are directed at promoting ‘public opinions’ in a manner that citizens will acquire the desire to conform to them. In other words, public relations hide

the business intentions of the advertiser in the role of someone interested in public welfare (Habermas, 1989: 193).

Even the state itself has come to adopt this type of publicity because, just as corporations “evoke in their customers the idea that in their consumption decisions they act as citizens, the state has to ‘address’ its citizens like consumers” (Habermas, 1989: 195).

As a function of public relations, publicity is directed at increasing the prominence of certain interests while avoiding discussion about how to achieve compromise with competing interests. The role of the media in this respect is that of a publicity vehicle for interests that claim to be in the public interest while not being in turn subject to public opinion. The political function of publicity is no longer directed at exposing political domination before public opinion, but rather at creating a “mood of conformity” towards the “publicly presented persons or personifications” of private organizations (Habermas, 1989: 195). Insofar as publicity is shaped by personally represented authority, “the public sphere of civil society again takes on feudal features” (Habermas, 1989: 195). In other words, modern publicity resembles feudal publicity insofar as “The public sphere becomes the court *before* whose public prestige can be displayed -- rather than *in* which public critical debate is carried on” (Habermas, 1989: 201).

The institutions of the commercial mass media thus present themselves as instruments in the attempts of political organizations to obtain agreement, acquiescence or acclaim from the public.

Originally, publicity guaranteed the connection between rational-critical public debate and the legislative foundation of domination, including the critical supervision of its exercise. Now it makes possible the peculiar ambivalence of a domination exercised through the domination of nonpublic opinion: it serves the manipulation *of* the public as much as legitimation *before* it. Critical publicity is supplanted by manipulative publicity (Habermas, 1989: 177-178).

Stated otherwise, the mass media are a means for displaying the competition for compromise between nonpublic interests; those interests that are *for*, rather than *of*, the public (Habermas, 1989: 179).

This section outlines the relations between media publicity and democratic public deliberation from the perspective of two contrasting models of society. In the model of the bourgeois public sphere, media publicity plays an integral role in forming rational and critical opinions through the democratic assemblies of public deliberation. However, this normative ideal of critical publicity is set against a model of manipulative publicity in the modern industrial welfare state. Mass media publicity is not associated with democratic public deliberation but rather has the role of manipulating public opinion through formalized discussions between privatized interests.

The following section examines the role of mass media publicity in contributing to a democratic process of forming public opinion.



### 3.3 Public Opinion and the Public Sphere.

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Habermas remarks that the political public sphere of the social welfare state is marked by two competing forms of publicity. On the one hand, there is a tendency towards *staged and manipulative publicity* that is displayed by organizations to a mediatized public. On the other hand, there is also a tendency that publicity maintains “the mandate of a political public sphere according to which the public is to set in motion a *critical* process of public communication through the very organizations that mediatize it” (Habermas, 1989:232).

Threats to democratic discourse turn on whether “the rationalization of the exercise of social and political authority” is subject to either a critical publicity through rational critical debate in a democratic public sphere, or the manipulative publicity of public relations. (Habermas, 1989:232). Habermas argues that “the extent to which the former type prevails gauges [...] *the rationalization of the exercise of social and political authority*” (Habermas, 1989: 232). The level of democracy in a state would thus correlate to the rationality in the exercise of its social and political authority.

While both critical publicity and manipulative publicity compete in the public sphere, public opinion is their common addressee. Public opinion can either appear as the subject of critical publicity or the object of manipulative publicity. As the subject of critical publicity, public opinion functions as “a critical authority in connection with the normative mandate that the exercise of political and social power be subject to publicity” (Habermas, 1989: 236). However, as the object of manipulative publicity, public opinion is “the object to be molded in connection with a staged display of, and manipulative

propagation of, publicity in the service of persons and institutions, consumer goods, and programs” (Habermas, 1989: 236).

The difficulty with public opinion is distinguishing whether it is the subject of critical publicity or the object of opinion management. Habermas maintains that public opinion was originally identifiable in the behaviour of a public engaging in rational-critical debate. However, with the predominance of manipulative publicity, this classical concept of public opinion has been displaced by a social-psychological one that equates public opinion with the attitudes and opinions of “groups” (Habermas, 1989: 164, 241).

In its social-psychological sense, the public opinion of group attitudes emerges only after it has been diagnosed and manipulated by opinion research. As such, relations between public authority and group attitudes do not require the recognition of differences between public and private, rational communication and irrational conformity. Rather, the “articulation of the relationship between group opinions and public authority is left to be accomplished within the framework of an auxiliary science of public administration” (Habermas, 1989: 243).

Public opinion as such is “not bound to rules of public discussion or forms of verbalization in general, nor need it be concerned with political problems or even be addressed to political authorities” (Habermas, 1989: 243). Nevertheless, it retains the original concept of public opinion because:

the constitutional reality of the social-welfare state must be conceived as a process in the course of which a public sphere that functions effectively in the political realm is realized, that is to say, as a process in which the exercise of social power and political domination is effectively subjected to the mandate of democratic publicity (Habermas, 1989: 244).

This leads Habermas to contrast two areas of communication within the model of the social-welfare state. On the one hand there is a personal and informal system of “non-public opinions” and the other a formal and institutionally authorized system of “quasi-public opinions” (Habermas, 1989: 245-246).

The personal and informal system of non-public opinions differs according to three levels. The first level represents the “verbalization of things culturally taken for granted and not discussed” (Habermas, 1989: 245). It refers to exchanges of taste and preferences between specific groups such as family, peer groups, and acquaintances at work or in neighbourhoods. Each of these groups has “structures of information channeling and opinion leadership ensuring the binding nature of group opinions” (*ibid.*).

At the second level, the “rarely discussed basic experiences of one’s own biography are verbalized” (Habermas, 1989: 245). Here, group exchanges become topical and constitute a system of norms that demands adaptation. However, these norms demand a social control in the manner of fashions whose “shifting rules require only a temporary loyalty” (*ibid.*).

The third level represents the often discussed things that are “generated as self-evident by the culture industry, the ephemeral results of the relentless publicist barrage and propagandist manipulation by the media to which consumers are exposed” (Habermas, 1989: 245). Group exchanges at this level are “under the influence of the mass media either directly or, more frequently, mediated through opinion leaders.” At this level, opinion emerges that are “ready-made, flexibly reproduced, barely internalized” but evoke little commitment. (*ibid.*).

“Over and against the domain of non-public opinion stands the sphere of quasi-public opinions” in which communication is conducted through an institutionally authorized system (Habermas, 1989: 246). The communicative system of quasi-public opinion deals with:

opinions that circulate in a relatively narrow circle -- skipping the mass of the population -- between the large political press and, generally, those publicist organs that cultivate rational debate and the advising, influencing, and deciding bodies with political or politically relevant jurisdictions (cabinet, government commissions, administrative bodies, parliamentary committees, party leadership, interest group committees, corporate bureaucracies, and union secretariats) (Habermas, 1989: 247).

The channels of the mass media provide a link between the spheres of non-public opinion and quasi-public opinion. However, as the previous section indicates, the mass media tend to provide manipulative publicity whereby “groups participating in the exercise and balancing of power strive to create a plebiscitary follower mentality on the part of the mediated public” (Habermas, 1989: 247).

According to Habermas, a genuine public opinion is brought about to the degree that “the two domains of communication are mediated by a third domain of *critical publicity*” (Habermas, 1989: 248). This mediation is possible only through “the participation of private people in a process of formal communication conducted through intraorganizational public spheres.” In other words, insofar as public organizations such as parties and special interest organizations “permit an internal public sphere [...] at all levels, there exists the possibility of mutual correspondence between political opinions of the private people and that kind of quasi-public opinion” (Habermas, 1989: 248).

Habermas states that the degree to which an opinion is a public opinion is measured by the following standard:

the degree to which it emerges from the intraorganizational public sphere constituted by the public of the organization's members and how much the intraorganizational public sphere communicates with an external one formed in the publicist interchange, via the mass media, between societal organizations and state institutions (Habermas, 1989: 248).

Thus, public opinion emerges from the communication between two public spheres. One is constituted by the public of the organization's members and the other formed in the publicist interchange between societal organizations and state institutions. In terms of communication, the former produces "non public opinion" in a *personal and informal system* of public communication between private people, and the latter forms "quasi-public opinions" through an *institutionally authorized and formal system* of publicist interchange between the societal organizations that cultivate rational debate and the advising, influencing, and deciding bodies of state institutions (Habermas, 1989: 245-246). When communication between these two public spheres takes the form of critical publicity, there is the potential for public opinion to emerge.

This section thus presents a theoretical perspective on the potential of mass media publicity to be re-associated with democratic public deliberation. This perspective is illustrated by the following model:

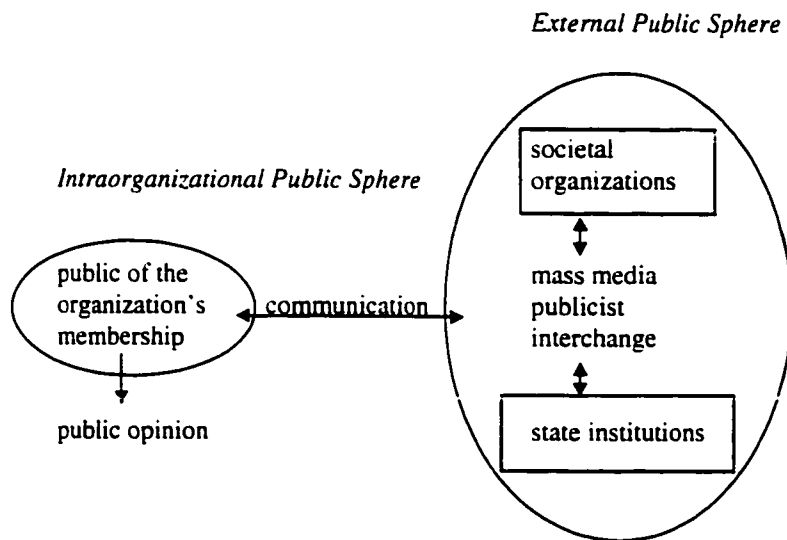


Figure 3.1 The Formation of Public Opinion

Opinions emerge from democratic public deliberation within an organization that is structured to permit its own internal public sphere. These opinions can potentially express a public opinion in the extent to which the intraorganizational public sphere communicates with an external public sphere formed in a publicist interchange through the mass media between societal organizations and state institutions. Habermas suggests that this potential may stand for a tendency, but that “the extent and actual impact of this tendency has to be established empirically” (Habermas, 1989: 248).

The following section will examine Habermas’s theory of Communicative action in order to construct a framework for applying a theoretical analysis to the conditions whereby politically influential media could contribute to democratic opinion formation.

### **3.4 Communicative Rationality and the Public Sphere.**

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Livingstone and Lunt (1994:10) observe that Habermas faults the mass media for “creating a society of private and fragmented individuals for whom it is difficult to form public rational-critical opinion which could oppose established power.” They observe that Habermas characterizes the mass media as “providing a pseudo public sphere that distracts the laity from political action, being a sphere of public relations and spectatorship rather than genuine public debate” Nevertheless, Habermas does advance the notion of an ideal of public communication that “if unfettered by institutional control might generate the critical consensus which [Habermas] considers necessary for public participation in democratic political processes” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994:10).

An ideal of public communication is developed with the theory of communicative competence. Communicative competence is an approach to studying language that seeks to identify and reconstruct the “universal pragmatics,” or universal conditions, of possible understanding (Habermas, 1976). It distinguishes itself from theories of linguistic competence in the tradition of Chomsky because it studies utterances rather than the grammatical structure of sentences. By focusing on utterances or “actions of speech,” communicative competence addresses the “basic qualifications of speech and of symbolic interaction (role-behavior)” that a speaker employs in performing a speech act (Habermas, 1987a: 131). Universal pragmatics thus contains a theoretical category that relates to symbolic interaction and an empirical category that address fundamental qualifications of speech.

Habermas derives three principles of universalization from the pragmatic universals of all communication:

- Any and every subject capable of speech and [social] action may take part
- Any participant may problematize an assertion,  
Any participant may introduce any assertion into discourse.  
Any participant may express his [or her] position, wishes, and needs.
- No participant may be hindered, through coercion internal or external to the speech situation, in perceiving his [or her] hereby established rights

(Braaten 1991: 44).

These principles are similar to the institutional criteria of the bourgeois public sphere that are summarized as parity, uncoerced and unconstrained discussion, and equal and inclusive access. In reconstructing the universal pragmatics of understanding, Habermas proposes that “anyone acting communicatively must, in performing any speech action, raise validity-claims and suppose that they can be vindicated” (Habermas, 1976:1). The reference to acts of speech refers to the theory of speech acts, and in particular to the conception of *illocutionary acts* (Austin, 1962). The action of performing speech, of saying something, is a locutionary act. The illocutionary act refers to the action of doing something in saying something (e.g., to promise, command, request, etc.). Perlocutionary acts relate to the effects of illocutionary acts, or the actions that result from saying something (i.e., consensus and understanding).

According to universal pragmatics, there are three types of illocutionary speech acts; constatives, regulatives and avowals. Constatives are assertions that affirm the truth



of a proposition. Regulatives influence the speaker's relationship with another person or party. Avowals express something about the speaker's internal condition (Littlejohn, 1996: 233).

With each type of illocutionary speech act raises a claim. Constatives raise claims to *truth*, regulatives raise claims to *rightness* or acceptability according to norms, and avowals raise the claims of *sincerity*.

A consensus over these validity-claims is usually implied in conversation. However, a failure to accept any of them requires that they be vindicated in order for communication to continue. Claims of sincerity can only be validated by subsequent actions. Claims to truth and rightness, on the other hand, are "vindicated discursively, by way of argumentation and a rational consensus" (Habermas, 1984:109).

In raising validity claims, Habermas indicates that speakers adopt a propositional attitude to three "worlds," or "domains of reality." Truth claims relate to an external state of affairs and objects. Claims of rightness refer to intersubjectively determined realities of shared social norms and values. Claims to truthfulness express the internal world of the speaker's inner ideas, thoughts and emotions (Holub, 1991:13).

Table 3.1 below outlines the correlation between validity claims, types of speech and the domains of reality to which they refer:

<i>Thematic validity claim</i>	<b>Truth</b>	<b>Rightness, appropriateness</b>	<b>Truthfulness, sincerity</b>
<i>Types of Speech and their Functions</i>	<b>Constative:</b> Representation of facts	<b>Regulative:</b> Establishment of legitimate interpersonal relations	<b>Avowal:</b> Disclosure of speaker's subjectivity
<i>Domains of reality</i>	<b>Objective world</b> of external affairs	<b>Social world</b> of shared norms	<b>Subjective worlds</b> of speaker

Table 3.1: *Content of Communication*

A 'decentered' understanding of the objective world is an understanding that is neither egocentric nor sociocentric, as in mythical thought. Rather, decentered understanding is achieved in the differentiation of the social, subjective worlds from the objective worlds. This differentiation "takes place in, or perhaps against the background of, the lifeworld and it is a central process in its rationalization" (Outhwaite, 1994: 76).

According to Habermas, the concept of the *lifeworld* represents a "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns" (Habermas, 1987, 124). This stock of interpretive patterns "supplies actors with unproblematic background convictions upon which they draw in the negotiation of common definitions of situations" (McCarthy, 1987: xxiv).

In accordance with the objective, social and subjective worlds, the structural components of lifeworlds are culture, society and person (Habermas 1987:138). Habermas maintains that new situations arising in lifeworlds are connected with the existing lifeworld conditions through processes of *cultural reproduction, social integration, and the socialization of individuals*. (Habermas 1987:137).

First, cultural reproduction ensures that newly arising situations are connected with existing conditions in the *semantic dimension*. Cultural reproduction does this by securing a “continuity of tradition and coherence of knowledge sufficient for daily practice. Continuity and coherence are measured by the rationality of the knowledge accepted as valid” (Habermas 1987:140). The continuity of culture ensures the continuity of a common stock of knowledge while the coherence of knowledge ensures that the culture remain accessible and understandable.

Second, the social integration of the lifeworld connects conditions in the *dimension of social space*. It coordinates actions “by way of legitimately regulated interpersonal relations and stabilizes the identity of groups to an extent sufficient for everyday practice.” This process is evaluated according to the *solidarity of members* (Habermas, 1987: 140).

Third, the socialization of the members of a lifeworld connects situations in the world in the *dimension of historical time*. Socialization ensures that “*individual life histories are in harmony with collective forms of life.*” It is evaluated according to the *responsibility of the adult personality* (Habermas, 1987: 141).

Table 3.2 illustrates a continuity the runs from validity claims to the functions reproduction of the lifeworld. A rational reproduction of the lifeworld reduces assumptions about shared knowledge and practices by drawing distinctions between these processes of reproduction. However, drawing distinctions between components of the lifeworld depends on “the interpretive accomplishments” of participants in reaching rationally motivated agreement:

the further the structural components of the lifeworld and the processes that contribute to maintaining them get differentiated, the more interaction contexts come under conditions of rationality motivated mutual understanding, that is, of consensus-formation that rests *in the end* on the authority of the better argument (Habermas, 1987: 145).

In other words, the *rationalization of the lifeworld* represents a movement away from conformity to the norms that are assumed from social and cultural traditions to the development of consensus and mutual understanding in communication between individuals in a society.

<i>Thematic validity claim</i>	<b>Truth</b>	<b>Rightness, appropriateness</b>	<b>Truthfulness, sincerity</b>
<i>Types of Speech and their Functions</i>	<b>Constative:</b> Representation of facts	<b>Regulative:</b> Establishment of legitimate interpersonal relations	<b>Avowal:</b> Disclosure of speaker's subjectivity
<i>Domains of reality</i>	<b>Objective world</b> of external nature	<b>Social world</b> of shared norms	<b>Subjective worlds</b> of individuals
<i>Process of Reproducing the Lifeworld</i>	Reproduction of <b>Knowledge</b>	<b>Social Integration</b>	<b>Socialization</b>
<i>Dimensions</i>	<b>Semantic Dimension.</b>	Dimension of <b>Social Space</b>	Dimension of <b>Historical Time</b>
<i>Standards of Evaluation</i>	<b>Rationality</b> of Knowledge	<b>Solidarity</b> of Members	<b>Responsibility</b> of the Adult Personality

Table 3.2: Functions of Communication

Chambers remarks that a "rationalization of the process through which culture, social integration, and socialization is reproduced allows citizens to reflectively reproduce or change those aspects of their shared lifeworld for which they think there are not good reasons" (Chambers, 1995: 246).

However, consensus and mutual understanding are not the only means of integrating social actions of in the reproduction of the lifeworld. Social actions are also coordinated by external and norm-free systems such as markets and administrative systems (Outhwaite, 1994: 88). The systems of markets and administrations integrate activities in accordance with “the adaptive goals of economic and political survival. They do this by regulating the unintended consequences of strategic action through market or bureaucratic mechanisms that constrain the scope of voluntary decision” (Ingram, 1987: 115). Therefore, systems “offer no intrinsic openings to the identification of reason and will, and they suffer from tendencies toward domination and reification” (Calhoun, 1992:6).

Despite the distinctions between systems integration and the social integration of the lifeworld, both action orientations are interconnected. The purposive-rationality of market economies and the administrative actions of state bureaucracies depend on shared values and mutual understanding. In like manner, culture, society and even persons are sustained by the coordinating actions of state and economic systems. Systemic mechanisms have to be institutionalized in the lifeworld, just as the rationalization of the lifeworld is a requirement for institutionalizing new mechanisms of system integration. (McCarthy, 1987: xxviii).

The danger with such interconnectedness is that forms of systems integration can intervene in the very form of the lifeworld to produce subsystems in which “there is no *necessity* for achieving consensus by communicative action” (Habermas, 1987: 311). The meaning of actions within such subsystems is not determined by subjective interpretations as much from their role in the subsystem. In this context, the lifeworld becomes an

environment where system processes “simply operate through action contexts without modifying them” (Outhwaite, 1994:92). In other words, the lifeworld becomes in itself an environment for the subsystem. According to Habermas, this systems integration in the lifeworld amounts can lead to a colonization of the lifeworld:

In the end, systemic mechanisms suppress forms of social integration even in those areas where consensus-dependent coordination of action cannot be replaced, that is, where the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is a stake. In these areas the *mediatization* of the lifeworld assumes the form of a *colonization*. (Habermas, 1987: 196).

The subsystems infiltrate the lifeworld from the outside. They act like colonial masters who force assimilation upon a tribal society for which the diffuse perspectives of the local culture cannot comprehend the intrusion. The conditions for the colonization of the lifeworld are met when everyday consciousness becomes fragmented to the point where it is no longer capable of synthesizing knowledge. (Habermas, 1987: 355).

The reproduction of the lifeworld and the public sphere are both tailored to the general comprehensibility of everyday communicative practices. (Habermas, 1996: 360). Habermas explains that the simple interactions of everyday communicative practices that reproduce the lifeworld are tied to two different categories of systems. On the one hand, the functions of cultural reproduction, social integration, or socialization of the lifeworld are associated with systems like “religion, education, and the family.” On the other hand, claims to truth, rightness, or truthfulness in everyday communicative action address systems like “science, morality and art.” However, the public sphere is specialized in neither of these two ways;

to the extent that [the public sphere] extends to politically relevant questions, it leaves their specialized treatment to the political system. Rather, the public sphere distinguishes itself through a *communication structure* that is related to a third feature of communicative action: it refers neither to the *functions* nor to the *contents* of everyday communication but to the *social space* generated in communicative action. (Habermas, 1996: 360).

The public sphere is differentiated according to three levels of communication structures. *Episodic* communication occurs between people meeting in public places such as on the street or restaurants. *Occasional* communication takes place among the arranged publics of social events and organizations. The *abstract* public sphere is expanded to include the “virtual presence of scattered readers, listeners or viewers, linked by public media” (Habermas, 1996: 361).

Habermas differentiates between two types of media that can “ease the burden of the (risky and demanding) coordinating mechanisms of coordinating action” (Habermas, 1987: 390). As mentioned earlier, steering media such as money and power differentiate subsystems out of the lifeworld. However, actions can also be coordinated by generalizable forms of communication that do not “replace agreement in language but merely condense it, and thus remain tied to lifeworld contexts” (*ibid.*).

The mass media are an example of generalizable forms of communication that simultaneously concentrate and contextualize processes of reaching understanding. The communicative structures of the mass media concentrate on “informational content and points of view that are uncoupled from the thick contexts of simple interactions, from specific persons and from practical obligations” (Habermas, 1996:361). Furthermore, the

inclusive, anonymous and generalized context of mass communication structures requires a “higher degree of explication that must dispense with technical vocabularies and special codes” (*ibid.*). Although an orientation to lay persons may imply a loss in differentiation, the uncoupling of opinions from obligations has an *intellectualizing* effect. To the extent that these process of opinion-formation are separated from putting the opinions into action, especially were political opinions are concerned, the “communicative structure of the public sphere *relieve the public of the burden of decision making*; the postponed decisions are reserved for the institutionalized political process” (Habermas, 1996: 362).

Nevertheless, mass communication is influential in as much as it meets the approval of the public:

For as soon as the public space has expanded beyond the context of simple interactions, a differentiation sets in among organizers, speakers, hearers; arenas and galleries; stage and viewing space. The organizational complexity and range of media are, of course, furnished with unequal opportunities for exerting influence. But the political influence that the actors gain through public communication must *ultimately* rest in the resonance and indeed the approval of a lay public whose composition is egalitarian (Habermas, 1996: 363-364).

The political influence of public communication means that the mass media are among those “private organizations of society that exercise public functions within the political order.” Habermas therefore asserts that political journalism, “like all institutions which through display and manipulation exercise a privileged influence in the public realm, should for its part be subject to the democratic demand for publicity” (Habermas, 1989: 209).



If indeed the politically influential institutions of the mass media were subject to the democratic demand of publicity, they could contribute to democratic public opinion formation. The democratic demand of publicity can be subdivided into three principles. First, the inner structure of the mass media institutions "must institutionally permit an intraparty or intra-association democracy -- to allow unimpeded communication and public rational-critical debate" (Habermas, 1989: 209). If we define rational-critical debate as the rational vindication of claims to truth and rightness by way of argumentation and a rational consensus, it would follow that such a democracy would conform to the principles of universalization. According to the principles of universalization, "any and every subject capable of speech and social action may take part; any participant may problematize an assertion, introduce any assertion into discourse, or express his or her position, wishes, and needs, and no participant may be hindered, through coercion internal or external to the speech situation, in perceiving these established rights" (Braaten 1991: 44).

Second, in "making the internal affairs of the parties and special-interest associations public, the linkage between such an intraorganizational public sphere and the public sphere of the entire public has to be assured" (Habermas, 1989: 209). The intraorganizational public sphere of a mass media organization would have its own means of publicizing its internal affairs. However, because such an intraorganizational public sphere would communicate with an external one "formed in the publicist interchange, via the mass media, between societal organizations and state institutions," publicity from other media and means of public communication would be needed to assure that the

communicative link with the entire public sphere constitutes a publicist interchange instead of simply disseminating publicity. (Habermas, 1989: 248).

Finally, Habermas requires that “the activities of the organizations themselves -- their pressure on the state apparatus and their use of power against one another, as well as the manifold relations of dependency and of economic intertwining -- need a far-reaching publicity” (Habermas, 1989: 209). Such publicity directed at a public sphere of mass media would reveal the media’s political relations of power with the government as well as their economic relations of power with viewers and advertisers.

These principles indicate how institutions of mass media could contribute to democratic opinion formation, and they likewise correlate with the roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability and the provision of a social space of public communication assumed by the producers of the TTM.

Table 3.3 compares the bourgeois public sphere with the *refeudalized* public sphere according to the communicative roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability and social space.

	<b>Public Advocacy</b>	<b>Political Accountability</b>	<b>Social Space</b>
<i>Bourgeois Public Sphere</i>	Public opinion emerges from rational-critical public debate.	The exercise of political and social power is subject to publicity.	Inclusive public assemblies of unrestricted public communication.
<i>“Refeudalized” Public Sphere</i>	Public relations work seeking mass public consent.	A staged display of, and manipulative propagation of, publicity in the service of persons and institutions, consumer goods, and programs.	Exclusive associations of formalized and managed communication.

*Table 3.3: Communicative roles of the Public Sphere*

The principle that the inner structure of the media institution be organized to permit a public sphere of public rational critical debate relates to how the TTM roles are played out in the interaction between participants. The principle that the internal affairs of the media be made public so as to assure a linkage with the public sphere related to how the roles of the TTM are developed in its capacity for critical publicity and rational understanding. Finally, the principle that the activities of the media institutions themselves be subject to publicity relates the relations of power between the participants of a TTM.

The following chapter compares the roles of the TTM to the principles of publicity. This comparison provides an analytical approach to evaluating the potential for a TTM in contributing to a democratic formation of public opinion.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Theoretical Perspective 2: The TTM and the Public Sphere

#### 4.1 Background to the TTM and the Public Sphere.

This chapter presents an approach to evaluating whether the roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability and the social space of a Television Town Hall Meeting (TTM) have the potential to contribute to democratic opinion and consensus-formation in the public sphere.

In chapter two, the format of the TTM was examined as a model of political communication that publicizes discussion between political leaders, television broadcast journalists, and a live studio audience of citizens. Livingstone and Lunt (1994:5) suggest that the mass media assume three roles in producing audience discussion programmes like TTMs. The characteristic features of these TTM roles are summarized in table 4.1 below:

<b>Roles of a TTM</b>	<b>Characteristic features of the roles</b>
Public Advocacy	Studio audience as surrogate public
Direct Political Accountability	Political discussion between political authorities and citizens
Social Space of Public Communication	Legitimation of lay political opinions

*Table 4.1: Features of a TTM*

Chapter three discussed the role of media publicity in forming public opinion in the public sphere. First, a normative ideal of publicity was presented in the model of the bourgeois public sphere. Within this model, the press facilitated communication between the assemblies of private individuals who came together as a sovereign public. This

public used the press to advocate public interests and make state authority accountable in principle to the rationality of public opinion. Public assemblies and the press formed the institutions that provided a social space of public advocacy and political accountability.

However, this model of publicity appears in contrast to a model of manipulative publicity that is characteristic of modern mass media corporations. Habermas explains that the mass media do not advocate public interests but rather provide a public audience for the publicity of organized, specialized and privatized interests. Likewise, public authority is not accountable to public opinion so much as public opinion is the means by which private interests justify their public authority. The social space of the media is not one of public communication but is rather monopolized by public relations specialists who engage in a modern form of publicity that resembles the pageantry of feudal publicity.

TTMs appear to share similarities with publicity in the bourgeois public sphere. In its public advocacy role, the TTM publicizes the opinions of this public body, while political authorities are accountable to respond directly to these opinions in the direct political accountability role of the TTM. In its role as a social space, the TTM is a site where at least some number of citizens actually assemble in person, as a public body, to publicly debate matters of general political interest.

However, TTMs can equally perform the functions of manipulative publicity in a refeudalized public sphere. A TTM can simply be a staged public event whereby political authorities engage in formalized and managed discussion with a selective assembly of citizens.

The contributions of TTMs to either public communication or public relations, critical publicity or manipulative publicity, depend on the level of democratic interaction between its participants. This interaction refers not only to democratic discussion but to the democracy of the institutional form of a TTM. Simone Chambers remarks, “the institutional arrangements that make discourse possible must be justified by a discourse.” (1995: 241). Likewise, the institutional arrangements that make a TTM should themselves be justified by a discourse that is subject to the democratic demand of publicity. Habermas (1989: 209) outlines the normative criteria under which the politically influential institutions of the mass media could contribute to democratic opinion formation. (*see pages 64-66.*) These criteria raise three questions about the TTM as a public sphere:

1. Is the TTM structurally organized according to the principles of publicity such that it permits a public sphere of rational-critical debate?
2. Are the internal affairs of the TTM made public so as to assure its linkage to the public sphere of the entire public?
3. How much is publicly revealed about the activities of the participants of a TTM. For instance, are the political and economic relations of power and dependency between participants publicized?

The following three sections examine these questions according to the normative roles of a TTM in providing public advocacy, direct political accountability and a social space of public communication. Section 4.2 examines the conditions for evaluating

whether a TTM can be considered a public sphere. Section 4.3 examines the link between a TTM and the public sphere in terms of critical publicity and rational understanding. Section 4.4 addresses the need for transparency in the economic and political relations of power between the participants of TTM.

## 4.2 The TTM as a Public Sphere: The Conditions for Rational-Critical Debate

A TTM could constitute a forum of rational-critical public debate if interaction were organized to permit democracy between politicians, citizens and moderators. Such a democracy would apply to the institutional structure of the TTM as well as to the discussion between the participants. As Chambers remarks, productive discourse contains “the negative requirement that individuals be given the space and opportunity to speak [and] the positive requirement that individuals listen to one another, respond to one another, and justify their positions.” (Chambers, 1995: 239).

The universal principles of communication, which require that everyone should have the right to participate and express any opinion relates to the negative requirement that individuals have the space and opportunity to participate in the structure of the TTM. Table 4.2 defines these universal principles of communication as inclusiveness, freedom of expression and autonomy.

Inclusiveness	Freedom of Expression	Autonomy
Any and every participant capable of speech and social action may take part.	Any participant may problematize an assertion, introduce any assertion into discourse, or express his or her position, wishes, and needs.	No participant may be hindered, through coercion internal or external to the TTM, in perceiving these established rights.

*Table 4.2: The Universal Principles of Communication*

The positive requirements that participants “listen to one another, respond to one another, and justify their positions” are a prerequisite of rational-critical debate. Positions are justified through the rational vindication of claims to truth and rightness. With claims to truth, participants refer to facts that represent an objective world. With claims to



rightness, participants establish interpersonal relations through interaction by referring to a social reality of shared norms. Both claims are vindicated by way of argumentation and rational consensus.

Table 4.3 categorizes thematic validity claims of truth and rightness along the lines of the attitudes of speakers, the functions of their speech, and the worlds to which they refer:

<i>Thematic validity claim</i>	Truth	Rightness, appropriateness
<i>Mode of communication and basic attitudes</i>	Cognitive, objective	Interactive, performative
<i>Types and Functions of Speech</i>	Constative: Representation of facts	Regulative: Establishment of legitimate interpersonal relations
<i>Domains of reality</i>	Objective world of external affairs	Social world of shared norms

*Table 4.3: The Content of Rational Debate.*

Working from this table, the public advocacy role is measured by the degree to which claims of truth and rightness raised by members of the studio audience represents the objective and social realities of the public. The political accountability role is measured by the degree to which the objective and social realities of the public are represented in the claims of the politicians represents a rational account of their public policies. Finally, the extent to which the social space of TTM constitutes a forum of public communication is measured by the degree to which it accords with principles of inclusiveness, freedom of expression and autonomy.

### 4.3 The TTM and the Public Sphere: The Communicative Link.

In order to assure that a TTM is linked with the public sphere of the entire public, its internal affairs need to be made public. In a direct sense, the internal affairs of a TTM concern the rational-critical debate between political leaders, private citizens and moderators. This debate is generally about public interests and the exercise of political authority. It is first made public through the publicity of television, and this type of publicity gives the content of the debate substance in the function of reproducing a public lifeworld. However, discussion in a TTM also takes place within a communicative structure, which indirectly implicates the state, the public and other media. Therefore, a TTM is linked with the public sphere not only through its own means of publicity, but through a *publicist exchange* involving other media and state institutions.

There are thus two stages to analyzing the communicative link between a TTM and the public sphere. First, there is an analysis of the content of the debate as a function of reproducing the lifeworld. Then, there is the examination of how mass media publicity simultaneously contextualizes and concentrates the processes of reaching understanding between the participants of a TTM.

Habermas (1987: 136) suggests that a methodologically promising way of clarifying the concept of the lifeworld is to analyze the form of narrative statements. According to Habermas, narrative is a specialized form of constative speech that “serves to describe sociocultural events and objects.” In presenting narratives, actors rely on a “lay concept of the “world,” in the sense of the everyday world or lifeworld, which defines the totality of states of affairs that can be reported in true stories.” Habermas

explains that the spheres of “private life” have an “existential language at their disposal, in which such socially generated problems can be *assessed in terms of one’s life history*. Problems voiced in the public sphere first become visible when they are mirrored in personal life experiences.” (Habermas 1996: 365).

However, individual experiences in the lifeworld conform in some degree to the common experiences shared by others by having the subjective experiences made intersubjective through reflective and collective critical discussion. This process of intersubjective interpretation is achieved through discourse, which is a “systematic argument that makes special appeals to demonstrate the validity of a claim” (Littlejohn 1996: 233).

Littlejohn describes three types of discourse: theoretical discourse, practical discourse and metatheoretical discourse. In theoretical discourse, the truth of a claim is argued by emphasizing evidence. In a practical discourse, the appropriateness of a claim is argued by appealing to norms. Finally, a metatheoretical discourse draws on arguments over what constitutes valid evidence or appropriate norms in a particular situation.

Through a theoretical discourse, private experiences are “placed within a conceptual framework, understood, explained, and brought into accord with the world that others share. In a like manner, private interests are recognized as generalizable or acceptable interests through practical discourse.” (Braaten, 1991: 32)

The correspondence between discourses and processes of reproducing the lifeworld is outlined in Table 4.4 below:

<i>Discourses</i>	Theoretical	Practical
<i>Dimensions</i>	Semantic Dimension.	Dimension of Social Space
<i>Standards of Evaluation</i>	Rationality of Knowledge	Solidarity of Members
<i>Process of reproducing the lifeworld</i>	Reproduction of Knowledge	Social Integration

*Table 4.4: The Functions of Rational Debate*

Citizens and politicians construct narratives and discourses in reproducing lifeworlds. The theoretical discourses attempt to bring private experiences into accord with the world that others share, while practical discourses try to have private interests recognized as generalizable or acceptable.

However, this function of discussion is contained within the communicative structure of mass media publicity that concentrates and contextualized the participants' process of reaching understanding about state and society.

The public advocacy role is measured by how media publicity represents "the public" through the narratives of the studio audience. The political accountability role is measured by how media publicity holds politicians accountable for what they say in the forum of a TTM. Finally, the role of providing a social space of public communication is measured by how the TTM forum represents the role of the media as a mediator between state and public.

#### 4.4 Publicity and the TTM: Relations of Power

If a TTM is to contribute to democratic opinion formation, its activities need to be subject to a far reaching publicity. These activities include political and economic relations of power and dependency between the participants.

A consideration of political and economic relations introduces the concept of systems in relation to the rationalization of lifeworlds. John Durham Peters indicates that the lifeworld is constituted in “the everyday realm of face-to-face talk, experiences, traditions, understandings, norms and ... solidarity.” By contrast, systems refer to “the realm of macrosocial life ruled by ‘delinguistified steering media’ such as money and power” that are “beyond the control or even understanding of any individual.” In other words:

The lifeworld is tailored to the human scale and is the realm in which a person can weave a life’s experiences into a coherent biography, while system is ruled by the abstract, all-englobing ‘media’ of money and power, such that issues of individual meaning or morality are completely irrelevant (Peters, 1993: 557).

The reproduction of a shared public lifeworld and the reproduction of the public sphere are both tailored to the general comprehensibility of everyday communicative practices. Table 4.5 situates the public sphere against the categories lifeworld and system and along the lines of public and private:

	Public	Private
System:	political subsystem	economic subsystem
Lifeworld:	public sphere	private sphere

Table 4.5: A Fourfold Model of Civil Society. (Dahlgren, 1995: 130)

The private realm contains the private sphere of the lifeworld and economic subsystems. Whereas actions within the private sphere of domestic settings are integrated through communicative action, the private actions of the marketplace are integrated through economic subsystems.

Correspondingly, the public realm incorporates political subsystems and the public sphere. Whereas the political subsystems of state institutions integrate public actions, the processes of reproducing cultural knowledge, social integration, and that socialization of individuals become coherent, acquire social meaning and moral significance through discourse in the public lifeworld.

However, subsystems can intervene in the public lifeworld so that “there is no *necessity* for achieving consensus by communicative action” (Habermas, 1987: 311). In this context, the lifeworld becomes an environment where system processes “simply operate through action contexts without modifying them” (Outhwaite, 1994: 92). This integration of subsystems in the lifeworld can eventually lead to a colonization of the lifeworld.

Dahlgren (1995) remarks that “the links *between* the system and the lifeworld can be critically framed in terms of communicative action within the public sphere.” (131). By the same measure, the links between the subsystems of political administration and the marketplace, and the lifeworlds of private citizens can be critically framed in terms of the communicative actions in the TTM.

In this context, the public advocacy role would require that the relationship between the producers of the TTM and the studio audience be publicized. This would include publicizing how the audience was selected and what their involvement was in

organizing the forum. Likewise, direct political accountability would require that the relationship between the political leaders and the TTM also be publicized. This would deal with publicizing issues surrounding the influence of the politicians in the design of the forum, as well as their influence over the producers themselves. Finally, the role of the TTM as a social space of public communication requires that the commercial as well as publicist functions of a TTM be subject to publicity.

To summarize the previous three sections, table 4.6 outlines a process for evaluating whether the public advocacy, political accountability and social space of a TTM contribute to democratic opinion formation in the public sphere.

	<b>public advocacy</b>	<b>political accountability</b>	<b>social space</b>
<i>The TTM as a public sphere</i>	How are public interests presented?	How do politicians account for their policies?	Does the format permit inclusiveness, freedom of expression and autonomy?
<i>The TTM and the public sphere</i>	How is the public represented by the studio audience?	How are politicians held accountable for what they say?	How does the programme represent the broadcaster?
<i>Publicity and the activities of the participants in a TTM</i>	What is the relationship between the studio audience and the producers of the TTM?	What is the relationship between the politicians and the producers of the TTM?	What is the role of the TTM: critical authority or public relations?

*Table 4.6: The roles of a TTM and the Public Sphere*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Case Study: The fourth annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*.

#### 5.1 Television Town Hall Meetings and the 1993 Canadian General Election

The second chapter of this study examined the TTM in the context of the 1992 United States Presidential elections. This chapter approaches the TTM from a Canadian context. Specifically, it examines the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's 1996 *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* as a case study in whether a TTM can contribute to democratic opinion and consensus-formation in the public sphere. As outlined in previous chapters, a TTM could satisfy the function of democratic opinion and consensus-formation if it conformed to the principles of publicity. As the following three sections will indicate, each principle provides a measure of the roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability and the provision of a social space of communication in a TTM.

Section 5.2 deals with the principle that the structure of a TTM should be organized to form a public sphere of public rational-critical debate. First, the structure of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* is examined to determine the extent to which it constitutes a social space of public communication that is inclusive, allows freedom of expression, and respects the autonomy of the participants. Then, the vindication of validity claims is examined in dialogues between the Prime Minister and the studio audience.

The role of public advocacy is measured the representation of common public interests in the opinions expressed by the studio audience. The role of direct political accountability



is measured by whether the Prime Minister can rationally account for how his policies are in the public's interests.

Section 5.3 deals with the principle that the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* should be subject to publicity so that its link to the public sphere is assured. This principle pertains to the role of media publicity in contextualizing and concentrating the roles of the public, the state and the media in a TTM. The role of public advocacy is related to the publicity of public interests through the studio audience. The direct political accountability role has to do with linking the programme's publicity of the Prime Minister to the publicity of government policies. The role of providing a social space of public communication has to do with how the TTM publicizes the functions of the media.

Finally, section 5.4 deals with the principle that the activities of the participants of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* should be publicized. In this instance, the public advocacy role concerns the publicity of the studio audience's relations with the programme's producers. The political accountability role has to do with the publicity of political relations of power between the Prime Minister and the CBC. Finally, the representation of the programme as social space of public communication pertains to the publicist functions of the TTM in reproducing the lifeworld.

## 5.2 The *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* as a Public Sphere

A TTM could function an intra-association democracy when its structure is organized to allow political leaders, citizens and journalists the space and opportunities to engage in rational-critical debate. The extent of such participation is measured by the inclusiveness of the forum, the freedom of expression in discussion, and the autonomy of the participants.

The principle of inclusiveness requires that all participants in a TTM be able to take part in the discussion. The participation of journalists, political leaders and citizens in the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was restricted to Peter Mansbridge, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, and a studio audience of about two hundred people. As the anchor of CBC's nightly newscast *The National*, Mansbridge arguably personifies the CBC English television service. Chrétien, for his part, is the elected leader of the governing party and is thereby the principal representative of the government. The studio audience was selected by the CBC using two processes, one for those who participated in the discussion and the other for those who did not. Of the two hundred audience members, only thirteen actually participated in the discussion. The audience of people who did not participate in the discussion were selected at random by an outside polling agency. These people were not allowed to ask questions, but could affect the tone of the broadcast in "the extent to which they laugh or applaud or even roll their eyes" (Feschuk, 1996). In other words, their presence was to give the meeting the appearance of a live public event.

The selection of members from the studio audience who participated in the discussion was more discriminating. It began with CBC staff members compiling a list of candidates by “getting in touch with people across the country -- reporters, business leaders and social activist, among many others -- and asking if they know of anyone who would be a good participants” (Feschuk, 1996). Thirteen people from this list were selected to speak. The CBC decided this number of participants because it estimated that more people could not reasonably ask questions in an hour long discussion (Crichton, 1996).

Discussion was organized according to a predetermined series of questions from audience members and Mansbridge, and answers from Chrétien. The principle of freedom of expression permits any participant to problematize an assertion, introduce any assertion into discourse, or express a position, wish, or need. Discussions between the studio audience and Chrétien were initiated and concluded by Mansbridge. There was no discussion between Mansbridge and the studio audience nor did members of the studio audience address each other. Mansbridge himself only initiated dialogues with the Prime Minister at the beginning of the programme, before the first commercial break, and at the end of the programme. However, Mansbridge did interject in discussions between Chrétien and an audience member on six occasions.

Although dialogues between Chrétien and audience members were confined to ‘questions and answers,’ audience members did at least have the opportunity to challenge claims made by Chrétien. Of the thirteen members of the studio audience who spoke with Chrétien, nine followed-up on their initial questions with subsequent questions, comments, or interjections. In the other dialogues, the four audience members did not

respond to Chrétien's answers, and in three cases, follow-up responses were made by Mansbridge.

Thus, the inclusiveness of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was restricted to one political leader, one moderator and the participation to 13 audience members selected by the CBC. As a measure of the freedom of expression, discussion was confined to question and answer dialogues with Chrétien.

Although participants were expected to ask Chrétien questions, they did enjoy a level of autonomy that allowed them to raise objections. These objections appear as objections over the truth and rightness of claims. The vindication of claims is a central aspect of rational-critical debate. The theory of universal pragmatics posits that the act of speech raises claims that an utterance is true, that it is right or acceptable according to conventions, and that the speaker is sincere in what she or he is saying. A consensus over these three validity claims is usually implied in conversation between speakers, however a failure to accept any of them requires that they be vindicated. Only claims to truth and rightness must be "vindicated discursively, by way of argumentation and a rational consensus" (Habermas, 1984:109). In the case of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, participants tended to dispute claims made over public interests and the rational exercise of political authority.

The following presents an analysis of the nine dialogues in which audience members required that Chrétien vindicate claims. In each case, members of the studio audience disputed claims made by Chrétien over the exercise of his political authority. For the most part, the disputes concerned different interpretations of public interests.

These dialogues will be examined according to the topical categories of social welfare, unemployment, the economy, and national unity.

Beginning with the issue of social welfare, Margaret Barton presented her experience as a nurse in explaining the problems with the Canadian health care system:

BARTON: Mr. Chrétien, as a registered nurse who has been at the bedside for more than 30 years, I have seen a lot of changes. The changes that I am seeing now are hurting. Patients are discharged too soon without adequate home care set-up. Others are waiting for long periods of time for a bed resulting in a worsening of their condition, sometimes we have premature death. You promised universal accessibility for medicare, but with the reduction in funds, some people are already using private systems -- those that can afford to -- while others have to wait. As the person responsible for the transfer of funds from the federal tax system to the provincial health care system, are you not the person responsible for that health care cut?

Barton raises three interrelated truth claims: First, she states that the health care system is inadequate. Second, she claims that Chrétien had promised universal access to health care. Third, she argues that because of reduced funding from the federal tax system, private systems are threatening the universality of the Canadian health care system. Barton's suggestion that Chrétien had forsaken his promise to maintain universal health care is a challenge to his sincerity. Barton therefore asks Chrétien whether he assumes personal responsibility for cuts in health care funding. Chrétien only claims partial responsibility and provides two reasons for the cuts.:

CHRÉTIEN: We are partly responsible, but we're not administering the hospital ourself [*sic.*]. It is run by the provincial governments. As the way that they are rendering the service, it is their responsibility. Yes we had to cut because the

finances of the nation were asking to reduce the deficit, and we could not spare any sector. When I look at the situation in Canada, we were spending 10.5 percent of G.D.P. for the medicare in Canada while in Europe, where they have the same type of free medicare for all citizens, they can do it with 8 or 7 per cent of G.D.P. Now, the reduction has gone from 10.5 to close to 9. Of course, there is some very dramatic change. I know it's not easy. Yesterday I was discussing with a forum of health that I've established under my authority three years ago, and they studied that; the need for changes and new approaches, and so on. But we are responsible for part of the financing. The way that it is administered at the level of the recipient of the service, we're not directly responsible. But the nation has to face the reality that money is scarce. When I became Prime Minister, we had a deficit of 42 billion dollars. For about 3.5 to 3.6 per cent of all the money we're collecting from the taxpayers were going to pay interest on the debt and it was increasing every year, so we had to do something. So we have reduced it by now, in our transfer, and the provinces have cut them in their participation in that because they face the same problem as us to manage the problem of provincial deficit.

First, Chrétien claims that the health care system is too expensive. As evidence, he explains that some European states offer the same type of "free medicare" at a lower cost ratio to G.D.P. Second, he claims transfer payments to the provinces had to be cut in order to reduce the deficit. Although Chrétien begins to acknowledge that the cuts are causing problems, he emphasizes his argument that the federal government is only partially responsible for these problems.

Barton is not satisfied with this answer. She responds that Chrétien has cut funding and will continue to cut. She explains, "if you have a coronary, or a stroke, you need a doctor right now, and a nurse and a hospital. You just think about that."

Chrétien responds by restating his reasons for the cuts. This time he claims that European countries offer universal health care at a lower *cost per capita* rather than cost to G.D.P. However, he does not support this claim with factual evidence. Moreover, he claims “we were obliged” to cut every sector of the government. He explains that the cuts were administered not because “we love to do it” but because “We think that it was in the interest of the nation ...”

There is disagreement between Barton and Chrétien. Whereas Barton measures the value of public health according to the universal quality of patient care, Chrétien measures its value in fiscal terms as either the cost to G.D.P. or the cost per capita.

The disagreement over the appropriateness of these cuts can be understood as a different notion of public interest. On the one hand, Barton claims that reduced spending in health care is inappropriate because it is not in the public interest. Chrétien, on the other hand, claims that the reductions are appropriate because they reduce the deficit, which is in the public’s best interest.

As similar disagreement occurs between Chrétien and David Northcott, who is seeking federal assistance for food banks:

**NORTHCOTT:** ... I work with a food bank in Winnipeg and the majority of people I work with on my volunteer team eat the food bank’s food to survive. In Manitoba, we share about 40 to about 41 to 42 thousand people a month eat food bank food [*sic.*]. Almost half are kids. So you know what food banks are doing, you know what food banks in Canada are doing just to survive, what are you going to do to take the Band-Aid off?

**CHRÉTIEN:** For us we try to, and we are aiming to put the economy of Canada in good shape so that there will be job creation. In the last three years there was a lot

of jobs created in Canada; 672,000 new jobs. It's a lot, it's not enough because the economy needs more. When we started in January of 1994, the unemployment was at 11.5. It went down to 9.5. Now, unfortunately, it went back to 10. But during the three years, because jobs is the way that people get the money to get the food that they need, and ...uh --At this moment we have created more jobs but people are coming more in the labour force in Canada than anywhere else. I was reading yesterday that Canada has created more jobs in the last three years than Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain, and Japan put together. But of course the participation rate is not over in Canada. The labour force is not as mature as other nations so we create jobs but this is not reducing unemployment as quickly as we like.

Northcott presents his personal experience in working at a food bank to represent the assistance that food banks require from the federal government. In response, Chrétien claims that food banks will be assisted by an economy in which jobs are created. Chrétien indicates that jobs have been created and explains how national unemployment figures changed since the beginning of his mandate, however Chrétien falters in explaining how job creation will assist food banks. Northcott then challenges the central claim that more employment will assist food banks:

**NORTHCOTT:** But the biggest growth I've got are people that are working. They are working part-time or low income jobs at full-time. And we're seeing more and more of those folks than we are seeing people on welfare

**CHRÉTIEN:** Yeah, of course, some people have a very tough time in Canada, I will not deny it. And that breaks my heart. But at the same time, you have to put the fundamentals of the economy in good shape. Look to take over the -



*[NORTHCOTT: How long do we have to wait]*-- to control the deficit it was not fun for any of the Premiers or us. And it has nothing to do with the political parties. You know, Romanow had to cut in Saskatchewan. Clark had to cut in B.C. They are N.D.P. Filmon is cutting the conservatives.

*[NORTHCOTT: How long]*

Chrétien acknowledges that the cuts have caused hardship for certain individuals, but he nevertheless pursues the argument for putting “the fundamentals of the economy in good shape.” Mansbridge then takes up Northcott’s question and asks how long food banks have to wait. Chrétien admits that anytime is too long, and introduces the claim that low interest rates will alleviate the problem. Again, Northcott challenges this claim in pointing out that regardless of interest rates, loans need to be paid back. However, Chrétien continues to argue for low interest rates because they are good for the balancing the government’s budget, and in the end, good for Canadians who can “renew their mortgage at half the cost that it was a few years ago, so that gave them cash to buy what is needed; food and clothing for the kids.” Chrétien had unsuccessfully tried to link job creation to the needs of the food banks, and now he appears to be raising the tenuous claim that lower mortgages rates will ease the demands on food banks.

In this dialogue, Northcott advocates the food banks’ need for federal funding, Chrétien reinterprets the problem as one of either unemployment or interest rates. Thus, Chrétien once again raises the claim that the federal government is first accountable for the economy. Just as deficit reduction ‘obliged’ reductions in health-care funding, assistance to food banks should come about through deficit reduction. Although Chrétien tacitly acknowledges that deficit reduction has led to greater poverty, he is quick to de-

politicize deficit reduction by asserting that it is not a partisan policy, but one that provincial governments are doing just the same.

These first two dialogues indicate a discord between the subjective interpretations of audience members concerning public interests. Claims by audience members advocate the funding of social services do not accord with Chrétien's claims that the government is primarily accountable for reducing its deficit.

As with issues of social welfare, differences between Chrétien's claims and those of the studio audience also reveal themselves in the following three questions from the studio audience regarding unemployment.

To this point, Chrétien has dealt with the issues of unemployment and deficit reduction separately. However, Ikejiani addresses the apparent relationship between the two:

IKEJIANI: Hi, Mr. Prime Minister. My name is Chiomo, and I'm from Toronto, Ontario. I'm glad that I'm sitting here, because it's good that you are saying that it breaks your heart to hear that people are on welfare. Mr. Prime Minister, I was one of those people six years ago, that was unemployed and on welfare. The issue that concerns me, Mr. Prime Minister, has to do with unemployment. It seems that both the provincial and federal governments are engaged in aggressive downsizing in trying to bring down the deficit. Is there a relationship between deficit-cutting and unemployment? Because, you see, the unemployment rate seems to be at that 10 per cent mark. Is there a relationship, Mr. Prime Minister?

Ikejiani remarks that governments are downsizing in order to reduce deficits, and she asks if the steady level of unemployment is related to government downsizing.

Chrétien does not address the relationship between government cutbacks and

unemployment but instead repeats the employment figures he gave to Northcott. Ikejiani then interrupts Chrétien to ask whether the 672,000 jobs created were full-time. Chrétien acknowledges that there is not enough full-time employment but claims that in reality “it’s not the government who create the jobs. We have to cut down. It is the private sector who created jobs in Canada and in most of the countries.”

Ikejiani presents the issue of unemployment in the context of her personal experience, and suggests a relationship between unemployment and government cutbacks. Chrétien responds by deferring accountability for job creation from the government to the private sector.

In his response to the question of the following audience member, Chrétien advances this argument to dismiss direct government employment programmes in support of government initiatives to encourage private sector entrepreneurs. Juanita MacKeigan presents the problem of unemployment in the context of regional economies. In particular, she addresses the elevated rate of unemployment in the Atlantic provinces in relation to unemployment levels in central Canada:

**MacKEIGAN:** Mr. Prime Minister, my name is Juanita MacKeigan and I’ve heard you talking today about the 11.5 percent unemployment rate, and I should be so lucky. I live in Cape Breton and we have an official unemployment rate that’s much higher. You live in central Canada and you have a rate of 9 percent. What I’d like to know is how you can sleep at night knowing that there’s people and workers in Atlantic Canada that live every day with these statistics. And when is your government going to give us some legislation that’s going to give us some real job creation in my area.

CHRÉTIEN: ... Of course some regions are more affected than others. That's why we have programs like ACOA to help the local business get some help from the government to develop new enterprises. It's always -- And I know, I've been often to Cape Breton and it's more difficult there. Even in my own riding, in rural Quebec, it's a very high level of unemployment. And we have to create the proper conditions so that the people will have the initiatives to create jobs. The government cannot take everyone on the payroll because exactly too much of it was done too much in the past and we end up in an extremely difficult financial situation. Now what we're doing is we are putting the fundamentals right so that the people who want, for example, to start an enterprise in Cape Breton or anywhere else. They will have interest rates the lowest in 40 years. So that will make them very competitive to able to compete in international markets. Jobs are always created in relation to products that you produce that you can sell. And it's exactly what we're trying to do make Canada extremely competitive... .

MacKeigan claims that government legislation is needed to solve the problem of unemployment in Cape Breton. Chrétien responds that unemployment is also high in his riding and argues that the government has programs to encourage entrepreneurs in disadvantaged regions. As with his response to Ikejiani, Chrétien claims that the private sector will solve the problems of unemployment. He supports this argument with the claim that Canadian entrepreneurs are more competitive internationally because of the comparatively low interest rates in Canada.

Mansbridge then interrupts to bring the discussion back to the local economy of Cape Breton. He indicates that Cape Breton has an unemployment rate of 25 percent and asks whether "the days are over for Cape Breton." Chrétien responds:

CHRÉTIEN: But no it's -- Some people will always live in Cape Breton and some initiatives and some entrepreneurs will create jobs. I was in my district 2 weeks

ago or 3 weeks ago, rather, before my trip to abroad. And I met two young men who started a little enterprise and they went from ... they were both 33 and 34 ... And now they have 350 employees. And they are in high tech. And they were 50, three years ago. And they found a market, and they found a technology, and they are expanding. And it is -- Canadians are very competitive. When I go on Mission Canada, abroad Canada, Team Canada [sic.], I am amazed by the ability of people coming from all over Canada including Nova Scotia able to penetrate new markets ...

In response to the moderator's bleak assessment of the unemployment in Cape Breton, Chrétien pursues his private sector argument with evidence of entrepreneurs in his riding who started a successful high tech company. However, MacKeigan challenges the argument that entrepreneurs will create jobs in Cape Breton because people that are unemployed do not have the money that is needed to start a new business:

MacKEIGAN: ... If you don't have a job you pay your rent, you buy your groceries you pay your power bills. You don't go out and start a new business. If people aren't working they don't have the resources to put into starting a new business. And that's what's happening in Cape Breton.

Despite MacKeigan's argument that unemployed individuals do not have the financial means to start a new business, Chrétien pursues the argument that individuals should be enterprising in creating work. The disagreement between MacKeigan and Chrétien is not one of public interest so much as it is about government accountability. Chrétien's position is that the private sector, and more specifically, private entrepreneurs are responsible for employment.

In the following dialogue, Chrétien extends this argument to claim that private citizens are accountable for their own employment. Laurie Foster presents herself as someone who is unable to find work other than temporary contracts:

FOSTER: My name is Lori Foster. I'm from Regina. I have three degrees and I have spent four years looking for work. All I have managed to find is short term contract work so I spend more time without work than with work, and I want to know when your government is going to intervene directly in the economy to create jobs so that people like me can contribute to our communities.

In response to Foster's request for direct government intervention, Chrétien indicates that Foster lives in a province with low level of unemployment. In 1996, Regina did enjoy a relatively low unemployment rate of 6.6 percent, although the rate of unemployment in northern parts of province reached 14.6 percent (HRDC, 1997). Despite the unemployment rate, Foster is quick to point out that this fact has not helped her in finding permanent work. Chrétien then tries to shift the issue of government intervention to Saskatchewan's NDP government, but again Foster interrupts to argue that the *federal government* needs to intervene. Finally, Chrétien resort to explaining the "reality" of the job market:

CHRÉTIEN: ... You know the problem is -- The reality ... The reality is that the market force exists in production of goods and services that we sell to Canadians and we sell abroad. We live in a global economy and some people, unfortunately, like you are ... find some ... it very difficult to find a job. Some are lucky. Some are unlucky. And that's life. I think that you have to keep trying and uh ... you know ... if your specialty does not lead to give you a job in Saskatoon [*sic.*], perhaps you can go to Regina or elsewhere. But I'm not living there. I think that if you decide to live with the probation [*sic.*] to stay in one town and it's not

working you have to look at different types of jobs. I don't know. In the economy of tomorrow people will be forced to change their job four or five times in their career.

Chrétien acknowledges that there are problems in finding employment, but claims that individuals must learn to adapt to the changing forces of a global marketplace. He suggests that Foster should be more mobile and accept career changes.

Like the first two dialogues, these three dialogues indicate a discord between the subjective interpretations of audience members concerning public interest and the responsibilities of the government.

First, Ikejiani begins a dialogue with a biographical narrative explaining that she once collected welfare. In reference to a previous dialogue she expresses her appreciation that Chrétien sympathizes with the plight of people collecting welfare, although Chrétien's remark actually referred to the working poor. Like other speakers, Ikejiani is attempting to establish her personal credibility as a public advocate against the loss of jobs and government downsizing.

Then, MacKeigan presents herself as an advocate for Atlantic Canadians in contrast to Chrétien who lives in central Canada. She establishes this distinction in order to underline her claim that Chrétien is neglecting the particular needs of the less prosperous Atlantic provinces.

Finally, Lori Foster presents her personal circumstances as a temporary worker to advocate for direct federal government intervention in the economy. Her request for government intervention is not based on regional equality but rather people not being able to contribute to their communities.

Overall, participants from the studio audience claim that the federal government is directly accountable for social services and employment. Chrétien claims that the government is responsible for deficit reduction and that it is the private entrepreneurs and individuals who are accountable for creating the conditions for developing employment. Chrétien argues that solutions to problems of unemployment are to be found with the creation of new enterprises that are capable of competing in the global marketplace. As evidence, he recurrently refers to the high technology enterprise in his riding.

Given that Chrétien appears to be concerned with the deficit, it should not be surprising that he faced the most direct challenges in the issue of federal government finances. First, Arnold Greenberg raises the issue of federal government investment in the high technology industries:

**GREENBERG:** Mr. Prime Minister, I'm a university professor and a director at a research institute in Manitoba. Many of the levels of government have encouraged Canadians to believe that the future economy of Canada is dependent upon the development of high technology industries in Canada. The success of these industries is dependent upon investment in research and development. Yet, Canada remains at the lowest level in the G-7 in investment in R & D and for many years has been at the level of countries like Greece. The end result is that our young people don't have high quality jobs in Canada and many of our best young minds leave the country and go to the US. Does the government have a plan to deal with long term investment in high technology industries in Canada to change the situation?

**CHRÉTIEN:** For us, we had to cut everywhere. In order to put the finances of the nation in good shape. And your sector was not spared, no more than the health sector, and other sectors [...] But, you say that we should put more money in research and development. Of course, if we could we do [*sic.*] But to give you



the example of the two entrepreneurs in my district who moved into high tech sector. They have created 350 jobs and they were telling me ... I said ... can we help you? They said just keep the incentive you have at this moment -- that the tax incentive for research and development. They have -- [*GREENBERG: Excuse me Mr. Prime Minister*] -- something like 75 people working only on research and development in that factory.

Arnold Greenberg claims that although many levels of government have promoted the high technology industry as the future economy of Canada, Canadian research and development ranks below that of other G-7 countries, and because of this, researchers are emigrating to the United States to find high quality positions. In response, Chrétien once again claims the need to put the nation's finances as justification for the lack of government investment in research and development:

Chrétien claims that investment in research and development, like investment in other sectors of the government, had to be cut so as to put the "finances of the nation" in order. He then returns to the local example of the two entrepreneurs in his riding who were able to create 350 jobs with the help of government tax incentives. At this point, Mansbridge allows Greenberg to interject. Greenberg challenges Chrétien's argument by clarifying that the tax incentives in question are not those of the federal government but rather of the government of Quebec. Chrétien only responds by saying "I'm happy that you pay a compliment to my province, but the level of unemployment is higher there than elsewhere."

Greenberg explicitly challenges the validity of a truth claimed by Chrétien, and Chrétien fails to vindicate his claim or even acknowledge a falsity. His attitude clearly

suggest a strategic orientation to success rather than motivation towards mutual understanding. Chrétien's strategic orientation becomes even more evident in his dialogue with Johanne Savoie. Savoie directly challenges Chrétien's claim to sincerity by claiming that the Liberals failed to fulfill a key election promise:

SAVOIE: Mr. Prime Minister, I'm Johanne Savoie, from Montreal. Recently, your government awarded itself a very generous grade. 'B+', based on your Red Book of campaign promises. But I mean, anyone who has taken a test, knows that on any test, some questions are worth more than others. Now, When I voted for you, I voted for you -- I didn't read the Red book. I voted for you, based on your promise to repeal the GST and you did not --

CHRÉTIEN: Did you read the Red Book on that [*sic.*]. It's not what we said in the Red Book. You should have read it. (*Audience reaction*)

Savoie begins her question by referring to the government's self-assessed grade on their fulfillment of the Red Book promises. She states that she voted for the Liberal party because they promised to repeal the Goods and Services Tax (GST). However, before she even mentions the term GST, Savoie stipulates that she did not read the Liberal Red book. She correctly anticipates Chrétien's claim that repealing the GST was not documented in the Liberal's Red Book of promises.

Rather than dispute the fact that a promise had not been fulfilled, Chrétien tells Savoie that she should have read the Red Book of election promises. This places the Savoie's knowledge of the issue into question. This unexpected challenge of an audience member produces a bemused reaction from the studio audience that implies a discomfort with Chrétien's scolding of a fellow audience member.

Savoie rejects Chrétien's implicit claim that only promises written in the Red Book are valid. She asserts that Chrétien had promised in his speeches to repeal the GST. Chrétien then corrects Savoie by noting that the Liberal Party had promised in the Red Book was to harmonize the GST with the taxes of provincial governments which, as he points out, was done in Quebec and some Maritime provinces. However, Savoie persists in asserting that regardless of what was written in the Red Book, promises were made that the GST would be repealed. Finally, Chrétien reacts by challenging the truth of Savoie's central claim that he promised to repeal the GST:

CHRÉTIEN: No, no -- we said that we were to harmonize the taxes to have a better system, because of the duplication that existed ... tried to make it more simpler; but we never said in the Red Book, or directly, that it was to be scrapped.

SAVOIE: I didn't hear simpler -- I heard scrapped.

CHRÉTIEN: From whom?

SAVOIE: From you on television and on the radio.

CHRÉTIEN: When?

SAVOIE: During the campaign.

CHRÉTIEN: Which radio?

SAVOIE: This is what I heard, Okay. Maybe they should pull tape. I don't know.

Chrétien aggressively challenges a claim made by an audience member, and in doing so, he reverses the discursive structure of the programme. It is now the audience member who is accountable to the Prime Minister.

At this point Mansbridge enters the dialogue to re-establish the order of interpersonal relations. He supports Savoie's claim by indicating that in interviews before the release of the Red Book Chrétien had "always said scrapped the GST." Chrétien then disputes the appropriateness of Mansbridge's claim. He claims the Liberals were "the first party who ever have a detailed program to be distributed to everybody" and chastises Mansbridge for claiming that it does not matter. Then, Chrétien remarks that the Liberals were opposed to the GST when the tax was introduced, and Savoie is quick to point out that the Liberals were only adverse to it while they were in opposition.

Finally, Chrétien admits to a change in the Liberal policy on GST. He defends this policy change by claiming that the deficit had to be reduced:

CHRÉTIEN: But when it's there you cannot you cannot always ... put back to square one when you're in government [*sic.*]. When we elaborated the policies, it was very clear what we were to do [*sic.*]. We had this debate. We were not happy. We voted against the GST. But by the time we were the government we have to have the revenues. We never said that we were not have the revenues, because we have to reduce the deficit [*sic.*].

Chrétien claims that the Liberal Party only changed their policy because, as government, they needed the revenues. In the opinion of Savoie, this amounts to duplicity. She claims that the previous Conservative government was defeated not only because of the GST but also because it was no longer regarded as honest. Savoie asks if

Chrétien has any more credibility going into the next election. That is, Savoie directly challenges Chrétien's truthfulness.

Chrétien responds to this challenge by defending the government's performance in fulfilling the promises in the Red Book:

CHRÉTIEN: ... Now we have met 78 percent of the promises -- [*MANSBRIDGE: Okay, we've got to move on*] -- And we're working another ... Were in the fourth year of the mandate. Probably we will not be able to fulfill exactly all of them. But for any business who had a business plan and realized 90 percent of the business, either a business or someone in the university field, and so on--

SAVOIE: So you're saying mediocrity is policy

CHRÉTIEN: No, no -- [*MANSBRIDGE: we've got to ...*] -- if 90 percent is mediocrity, I'm sorry -- [*... we've got to leave it at ...*] -- I'm not perfect Madam -- [*... Okay We've got to leave it at that.*] --90 percent is not bad.

In these two dialogues, members of the studio audience challenged Chrétien on his claims of truth and sincerity. First, Greenberg presented his status as university professor and director of a research institute as a measure of his authority to advocate for more investment in Canadian research and development. Unlike most other audience members, Greenberg supports his claim with objective facts. Greenberg thereby challenged Chrétien on the claim that the federal government was assisting research and development with tax incentives that were in fact offered by the government of Quebec. Second, Savoie challenged Chrétien on the sincerity of his promise to repeal the GST. However, Chrétien fails to vindicate his claim to truth or sincerity in either case. Chrétien

only succeed in suggesting that the Liberal government might fulfill 90 percent of their election promises by the end of their mandate.

Up to this point, Chrétien had associated the problems presented by the studio audience with deficit reduction. His approach had been to acknowledge the concerns expressed by audience members, and even identify with them, while presenting objective and factual evidence to support his claims that the public must accept and adapt to the consequences of deficit reduction and globalization.

The fourth and final section of the discourse analysis leaves economic and fiscal concerns behind and introduces the issue of national unity. The first question from the studio audience on this topic is from a Quebec separatist. Jocelyne Bolduc identifies herself as a separatist and claims that the federal government's contingency plan for Quebec's secession is a tactic to frighten people from voting for Quebec independence:

**BOLDUC:** Mr. Chrétien, I voted "yes" in the last referendum. My question is that your government seems to have adopted "Plan b" and to scare us away from independence. As Prime Minister of Canada, would you be satisfied if we stayed in Canada just because you've used fear as a tactic, just because you've scared us?

**CHRÉTIEN:** I want you to stay in Canada because Canada is the best country in the world, Madam. When you go around -- (*Audience Applause*).

**BOLDUC:** But you're not trying to accommodate our demands. You're not -- you're clearly saying well, if you vote yes, we won't recognize the question, we won't recognize the results of a tight vote. You are even asking the Supreme Court to tell us that we cannot decide our own future. And we don't see any goodwill on your part to try and bring us willingly into Canada.

Against the audience's approving applause for Chrétien's patriotism, Bolduc asserts her claim that there is no goodwill on the part of Chrétien in "bringing" Quebec willingly in Canada, as if Quebec had already separated. She notes that the federal government has questioned the recognition of a simple majority vote and has referred the legality of Quebec's secession to the supreme court of Canada. Chrétien responds by questioning Bolduc's knowledge of the issue. He asks Bolduc whether she is aware that the administration of manpower has been transferred to the provinces, and she responds that "we've been asking that for a long time." He then asks whether she is aware of a House of Commons vote to grant Quebec Distinct Society status, to which she replies "It doesn't give us any more power." Bolduc is quick to defend herself against Chrétien's challenges, such that Chrétien finally resorts to an ultimatum:

CHRÉTIEN: Which power are you talking about? We said that we were to get out of mining [*sic.*]. We're out of it. We said we were to get out of forestry [*sic.*]. We're out of it. We've done a lot. Of course, you know you cannot get out of Canada and have all the benefit of being in Canada.

BOLDUC: I don't think that's what we want.

CHRÉTIEN: You have to be in Canada, or not in Canada. You have to make up your mind about it.

BOLDUC: But I think that -- (*Audience Applause*).

Following another burst of applause from the studio audience, Mansbridge invites Bolduc to make a final point. Bolduc admits that Quebec wants to remain in Canada, but only if the federal government is willing to negotiate terms for keeping it in Canada.

Chrétien responds by claiming that Quebec separatists do not understand the value of being in Canada. He argues that he wants them to understand that Canada is a good country for everyone, and that francophones are accepted outside of Quebec. He provides himself as evidence of a Quebecois who did not speak English but nevertheless succeeded in Canada.

The disagreement between Bolduc and Chrétien is over legitimate norms of negotiation. Bolduc claims that Chrétien is applying tactics that do not conform to the norms of the federal government, and Chrétien responds that the expectations of Quebec separatists are not legitimate. There is evidence of rational debate over these norms until Chrétien resorts to the strategic action of an ultimatum that Quebec make up its mind on whether to stay in Canada or leave. This has the curious effect of receiving applause from the studio audience. Although Chrétien is dismissive of Bolduc's concerns, he was less successful in dismissing the concerns of Howard Miller, an anglophone living in Quebec:

**MILLER:** Mr. Prime Minister, I'm a former Montrealer, presently living in the French town of Gaspé Bay. Many of the anglophones that I know, both rural and urban, feel abandoned by our federal government. We live in fear of the next Quebec referendum with the distinct possibility that the nationalists may win this vote next time. And the anglophones that I know, again, both rural and urban, would probably be compelled, in their own minds, to leave Quebec to -- of course, the best country in the world, Canada.

**MANSBRIDGE:** The question?



MILLER: The question is, in such an event, could we expect any assistance, financial or otherwise, from our Canadian government in that disastrous scenario?

Howard Miller presents the fears of Quebec anglophones over Quebec's secession from Canada. He asks whether anglophones living in Quebec can expect any assistance from the federal government in such an event. Chrétien replies that he does not want to spend a lot of time on the disastrous scenario, but Miller quickly interjects:

MILLER: Excuse me, Mr. Prime Minister, I do want to point out to you, that prior to the last referendum, you also said that you did not want to spend a lot of time on the scenario. We came within one percentage point. The Parti Québécois had a plan. They had a contingency plan. I'm asking you right now, for my fellow anglophone Quebecers, what type of contingency plan is in place in the event that Quebec does separate. That's a realistic possibility, with a one per cent differential.

MANSBRIDGE: You've asked your question. And the answer?

CHRÉTIEN: For me, I just say that the goal of this government is to make sure that if there is a referendum, that it will be won. We are proposing some changes at this time. You saw yesterday, for example, the reaction of most of the premiers -- quite positive to recognize the fact [*sic.*], that in fact, Quebec is a different society. You know that.

Miller demands to know what the federal government has planned in the event that Quebec does vote for secession. Chrétien responds that the government must concentrate on winning the next referendum and argues that most premiers support the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society. He insists that the government is fighting for

anglophone Quebecers. but when Miller asks “what if we lose?” Chrétien simply argues that the question on the next referendum has to be clear.

Mansbridge then asks for a yes or no answer to the question of whether there is a contingency plan for anglophone Quebecers, but Chrétien dismisses the validity of this “hypothetical question.” Miller exclaims “It’s not hypothetical with a one per cent differential”, but Chrétien continues to claim that the question in a referendum has to be clear, legal, and in turn, that the democratic will of “a real majority of Quebecers” must be respected.

Miller insists on knowing what will happen to anglophone Quebecers and “the best country in the world,” and Chrétien responds in the same way that he responded to Savoie and Bolduc; he questions the audience member:

CHRÉTIEN: Are you telling me that we should not have a democratic institution that can be respected? If I said that I hate the notion--

MILLER: Are you telling me that we will lose our Canadian citizenship by virtue of the fact that we're in Quebec, if they do declare unilaterally?

Finally, Chrétien concedes that he has the obligation to protect minorities in Quebec, just as he protects the French minorities outside Quebec. The dialogue ends with Mansbridge asking Chrétien to define what a clear majority would be in a referendum. After stipulating that the question has to be clear, Chrétien says:

CHRÉTIEN: ... Even to break up a factory in Quebec or a corporation, you need two-thirds of the vote [*sic.*]. So we will negotiate if there is another referendum. If they want to have a clear question we will debate that; but when you have a negotiation, you do not give your answer before the negotiations start [*sic.*].

On the question of job creation, Chrétien drew clear distinctions between the roles of the public and private sectors. However he now applies business practices in his evaluation of public administration and in his conditions for the secession of Quebec. First, Chrétien compares the Red Book to a business plan, and then he compares negotiating the secession of Quebec from Canada to the process of negotiating the dissolution of a corporation. Despite referring to the constitution and respect for democratic institutions, the norms of negotiating private sector agreements are appropriate to the norms of negotiating constitutional accords.

These last two dialogues present two conflicting claims that are represented by two social groups. First, Bolduc introduces the claim that people in Quebec feel threatened by the federal government into remaining in Canada. She claims a need for the people of Quebec to identify with Canada. Ultimately, Chrétien responds that Quebec must decide to either stay in Canada or separate.

Then, Miller presents himself as an advocate of fellow anglophones in Quebec. He expresses the fears of English-speaking Quebecers regarding Quebec's separation from Canada. Whereas Bolduc expressed the fears of separatists regarding the possibility of a federal government contingency plan, Miller expresses the fears of anglophone Quebecers regarding the lack of a clear contingency plan.

Chrétien contests the separatist claims against a "plan b," or contingency plan for the secession of Quebec, and the anglo-Canadian claim for one. Rather, he argues that, on the one hand, Quebec should make up its mind, and on the other hand, that the

separatists will not win a referendum. From Chrétien's perspective, it is irrational that a majority of people from Quebec should want to succeed from Canada.

In principle, rational-critical debate should form mutual understanding and consensus through the authority of the better argument. Argument involves the vindication of validity claims. Table 5.1 (*page 111*) summarized the principal claims to truth and rightness that were argued in the nine dialogues discussed above.

The citizens of the studio audience did not officially represent the membership of a wider public, nor were they able to debate among themselves about what constituted genuine public interests. The representation of the public appeared in the context of a demographically diverse collection of average Canadians. Thus, citizens acted as public advocates inasmuch as they were able to express their personal experiences and interests as representative of public interests.

The Prime Minister was made directly accountable to the studio audience in that members of the studio audience were able to raise objections about the Prime Minister's responses. However, even in response to objections by the studio audience, the Prime Minister consistently adhered to a set of facts and figures in defending his position. Rational-critical debate in the Town Hall with the Prime Minister did not reach the potential for resolving differences between the interests and experiences of the studio audience and the facts as presented by Chrétien.

Thus, the roles of public advocacy and political accountability were limited to the degree that discussion was restricted to short dialogues between individual citizens and Chrétien. Had members of the studio audience been able to engage in a more extensive discursive exchange, rational-critical debate would have contributed to a better

understanding of public interest. Likewise, Chrétien would have been held more directly accountable to the public if the studio audience actually represented the opinions and interests of public and social organizations.

Finally, the structure of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* did not allow the public access, the range of discussion nor the autonomy necessary for allowing a social space of public communication. The *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was structurally organized to allow the participation of only selected individuals. These participants could express opinions, ask questions and object to answers, but the extent of their interaction with the Prime Minister was ultimately determined by the Moderator.

	<b>Truth Claim</b>	<b>Normative Claim</b>	<b>Chrétien</b>	<b>Truth Claim</b>	<b>Normative Claim</b>
<b>Mansbridge</b>	Liberal government did not reduce unemployment	Federal government should not have campaigned job creation	<b>Chrétien</b>	Jobs were created	Federal government attempted to fulfill promise
<b>Mansbridge</b>	Canada is trading with a country that violates human rights	Federal government should set standards	<b>Chrétien</b>	Boycotts only work if all countries agree.	Canadian trade standards reflects international norms
<b>Barton</b>	Deterioration of universal health care system	Federal government should preserve universal health care system	<b>Chrétien</b>	Universal health care cost more than it should.	Deficit reduction justifies cuts to health care funding
<b>Northcott</b>	Increasing demands on food banks	Federal government should provide support	<b>Chrétien</b>	Job creation and low interest rates will decrease demands on food banks	Deficit should be reduced
<b>Ikejiani</b>	Unemployment and government deficit are linked	Deficit reduction should not create unemployment	<b>Chrétien</b>	Jobs have been created	Private sector should create jobs
<b>MacKeigan</b>	Unemployment is high in Atlantic Provinces	Federal government should legislate assistance	<b>Chrétien</b>	Federal government is assisting local entrepreneurs	Private sector should create jobs
<b>Foster</b>	Educated workers cannot find full employment	Federal government should intervene in the economy.	<b>Chrétien</b>	Work-force is changing due to global economy	Individuals should adapt to economic changes
<b>Greenberg</b>	Canadian research and development is under-funded	Federal government should invest more in research and development	<b>Chrétien</b>	Federal government cut investments in research and development	Private sector should still benefit from tax incentives
<b>Savoie</b>	Liberals promised to repeal GST	Federal government should live up to its promises	<b>Chrétien</b>	According to red book, Liberals promised to simplify GST	Federal government did not break a promise
<b>Bolduc</b>	Chrétien is trying to scare people of Quebec away from independence	Federal government should negotiate in good faith	<b>Chrétien</b>	Federal government is not trying to scare people Quebec away from independence	Quebec should decide to either stay in Canada or leave.
<b>Miller</b>	Anglophone Quebecers are afraid of living in independent Quebec	Federal government should have plan to protect them	<b>Chrétien</b>	Quebec will not declare independence from Canada	Federal government should protect minority groups

*Table 5.1: Overview of Validity Claims*

A theoretical discourse is a conceptual framework that situates private experiences so that they can be explained, understood and brought into accord with the world that others share. The effectiveness of a such a discourse is evaluated according to the rationality of knowledge. A practical discourse recognizes private interests as generalizable or acceptable. Practical discourses are evaluated according to the solidarity of participants. (Braaten, 1991: 32).

Table 5.2 (*page 113*) summarizes the principal objections by members of the studio audience and Chrétien's attempts in vindicating his claims.

On the topic of social services, Barton raised the objection that Chrétien is cutting too much funding out of health care. Chrétien defended the cutbacks by arguing that the Canadian health care system is too expensive. When Northcott objected to the argument that more employment would assist food banks, Chrétien suggested that low interest rates could also help. In both cases, Chrétien's discourse was directed at accounting for the government's deficit reduction strategy of reducing social service funds with facts about either cost ratios or employment figures.

On the issue of the federal government's role in reducing unemployment, Ikejiani objected to Chrétien's job creation figures because they were mostly about part-time jobs. Chrétien responded that work is created by the private sector. Then MacKeigan objected to the suggestion that entrepreneurs will create work in Cape Breton and Chrétien responded that unemployment is also high in his ridding. Finally, Foster objected to Chrétien's reference to the role of the provincial government and Chrétien introduced

QUESTION	ANSWER	OBJECTION	RESPONSE	OBJECTION	RESPONSE
<b>Barton</b> accuses Chrétien of causing inferior health care system	<b>Chrétien</b> answers that health care is too expensive	<b>Barton</b> states that Chrétien will continue to cut funds despite the needs	<b>Chrétien</b> maintains that less expensive health care can be provided		
<b>Northcott</b> requests Federal assistance for food banks	<b>Chrétien</b> claims that strong economy will create employment	<b>Northcott</b> indicates that employed people are increasingly using food banks	<b>Chrétien</b> claims that low interests rates will ease burden on food banks		
<b>Ikejiani</b> asks if government cutbacks create unemployment	<b>Chrétien</b> indicates that Employment has increased	<b>Ikejiani</b> states that there is a need for full-time jobs	<b>Chrétien</b> states that it is the private sector that creates jobs		
<b>MacKeigan</b> requests federal policy to assist the unemployed in the Atlantic regions	<b>Chrétien</b> explains that the federal government has regional assistance programmes	<b>Mansbridge</b> asks if there is hope for Cape Breton	<b>Chrétien</b> claims that entrepreneurs will create employment	<b>MacKeigan</b> argues that the unemployed need money to start business riding	<b>Chrétien</b> talks about unemployment in his riding
<b>Foster</b> requests direct federal government intervention	<b>Chrétien</b> observes that Saskatchewan has low unemployment	<b>Foster</b> interjects that this fact has not helped her in finding work	<b>Chrétien</b> notes that Provincial government is NDP	<b>Foster</b> specifies that the federal government needs to intervene	<b>Chrétien</b> concludes that individuals need to adapt to global economy
<b>Greenberg</b> requests more funding for high tech. R & D.	<b>Chrétien</b> cites a company in his riding enjoys tax incentives for R & D	<b>Greenberg</b> clarifies that they enjoy provincial tax incentives	<b>Chrétien</b> responds that Quebec still has high unemployment		
<b>Savoie</b> claims that Chrétien promised to abolish G.S.T	<b>Chrétien</b> states that the promise was not in the red book	<b>Mansbridge</b> confirms that Chrétien has made promise before election	<b>Chrétien</b> accuses Mansbridge of ignoring the importance of the Red Book	<b>Savoie</b> suggests that Chrétien is not being truthful.	<b>Chrétien:</b> Government needed the revenues
<b>Bolduc</b> claims Chrétien is trying to scare Quebec with a contingency plan	<b>Chrétien</b> says he wants Quebec in Canada	<b>Bolduc</b> claims that Chrétien will not meet Quebec's demands	<b>Chrétien</b> asks Bolduc if she knows of demands that have been met.	<b>Bolduc</b> responds; that it is not enough	<b>Chrétien</b> declares that Quebec has to come to a decision
<b>Miller</b> says Chrétien should protect anglophones in Quebec with a contingency plan	<b>Chrétien</b> does not want to discuss hypothetical scenarios	<b>Miller</b> states that it is not hypothetical	<b>Chrétien</b> explains that federal government will "win" the next referendum	<b>Miller</b> wants to know if anglophones in Quebec will be protected	<b>Chrétien</b> says he is obliged to protect them

Table 5.2: Summary of Principal Objections



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On the topic of social services, Barton raised the objection that Chrétien is cutting too much funding out of health care. Chrétien defended the cutbacks by arguing that the Canadian health care system is too expensive. When Northcott objected to the argument that more employment would assist food banks, Chrétien suggested that low interest rates could also help. In both cases, Chrétien's discourse was directed at accounting for the government's deficit reduction strategy of reducing social service funds with facts about either cost ratios or employment figures. Chrétien's argument for the imperative of deficit reduction by way of reduced social spending is consistent with the recommendations promoted by Canada's leading think tanks, most notably the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI). As Maude Barlow explains, the BCNI was instrument in charting the course of the Liberals towards a corporate agenda:

the BCNI persuaded the Liberal government to give priority to fighting inflation over reducing unemployment, and shifted it from an activist to a more passive industrial strategy. I also helped ensure that more business-friendly Liberals were placed in key economic portfolios, steering the government away from its nationalist propensity (Barlow, 1995: 48).

On the issue of the federal government's role in reducing unemployment, Ikejiani objected to Chrétien's job creation figures because they were about part-time jobs. Chrétien responded that work is created by the private sector. Then MacKeigan objected to the suggestion that entrepreneurs will create work in Cape Breton and Chrétien responded that unemployment is also high in his riding. Finally, Foster objected to

Chrétien's reference to the role of the provincial government and Chrétien introduced the argument that individuals are responsible for their employment. Chrétien generally resorted to a discourse that argued against government accountability for unemployment.

The truths of Chrétien's claims are then challenged in questions relating to the role of the government in the economy. First, Greenberg contests the truth of Chrétien's claim that the federal government offers tax incentives for high-tech research and development, but Chrétien does not acknowledge that Greenberg has challenged the accuracy of his facts. Then, Savoie and Mansbridge both claim that Chrétien had promised to eliminate the GST. In this case, Chrétien resorts to arguing the inappropriateness of the claims in an attempt to defend his truthfulness.

Finally, on the topic of national unity, Bolduc objects to the use of a contingency plan to frighten Quebec separatists, while Miller objects to the lack of a clear contingency plan to protect the anglophones of Quebec. Chrétien contests both the claims of Bolduc that the federal government should not resort to a contingency plan and of Miller that it should. Chrétien argues instead that Quebec should come to a clear decision, and on the other hand, that the separatists will not win a referendum.

Discussion between Chrétien and the studio audience did not generate a coherent understanding of public interests. In the semantic dimension of theoretical discourse, the studio audience confined public interests to the contexts of their own personal experiences, and Chrétien was largely unable to incorporate these individual experiences into a rationally account of how his policies correspond with public interests. Thereby, knowledge of what actually constituted public interests was not rationally defined. On the dimension of social space, practical discourses failed to draw solidarity between audience

members and Chrétien, or even simply between audience members. The participants in the debate were not engaged in a process of social integration.

In the context of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, the studio audience, Chrétien and Mansbridge appear to respectively represent the public, the government, and journalists as objective mediators between public and government. The significance of any apparent discord between the Prime Minister and a studio audience of is significant because it suggests the existence of a larger discord between the interests of state and society. In this regard, the roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability, and a social space of public communication pertain to how the publicity of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* contextualizes and concentrates mutual understanding and consensus about the roles of the public, the state, and the media.

The CBC attempted to establish the role of public advocacy by representing the studio audience as a surrogate Canadian public. The studio audience was presented to viewers as a diverse group of politically independent citizens. In his introduction to the viewing audience, Mansbridge announced that people from across the country were invited to “say what they think about the government’s performance -- and to ask questions about their future and the future of the country.”

CBC producers selected a studio audience that would represent a balance of demographic factors such as gender, racial and regional representation, while presenting a range of issues (Crichton, 1996). The gender balance was seven women to six men, and only two speakers were of visible minority; one an Afro-Canadian woman and the other an Aboriginal male. As for regional representation, participants came from all provinces

except Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island and the programme was produced both in English and in French.

The CBC also selected members of the studio audience based on their ability to provide thoughtful questions about issues that concerned most Canadians. The candidates were interviewed about the issues that intrigued them and the question they would ask the Prime Minister. Coincidentally, the issues expressed by the studio audience corresponded to the concerns of Canadians. In the lead into a commercial break, the CBC showed the results of an Environics poll taken in October of 1996 that ranked the most important problems for Canadians. The poll indicated that unemployment was the most important problem for forty-two percent of Canadians, while fourteen percent of Canadian found the economy to be the most important problem. National unity, the deficit and health care were each respectively the main concern for seven percent of the population.

In addition to constructing an audience that represents Canadians, producers were looking for “someone articulate, not afraid to go on television.” someone “who’s passionate about the issues” and capable of expressing their opinions “in the words and language that they choose.” (Feschuk, 1996). However, participants could not be directly involved with a political party. According to Kelly Crichton, the programme’s producer, participants had to “take an interest in public-policy issues, be articulate, not represent any advocacy group and not be involved in partisan politics.”

Therefore, public advocacy in the discussion of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was restricted to thirteen citizens who were not the elected representatives of any

social or public organizations, but merely citizens chosen by the CBC to represent a demographically diverse collection of autonomous individuals from across Canada.

The role of the Prime Minister as directly accountable to the “public” of the studio audience was reflected in the publicity of the press. The fourth annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was the topic of front page articles in at least two of Canada’s leading newspapers the morning after it aired. The caption of the *Globe and Mail* read “PM challenged on jobs, Quebec: Chrétien often put on defensive in peppery interchanges at taping of TV show.” (Greenspon, 1996), while the front page of the *Toronto star* proclaimed “Chrétien taken to task over his record.” (Vienneau, 1996).

In the *Globe and Mail* report, Edward Greenspon (Greenspon, 1996) remarks that the programme reflected public dissatisfaction with the government’s performance on jobs, worry about health care, anger about the GST and division over Quebec. Greenspon characterizes the dialogue as sharp, noting that the studio audience interrupted the Prime Minister who was in turn “thrown on the defensive.”

Greenspon observes that Chrétien “made no apology for major reductions in health care,” and that Chrétien “made it plain that he views joblessness largely as an issue of personal responsibility.” As an example, he quotes Chrétien’s response to Foster that “some are lucky, some are unlucky” with employment. Greenspon also writes that Chrétien had said that “governments don’t create jobs in the modern, global economy, but rather create the conditions in which the private sector does.” Noting MacKeigan’s challenge that money is needed to start a business, Greenspon states that “the questioners overwhelmingly said that since the private sector has failed to pick up the slack, the responsibility must fall to governments.”

Greenspon's account of the programme concentrates on disagreements between Chrétien and the studio audience and presents them within the context of an upcoming election. Although Greenspon does acknowledge that the studio audience, "selected by the broadcaster," reflected the concerns that Canadians regularly express in opinion polls, he is inconclusive about the reasons or justification for these concerns. Indeed, for a journalist that had just co-authored a book entitled *Double Vision: The inside story of the Liberals in power* (1996), Greenspon provides little explanation for the public's concerns about employment, health care, social spending, deficit reduction, the GST and division over Quebec.

David Vienneau provides a similar description of the programme in the *Toronto Star*. Vienneau begins his report by declaring that Chrétien took a 'verbal beating' over the record of his government and compares Chrétien to a "hockey player skating on dull blades."

Participants from the studio audience are said to have 'grilled' Chrétien about "high unemployment, the GST, declining health care and the fears of anglo-Quebecers." Vienneau observes that instead of "deferring to the man who holds the country's highest political office," the participants from the studio audience were aggressive and even appeared angry. In particular, they "challenged Chrétien's answers and were not shy about cutting him off in mid sentence." Vienneau devotes the most attention to exchanges between Savoie and Chrétien, which appears under the sub-heading of "Voted to Kill GST." Vienneau cites Chrétien's affirmation that he never said "scrapped" and Savoie's response: "I didn't hear "simpler", I heard "scrapped"." Vienneau then quotes the passage in the Red Book that states that the GST will be replaced by a "system that

generates equivalent revenues.” Vienneau supports with evidence Chrétien’s argument that a repeal of the GST was not explicitly written in the Red Book, yet he ignores any evidence of Chrétien’s verbal promises to indeed scrap the GST.

Vienneau describes the Prime Minister’s discourse as one of pleading a “lack of money and the need to get the government’s books in order.” However, Vienneau is more forgiving of Chrétien than Greenspon. In particular, he quotes Chrétien as saying:

“Its difficult, but it’s democracy [...] They asked good questions ... valid questions. We have the same thing in the House but I think their questions were sometimes better than in the House.”

These examples of initial press coverage illustrate discord between Chrétien’s discourse of government and individual fiscal responsibility and the interests expressed by the studio audience. However, the articles do not provide much in the way of rationally accounting for the role of the state, nor an understanding of the role of the public. Rather, discussion is concentrated into arguments between the Prime Minister and the studio audience. The context of the discussion is one of debate between a hostile public and a government that does not sympathize with their problems. The narrow context of these articles is consistent with the view that the press often ignores an understanding of the larger thematic context of issues to pursue episodic events that are more responsive to a consumption of information.

As for the extent of public communication in the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, it was examined in an article by Scott Feschuk (1996) published in the *Globe and Mail*, Friday, December 14, 1996. Feschuk explains that the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* had previously provided a “rare opportunity for Canadians to pitch

questions at Jean Chrétien” while prompting little political fallout. Feschuk observed that “Liberal strategists viewed the event as a valuable showcase for Mr. Chrétien’s renowned people skills.” However, because Chrétien was now showing poor people skills, Liberal strategists and even cabinet ministers were suggesting in “off-the-record” interviews that the CBC had “stacked the audience with Canadians who have an axe to grind.”

CBC Executive producer Tony Burman dismisses this charge. He contends that given an opportunity to talk to the Prime Minister, Canadians would not be inclined to compliment him but rather to ask “good questions about important issues.” Burman then argues that it was only after the “post game analysis” that the Prime Minister’s aides raised complaints. As he states it, “the story is in the answers [of Mr. Chrétien], not in the questions”(Feschuk, 1996).

The article by Feschuk concentrates on describing the selection of audience members, and he raises issue with certain aspects of the process. First, Feschuk contends there is “no guarantee that the person will be a so-called average Canadian.” For instance, he notes that Juanita MacKeigan has “done a lot of public speaking and dealt with the news media as a representative of a fisheries worker’s union on Cape Breton.” Second, Feschuk notes that even though participants were allowed to ask questions in the words and language that they chose, Laurie Foster admitted that she was “urged by CBC officials to eliminate the preamble to her question about job creation and instead introduce herself as unemployed despite having three university degrees.”

Feschuk also raises issue with complaints put forth by the Liberals. Liberals perceived Mansbridge’s invitation for participants to not let “Chrétien get away with not



answering their questions” as an invitation to be combative. However, the participants took it as “an attempt to ensure that they did not defer to Mr. Chrétien.”

Furthermore, Feschuk echoes Burman’s concern that “complaints about the town hall audience surfaced only after opposition politicians and news commentators began taking the Prime Minister to task for his comments about the GST.”

The studio audience is presented within the context of accusations by unnamed Liberal strategists against the CBC that the programme was a strategic attack on Chrétien. These accusations are themselves part of a strategic attack on the CBC in an effort to defend Chrétien’s image. In concentrating on this point, the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* is not presented as a social space of public communication between citizens, but within the context of strategic actions against Chrétien and the CBC.

In the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, understanding and consensus of the roles of state, public and the media in Canadian society were initially concentrated in the context of a democratic exchange of questions and answers between the Prime Minister and a studio audience of Canadian citizens. The CBC’s representation of the studio audience as a surrogate public established the role of public advocacy. This role and that of the Prime Minister as directly accountable to this surrogate public were initially reflected in the publicity of the press. However, objections by Liberal part officials raised questions about the justification for the studio audience’s role as public advocates. This shifted political accountability from the Prime Minister to the CBC. Finally, the programme’s role as a social space of public communication was the subject of an article that examined the role of the CBC in selecting the studio audience.

The programme appeared in the context of the conflicting interests of the Prime Minister and CBC in producing the programme rather than in the context of public communication. Rather than providing a social space of public communication, the TTM appeared to be space where representations of the public are shaped to respond to the interests of the media and government.

#### **5.4 Publicizing the Activities of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*.**

The activities of the participants of a TTM need to be publicized if they are to contribute to democratic opinion formation. This includes the publicity of the political and economic relations of power and dependency between the participants of a TTM.

If we consider discussion from the perspective of communicative action, the political and economic relations of power in a TTM relate to the processes of systems integration. Communicative action coordinates actions around reaching consensus over criticizable validity claims. However, political and economic relations of power are simply coordinated in communicative action but are steered by the bureaucratic systems of the state and the monetary systems of the market. These systems coordinate action "in accordance with the adaptive goals of economic and political survival." (Ingram, 1987: 115).

Just as relations between state, society and the media are subject to the abstract rules of money and power systems, representations of state, public and the media in the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* are subject to the goals and mechanisms of political parties and publicist institutions.

In this context, the political accountability role is compromised by political relations of power between the Prime Minister and the CBC. Equally, the public advocacy role concerns is compromised by relations of power between CBC producers and the studio audience. Finally, the role of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* as a social space of public communication depends on the degree to which the programme is

either oriented to the reproduction of the lifeworld or the manipulative publicity of public relations.

The *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was a feature of political relations of power between the governing Liberal party and the opposition Reform party. The Reform Party was particularly critical of Chrétien's responses during the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* in the House of Commons debates from Tuesday, December 11 until the parliament recessed on Friday, December 14.

The Reform Party presents itself as a populist party in contrast to more established parties like the Liberal Party. It had previously produced TTMs of its own as part of a series of cross-Canada rallies. These programmes were presented on cable television and only dealt with specific issues such as taxes. Like the TTMs of the CBC, the audiences were carefully selected. However, the audience tended to reflect the interests of the Reform party rather than those shared by most Canadians (Barney, 1996).

In the case of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, Reform Party leader Preston Manning subscribed to the identification of some members of the studio audience with the Canadian public. During the House of Commons question period of December 11, Manning stated that "yesterday at a CBC town hall meeting, Canadians started to hold the Prime Minister accountable for his broken campaign promise of jobs, jobs, jobs." He stated that "Canadians could not get a straight answer from the Prime Minister last night so I would like to try today."

Chrétien responded by repeating his claims and the evidence he presented in the programme, but Manning retorted that "those numbers and that answer did not satisfy the audience last night, and those numbers and that answer do not satisfy this House."

Manning then outlined Chrétien's responses to the concerns of individual members of the studio audience as response to the concerns of millions of citizens:

... the Prime Minister last night told the 17.2 per cent of Canadian young people looking for work: "Go back to school." His answer to the two million to three million people who are unemployed in this country was: "Get a loan and start a new business." His answer to the 1.5 million unemployed Canadians was: "some are lucky, some are unlucky. That's life." That sounds like rolling the dice with the lives of the unemployed (House of Commons, 1996: 7384)

The next day, Manning accused Liberals of attempting to discredit the CBC. He declared that Chrétien's performance in the town hall meeting has put the "Liberal spin doctors into damage control mode" and that the Liberals:

"have now suggested the CBC, a federal crown corporation established by an act of this House, rigged the town hall, purposely stacking it with hostile questioners who did not reflect the concerns of Canadians [...] Does the Prime Minister really think that the CBC rigged that town hall and that Canadians are not really concerned about jobs, about taxes, and about national unity? (House of Commons, 1996: 7463-7464)

Chrétien denied that he said the programme was rigged and indicated that he did not have to participate in the programme but did so because he is "not afraid to talk to the Canadian people." Manning then challenged Chrétien to "present himself at more town hall meetings and public fora where Canadian voters can hold him accountable for his actions." Chrétien's reply is that he was in the House more than many other members of Parliament. However, Chrétien did not appear in the House of Commons for the remainder of the week, leaving the Deputy Prime Minister Paul Martin to account for

him. (House of Commons, 1996: 7464). Indeed, Chrétien never participated in a TTM discussion since his appearance on the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*. The following year, Chrétien appeared instead with his wife Aline in a more conventional interview for CTV.

However, on Saturday, December 21, Chrétien did appear on the CBC radio programme *The House* to openly criticize the CBC. Originally, Chrétien was quoted in the *Toronto Star* as saying that the studio audience asked “valid questions” and that the questions were “sometimes better than in the House [of Commons]” (Vienneau, 1996). Now, he was saying that the questions asked during the programme were “prepared.” Chrétien dismissed the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* as “not real,” noting that only 13 of the 200 participants asked questions. He also remarked that clips and sound bites in news coverage of the programme were edited to “suit the purpose, not necessarily to have the whole truth.” (Greenspon, 1996b).

Chrétien had resorted to challenging the truth and appropriateness of critical claims raised by members of the audience, he now defends himself by challenging the credibility of the studio audience as a whole, not to mention the credibility of the CBC. Initially, complaints against the CBC were not addressed directly by Chrétien but rather filtered to the media through a system of “off-the-record” remarks made by members of his government. This maneuver succeeded in concentrating critical publicity on the context of the discussion rather than on the content of the arguments. It is a strategy that the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) would successfully implement against the CBC in their reports about the Prime Minister influencing RCMP security at the 1997 APEC Summit in Vancouver. In this case, the director of communications at the PMO, Peter

Donolo, publicly accused CBC reporter Terry Milewski of bias because he had given advice to an APEC protester and had referred to the federal government in his email as "The Forces of Darkness." The CBC initially contested Donolo's accusation of bias, noting that he was not actually contesting the content of the reports, and that furthermore, the PMO and the RCMP were consistently unwilling to answer any questions or provide any comment about the issue. Although a CBC internal investigation and even the CBC's ombudsman cleared Milewski of wrongdoing, Milewski was suspended after a letter he had written about the issue was published in the *Globe and Mail* (Milewski, 1998). Whatever the outcome for Milewski or the CBC, the PMO achieved its objective of diverting media attention from hearings into APEC security to unfounded accusation of bias against the journalist. Both incidents indicate the government attempting to colonize opportunities for further rational debate over the issues by accusing the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the only national public broadcaster, of bias.

Chrétien's open criticism against the CBC followed a letter published in the *Globe and Mail* in which the CBC had already defended itself against criticism made by veteran television journalist Peter Desbarats in a December 17, *Globe and Mail* editorial.

Entitled "Anatomy of a 'town-hall meeting'," Desbarats (1996) began his article by stating that the programme created unnecessary and untimely political turmoil; untimely for Chrétien because it damaged his credibility as a "straightforward politician" just before calling an election, and untimely for the CBC because it damaged its credibility on the issue of "truth in broadcasting" at a time when it is suffering from budget cuts and questions regarding its privatization. Desbarats thus raises the issue that

the public broadcaster's financial stability is dependent upon its political relations with the government.

Desbarats then addresses the question of whether the fourth annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was indeed a town hall meeting or an orchestrated ambush, concluding that the programme was not a town hall meeting. He defines a town hall meeting as a basic democratic institution that is "not organized, controlled and manipulated as the official political agenda is." He registers surprise that only 13 people were selected in advance to ask questions and that their "questions were screened and edited and that the people were coached on how to ask them effectively." He thus qualifies the CBC's *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* as a confusion between the acceptable journalistic practice of attacking politicians during a Leaders Debate and the essentially accessible and spontaneous format of audience participation television programmes.

Despite these criticisms, Desbarats does recognize that the CBC needed "people who can ask terse, intelligent questions and who are not afraid to argue with Mr. Chrétien if need be." He also admits that the Liberals are partly to blame for accepting a format that guaranteed a good show by transferring "the element risk" to the Prime Minister. Desbarats does not define what these risks are, but considers them great enough that "the odds against [Chrétien] winning this confrontation have become almost insurmountable."

In the end, Desbarats recommends that the CBC explain to viewers beforehand how the programme was produced, "Otherwise it's guilty of ambushing viewers as well as politicians, presenting them with something that isn't exactly what it pretends to be." He warns that the CBC's "selection and coaching of participants raises questions about



making news rather than just reporting it.” Desbarats concludes by remarking that the “whole episode should trigger a healthy debate about the journalistic ethics of the CBC’s town hall format.”

On Friday, December 20, the *Globe and Mail* published a letter in reply to Desbarats written by the head of CBC Television News, Kelly Crichton. Crichton (1996) defends the process of selecting the studio audience as a means of ensuring that it would not be stacked with people who have an axe to grind. Crichton notes that the criteria for selecting the participants were that “they must take an interest in public-policy issues, be articulate, not represent any advocacy group and not be involved in partisan politics.” She thus reinforces the notion of a public made of non-partisan individuals.

She states that the Prime Minister’s staff was told in advance about the general policy areas, that they knew how the questions would be addressed, and that they were aware of how the audience was selected. This fact is presented in order to establish that the Prime Minister was not ambushed. However, it reveals the extent to which the CBC is prepared to collaborate with the Prime Minister for his participation. As for any preparation of questions, Crichton indicates that: “most of the questions that caused the kerfuffle came in those follow-ups -- you know the ones we couldn’t rehearse even if we wanted to.”

Crichton argues that Desbarats’s concern for the legitimacy of the format ignores the issue of whether the audience members expressed valid concerns and opinions:

“We produced a careful and responsible program designed to reflect the concerns of Canadians. It is the message contained in those concerns that should be the preoccupation of the chattering classes -- not a concern with killing the messenger.”

However, Crichton does concede that "next year, as Mr. Desbarats suggested, at the top of the programme we'll be explaining all of the above. We truly wish we'd thought of it this time."

In her defence of the programme, Crichton claims to have produced a careful and responsible programme designed to reflect the concerns of Canadians. She is defending relations between the CBC and the public by appealing to the CBC's mandate of reflecting Canada.

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is a federal crown corporation that was established by an act of parliament on November 22, 1936. It was originally the only national broadcasting service, but it has since become the only national public broadcaster within a largely private broadcasting system. As the national public broadcaster, the CBC has a special mandate to serve the Canadian public. According to the 1991 Broadcasting Act (CRTC 1994), the CBC is mandated to reflect Canadian culture and society with programming that "informs, enlightens and entertains."

The mandate of the CBC can be understood in terms of the processes of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization in the lifeworld. First, the mandate of the CBC states that programming should actively contribute to "the flow and exchange of cultural expression," and that this cultural exchange should "reflect the multicultural and multiracial nature of Canada." This provision of the mandate relates to cultural reproduction. Second, the CBC is mandated to contribute to a "shared national consciousness and identity," implying a function of social integration. Finally, the CBC is mandated to reflect Canada and its regions to national and regional audiences, while

servicing the special needs of those regions. Programming should be provided both in English and in French so that it reflects “the different needs and circumstances of English and French linguistic minorities.” This reference to the needs of specific audiences relates a notion that the CBC should socialize certain viewers to their linguistic communities.

In principle, the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* should conform to the functions of the CBC mandate. It publicized the social concerns of a cross section of Canadians to both English and French speaking audiences, thus producing a particular vision of a shared Canadian consciousness and identity. However, as Desbarats indicates and Crichton concedes, the problem is that the CBC failed to subject the format to publicity to the extent that the programme could rightly hold the claim of reflecting the concerns of the public.

The institutional criteria for public participation in the forum were not democratically determined among all participants but restricted to the CBC. As such, the studio audience appeared to function as resources for the CBC in asking questions. This allowed the Prime Minister’s Office to raise objections about the role of the studio audience as public advocates; objections that effectively undermined the role of the programme in providing a social space of public communication.

Likewise, publicity of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* revealed the political and economic relations of power and dependency between the Prime Minister’s Office, the citizens from the studio audience and the CBC. First, the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* became part of political relations of power between the governing Liberal party and the opposition Reform party. The Liberals reacted by objecting to the CBC’s

role in selecting the studio audience. As a result of publicity over these objections, the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* appeared to be a failed public relations exercise on behalf of the CBC and the Prime Minister's Office. As a result, the CBC could not assume its role as a social space of public communication.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

#### 6.1 The Model of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*

The introduction to this study asked whether the assumed roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability, and the social space of a television town hall meeting (TTM) can contribute to the “deliberative democracy” of the public sphere.

The TTM is broadly defined as a television programme that attracts viewer-audiences by featuring public debate between political leaders and a live studio audience of citizens. By comparison, the public sphere is understood to be a social space where citizens come together as a public to form public opinion in rational-critical discussion.

Interaction within a properly constituted public sphere is conducted according to the democratic principles of freedom of expression and liberty of association (Habermas 1974: 55). In the case of a national public sphere, political opinions, policy options, and policy-relevant information are expressed and acquire influence through the publicity of the press and broadcast journalism.

However, as outlined in chapter three, the mass media of press and broadcast journalism are not simply transmitters of a public opinion formed in conversation between citizens. Rather, mass media are more likely to publicize opinions and information that are directed at influencing public opinion on behalf of privatized and organized public relations interests.

Habermas explains that the meaning of public opinion differs depending on how it is put to use. Public opinion can either function as “a critical authority in connection with

the normative mandate that the exercise of political and social power be subject to publicity or as the object to be molded in connection with a staged display of, and manipulative propagation of, publicity in the service of persons and institutions, consumer goods, and programs.”( Habermas, 1989: 236).

Habermas suggests that politically influential mass media are capable of forming democratic opinion and consensus when they are subject to certain democratic demands of publicity. These principles first require that the activities and inner structure of the media must be opened to the public so as to permit an intraorganizational public sphere of public rational-critical debate. Then, the internal affairs of the intraorganizational public sphere need to be made public so that its linkage with the public sphere of the entire public is assured. Finally, the political and economic relations of power and dependency of the organization must be subject to a far reaching publicity. (Habermas, 1989: 209).

Similarly, Livingstone and Lunt propose that public organizations such as political parties, interest groups, and charities can provide public access to the formation of public opinion when they operate as their own self-contained public spheres. Livingstone and Lunt explain that the representatives of such groups “may contribute to a rational-critical public debate, influence political processes and hold the system accountable” insofar as they also “represent broader public opinion” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994: 23). The degree to which the opinions they express can be considered “public” depends on how their membership is constituted and how it relates to the state, social organizations, and the mass media. From this perspective, the TTM can function as a public sphere when its structure is organized in a manner that is open to the public, allows rational-critical debate, and is linked to the public sphere through critical publicity.

Livingstone and Lunt also suggest that audience discussion programmes like TTMs allow media institutions to assume three roles: a public advocacy role, a direct political accountability role, and a role as a social space. Each of these roles provides a measure of the principle of publicity.

The case of the fourth annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* did provide some degree of public advocacy within a restricted form of rational-critical debate between individual citizens and the Prime Minister. However, the citizens of the studio audience did not officially represent the membership of a wider public, nor were they able to debate among themselves as to what constituted genuine public interests. The representation of the public appeared in the context of a demographically diverse collection of average Canadians. Rather than providing public advocacy, citizens were resources for the CBC and the Prime Minister in an endeavour to appear more accessible to the public.

Debate between the Prime Minister and the studio audience also provided some measure of direct political accountability in that audience members were able to object to the Prime Minister's responses. However, the Prime Minister would have been more directly accountable to the public had the studio audience actually held legitimate connections to democratic public organizations that represent public opinions and interests. In this context, the state appeared to be accountable to a collection of individual interests rather than to a common public interest. The Prime Minister was later held accountable for his responses by an opposition party, however he was able to defend himself by using the power of his political relations to discredit the legitimacy of the programme and its producers.

Finally, the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* was structurally organized so that only a few selected individuals were allowed to express opinions, ask questions and object to answers. The extent of their interaction with the Prime Minister was ultimately determined by the moderator. Publicity of the conditions for public participation in the programme provided a context for understanding the social space of the media as one of restricted association, or formalized and managed communication instead of genuine public communication. In the end, the opportunities for generating uncoerced agreements in the public sphere of the entire public were condensed by systems of political parties and publicist institutions into a debate over the context of public participation.

If a TTM were to subject the exercise of political and social power to the critical publicity of a public sphere, its format would need to be subjected to a greater degree of publicity at all levels. Otherwise, it risks being another staged display of publicity in the service of state and media institutions.



## 6.2 Alternate Models for a Television Town Hall Meeting

The case of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister* suggests that if a TTM is sufficiently subject to the principle of publicity, there is a potential that the roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability, and the provision of a social space of communication will contribute to democratic deliberation in the public sphere.

The CBC has produced other programmes using formats that more closely adhere to the principles of publicity. For instance, the annual Budget Town Halls featured Finance Minister Paul Martin answering questions from representatives of various public organizations and associations including labour groups, charities, political organization and business associations. This format was more representative of a public forum, yet discussion was still restricted to an exchange of questions and answers. This format thus failed to offer any greater potential for rational-critical debate and consensus.

An example of a more deliberative process of debate and consensus-formation is the programme *Out of the Red, into the Black*. This was a two-part programme broadcast during the *National Magazine*, on February 23 and 24, 1998. It brought together twelve citizens to draft a budget for a projected five billion dollar surplus. This group of citizens received proposals from various public agencies and social organizations and were given seventy-two hours to decide how the funds would be distributed. Afterwards, Finance Minister Paul Martin was presented with their final budget and was given the opportunity to comment on it in an interview with host Hanna Gartner. The event was modeled after a previous CBC programme in which a citizen from each province was invited to attend a

weekend retreat in order to draft a new constitutional accord. Unlike the format of the *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*, this type of forum permitted rational-critical debate between citizens in the form of deliberation and the formation of consensus on a specific topic of public interest. The citizens did not simply play the role of public advocates but also played the role of political authorities. Both roles were however fictions of the format. Consensus between the participants did not necessarily imply that a similar consensus would have been reached by a wider public.

For a studio audience to have broader public representation it would need to have a legitimate claim to the status of "surrogate public." To this end, James Fishkin (1996) proposes the format of a deliberative poll that was adopted by Britain's Channel Four on May 8, 1994. In this deliberative poll, a random sample of the population gathered together in a single place to discuss and deliberate the issue of crime. This process used the same sampling method that a polling firm would. However, instead of individually asking each participant a series of questions, participants were brought together to deliberate in small groups and arrive at considered judgments. These judgements were then broadcast to the population at large as a model of what the public would think if it were engaged by an issue. Although this format does not necessarily reflect a "democracy of parties and associations," it did provide a level of democratic public participation that reflects the public sphere ideal of citizens forming public opinion in open and free conversation.

In the Canadian context, the TTM format that perhaps most closely realized the public sphere ideal was the *Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future*. This forum came about in response to the abiding Canadian concern over the constitution. In 1982, the federal

government and the nine premiers of Canada convened to reach an agreement on repatriating the Canadian constitution. The Prime Minister and all Provincial Premiers except for the premier of Quebec agreed to endorse the Constitution. Amendments to the constitution at that time did not require the unanimous consent of all the provinces, so the constitution was ratified without the consent of Quebec. This being said, any amendments to the 1982 constitution do require unanimous consent of all provinces. Canada thus adopted a constitution that requires unanimous consent of all provinces even though it in itself had not received the unanimous endorsement of all provinces.

In an attempt to rectify the situation, the ten premiers and the government of Canada attempted to unanimously ratify the constitution in 1989. Known as the Meech Lake accord, this attempt consisted of intense negotiations between the premiers and the federal government. According to Chambers, these negotiations were “dominated by elite bargaining, trade-offs, and pressure tactics on the part of the federal government” and an accord was never reached (Chambers, 1995:251). Governments later recognized that part of the reason why they failed to reach consensus was because the process of negotiation failed to solicit the endorsement of the public.

The federal government then proposed to revive constitutional debates with the recognition that “All Canadians should be able to relate to the description of the qualities that define the country to which they are bound by birth or by choice.” (Government of Canada, 1991:9).

On November 1, 1990, the Prime Minister announced the creation of the *Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future*, a process of consulting Canadians on the future of the country. As outlined in a report on this consultative process, the mandate of the forum

was to undertake public consultations with “Canadians of all ages and backgrounds, from all walks of life, from each province and territory” (Porteous, 1995: 3). To accomplish this, the forum undertook consultations through a variety of means including discussions, fora and debates. All together, consultations lasted seventeen weeks. They dealt with six principal themes: “relations among aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples; Canada’s official languages; regionalism vis-à-vis identity and unity; ethnic and cultural diversity; impact of global interdependency on individual and collective aspirations and division of powers; and collective rights vis-à-vis the Canadian identity” (ibid.).

This consultative process included six Electronic Town Hall Meetings (ETMs) that were produced with the participation of audiences from 19 communities across Canada. The purpose of these ETMs was to “permit participants from different parts of Canada to exchange views on different themes of the mandate” (Porteous, 1995:18). The panels and studio audiences for the ETMs were selected from within the communities of the host cities. They were moderated by Laurier LaPierre and broadcast in both official languages on the Parliamentary Channel. Other technical support included telecommunication with rural Aboriginal communities and the use of community cable television facilities.

The first two programmes, held in the first two months of the fora, included panel members from six provinces or territories. The following ETMs were held at the end of the forum, with the participating communities reduced to three. The decision to hold the ETM at the end of the forum was motivated by the intent to primarily use them as means of deepening the dialogue (Porteous, 1995:19). Although the ETMs did not succeed in this regard, they did inform the public about the issues being discussed. One of the

problems encountered with ETMs was the technological challenge of “balancing the desire for good television against the natural dynamic of dialogue which should permit the participants to speak longer and more spontaneously, and allow for the occasional thoughtful silence” (Porteous, 1995:29).

However, it is important to remember that the ETMs were only part of a much larger consultative process. Consultations also included outreach discussion kits, panel discussions on radio and television talk shows, student fora, a traveling task force, and five cross-country regional theme conferences. For Simone Chambers (1995), the overall importance of these initiatives was that “their aim was not to reach a negotiated settlement, but rather to create public spaces for the articulation and exchange of ideas, grievances, and claims” (252). The *Citizens Forum on Canada’s Future* did not have a clear decision schedule. The absence of a need for a final decision allowed discussants to “discuss issues at the level of public reason” and alleviated any need to resort to strategic actions. As Chambers observes, “The closer and more final that point of closure, the more participants will be motivated to act strategically rather than discursively” (Chambers, 1995: 255). Thus, unlike the Meech Lake accord, the *Citizen’s Forum on Canada’s Future* was not a process of negotiating consent, but of developing consensus and understanding through “sustained argumentation and discussion in which people contemplate, analyze, and articulate the fundamental principles that are to govern their interaction”(253).

In her assessment of the *Citizen’s Forum on Canada’s Future*, Chambers evokes the principles of a bourgeois public sphere where citizens engage in open and inclusive discussion. As part of a larger realm of public discussion, the TTM format was situated

in a context where the roles of public advocacy, direct political accountability and social space of public communication were more consistent with the principles of publicity. This in turn provided some role for television in contributing to the mutual understanding and formation of consensus through rational-critical public debate.

It remains to be seen whether the format could consistently respond to this objective. More extensive attempts at developing TTMs in addition to critical research on the format would be required to reveal its potential or limitations in contributing to public opinion formation in the public sphere. It is likewise hoped that a more extensive application of the methodology presented in this study might reveal its potential and limitations in situating the TTM in relation to the public sphere. To date, TTMs have largely been conducted as public relations exercises for political leaders and television broadcasters. Whether this media format progresses to become a public forum of political discussion, debate, and the formation of consensus depends on whether television broadcasters and political leaders are willing to subject themselves to the forms of publicity which must characterize a deliberative democracy.

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# APPENDIX A

## Glossary

**audience participation programme:** a television programme where lay people and experts discuss a topical question, social problem or matter of human interest under the direction of a programme host.<sup>i</sup>

**bourgeois public sphere and refeudalized public sphere:**

The bourgeois public sphere refers to the public sphere of eighteenth century bourgeois society. Communication in this public sphere is characterized by critical publicity and the ideals of the authority of the better argument, uncoerced and unconstrained discussion, and equal and inclusive access. The refeudalized public sphere refers to the public sphere of the modern industrial welfare state. Communication in this public sphere is managed and formalized, and characterized by manipulative publicity.

**colonization of the lifeworld:** A colonization of the lifeworld occurs when systemic mechanisms suppress forms of social integration even in those areas where consensus dependent coordination of the lifeworld is at stake.<sup>ii</sup>

**communicative action:** Communicative action is central to Habermas's claim that interpersonal understanding is dependent upon norms of truth, sincerity, justice, and freedom. Whether acknowledged or not, uncoerced agreement requires that dialogue partners have equal chances to deploy speech acts, and utterances are comprehensible, true, appropriate, and sincerely spoken. Communicative action is illocutionary speech where validity claims are open to public scrutiny, making possible an ideal consensus based solely on the force of the better argument. This emancipatory dimension of language, however, is counterfactual -- it is recovered only through philosophical critique rather than empirical observation. Hence, it is also known as the "ideal speech situation."<sup>iii</sup>

**communicative competence:** The means, including the rules, by which persons sustain communicative exchanges and interactions with others within a community<sup>iv</sup>

**critical publicity and manipulative publicity:** Critical publicity refers to publicity that initiates a critical process of public communication through the organizations that mediatize it. Public opinion that is the subject of critical publicity functions as a critical authority that subjects political and social power to publicity. Manipulative Publicity is displayed by organizations to the public of a mass audience. With manipulative publicity, public opinion is an object to be moulded in the service of private interests. (see p.48)

**democratic deliberation:** Careful consideration among a group of individuals whose composition is egalitarian.

**direct political accountability, role of.:** The role assumed from holding politicians to account directly to citizens rather than by proxy.

**discourse:** the formal discussion of a subject in speech.

**Electronic Town Hall Meeting (ETM):** A public forum that uses electronic media to solicit the participation of the public. Participation is measured to produce a poll of "public opinion."

**generalizable forms of communication:** Forms of communication that uncouple "informational content from simple interactions, from specific persons and from practical obligations."<sup>v</sup>

**intraorganizational public sphere:** Any organization that is structured to permit an internal public sphere.

**legitimation:** to accord with established rules, principles, or standards.

**lifeworld:** A phenomenological concept referring to the world of shared, ongoing flow of experiences from which we constitute objects and abstract concepts.<sup>vi</sup>

**mediatize:** to subject to mediation.

**metatheoretical discourse:** A discourse that draws on arguments over what constitutes valid evidence or appropriate norms in a particular situation.

**narrative:** an account of events or experiences.

**practical discourse:** a discourse that argues the appropriateness of a claim.

**public advocacy, role of.:** the role that is assumed from conveying the opinions, experiences, and information of citizens to the government.

**public body:** Citizens behave as a public body when they confer in an unrestricted fashion -- that is with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions -- about matters of general interest [...] They then behave neither like business or professional people transacting private affairs, nor like members of a constitutional order subject to the legal constraints of a state bureaucracy.<sup>vii</sup>

**public opinion:** collective opinion of a public body.

**public relations:** the actions of a corporation or government in promoting goodwill between itself and the public.

**public sphere:** By "the public sphere" we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all

citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals form a public body.<sup>viii</sup>

**publicity:** Publicity refers to activities that either seek to gain public notice by means of communication or that make proceeding public and open to general observation or knowledge.

**rational-critical debate:** Debate that requires judgement and justification through reason. Rational-critical debate is guided by the principle of the authority of the better argument.

**reify, reification:** to regard as a concrete thing.

**reproduction of the lifeworld:** The reproduction of the lifeworld refers to the processes of reproducing the knowledge of a culture, the solidarity of the members of a society, and the responsibilities of adult persons.

**social integration and systems integration:** Social integration refers to the principles by which individuals or actors are related to one another in a society; system integration refers to the relationships between parts of a society or social system. Despite the use of the word integration there is no assumption that the relationships so described are harmonious. The terms social integration and systems integration can embrace both order and chaos.<sup>ix</sup>

**social space, the role of providing a.:** The role that is assumed in providing a social space for communication among the lay public itself that gives everyday experiences and opinions a new and powerful legitimation.

**systems:** A system is [...] any structured or patterned relationship between any number of elements, where this system form a whole or a unity. It is assumed that a system has an environment and thus there is the requirement for boundary maintenance.<sup>x</sup>

**Television Town Hall Meeting (TTM):** a television programme in which politicians discuss public issues with a live studio audience of citizens.

**theoretical discourse:** A discourse that argues the truth of a claim by emphasizing evidence.

**universalist, universalization:** applicable in all cases under all conditions.

**validity claims:** Claims implicit between dialogue partners that speech acts and utterances are comprehensible, true, appropriate, and sincerely spoken.

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<sup>1</sup> Livingstone, Sonia and Lunt, Peter. (1994). *Talk Television: Audience Participation and Public Debate*. London: New York: Routledge. p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. (1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2; Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Thomas McCarthy, trans. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. 196.

<sup>3</sup> Ray, Laurence J. (1996) "Communicative action." In Michael Payne, Ed. *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*. David Jary and Julia Jary, Eds. HarperCollins Publishing. 1995. 98

<sup>5</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. (1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2; Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Thomas McCarthy, trans. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. 361.

<sup>6</sup> *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Gordon Marshall, Ed. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press. 1998. 370-371.

<sup>7</sup> Habermas, Jürgen (1974). "The Public Sphere." Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, trans. *New German Critique*. Vol. 3, Fall. p. 198.

<sup>8</sup> Habermas, Jürgen. (1974). "The Public Sphere." Sara Lennox and Frank Lennox, trans. *New German Critique*. Vol. 3, Fall. p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Gordon Marshall, Ed. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press. 1998. 614.

<sup>10</sup> *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Gordon Marshall, Ed. Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press. 1998. 658.

## APPENDIX B

### Transcript of the 1996 fourth annual *Town Hall with the Prime Minister*

Date: 96/12/10

Time: 21:00:00 ET - 21:57:00 ET

NATIONAL TOWN HALL WITH THE PRIME MINISTER

Host: PETER MANSBRIDGE

Guests: PRIME MINISTER JEAN CHRÉTIEN;

MARGARET BARTON, Prescott, Ontario;

DAVID NORTHCOTT, Winnipeg, Manitoba;

CHOMO IKEJANI, Toronto, Ontario;

JUANITA MacKEIGAN, Louisbourg, Nova Scotia;

LORI FOSTER, Regina, Saskatchewan;

ARNOLD GREENBERG, Winnipeg, Manitoba;

LOU MacEACHERN, Calgary, Alberta;

JOHANNE SAVOIE, Montreal, Quebec;

JOCELYNE BOLDUC, Quebec City, Quebec;

HOWARD MILLER, Gaspé Bay, Quebec;

FRANCIS LaCOUVEE, Qualicum Beach, British Columbia;

ALEX DEDAM, Burnt Church, New Brunswick;

KRISTA SIROTA, Weaverly, Nova Scotia;

UNIDENTIFIED Town Hall Participants.

#### MUSIC

CHRÉTIEN (clip): We're not to change the course because in two years there will be no need anymore to borrow for the Federal Government.

VOX POP: What's going to be happening with youth employment. A lot of people are moving out onto the streets. . . just . . . wasn't that one of the election promises.

CHRÉTIEN (clip): We will have a Medicare that will give access to every citizen in Canada, money or no money.

VOX POP: I would like to know what your long term plans are for health care and whether or not you're going to continue cutting what little we have.

#### MUSIC

ANNOUNCER: From Tabaray Hall at the University of Ottawa, a National Town Hall with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. Here is Peter Mansbridge.

MANSBRIDGE: And good evening, Welcome to our fourth annual Town Hall with the Prime Minister. In the next year we may well see another federal election, so Canadians are beginning to take stock of their government. Heading into the fourth year of this mandate the Liberals are still running very high in the public opinion polls. But there are some stubborn problems for them: 10% unemployment according to the latest figures; an economy that isn't encouraging spending and; growing opposition to federal cutbacks on social program spending. The Prime Minister has given his own party a mark of 78%, saying that it kept most election promises and managed to make a big dent in the federal deficit. Tonight we've invited people from across the country to say what they think about the government's performance -- and to ask questions about their future and the future of the country. Prime Minister, before we go to the audience, a couple of questions from me. Most people, including most people in your party are expecting an election next year, are they right?

CHRÉTIEN: We're in the fourth year, normally you call an election in the fourth year. But you have to understand too that when I was in the opposition they forced me to wait until the fifth year. So there's always a temptation to serve back the same medicine.

MANSBRIDGE: But would you . . . would you -- Okay, have you thought spring, summer, fall. I know you don't like to both Canadians in the summer. You're on the record as saying that. So is it spring or fall you're looking at?

CHRÉTIEN: I don't know, it depends on a . . . a lot of people would like to have an election -- late in the spring, others prefer the fall. For me I will decide when I feel its the best time to call an election.

MANSBRIDGE: There's no doubt that you will be running as leader of the party?

CHRÉTIEN: Oh, no doubt about it -- Until I fall dead right here.

MANSBRIDGE: Heh, heh. Let's hope that doesn't happen.

AUDIENCE: LAUGHTER

MANSBRIDGE: Prime Minister, when you look at the opposition parties, which party do you consider to be your major opposition in the next election.

CHRÉTIEN: I don't analyze it that way. They are four competing to be second and that--

MANSBRIDGE: They'd probably say they were four competing to be first.

CHRÉTIEN: Yeah but, you know, generally speaking, they compare each other. For me I don't chose my opponents. One will emerge, probably doing a better program and a better presentation than the others.

MANSBRIDGE: Your pollster has suggested that probably the conservatives are a bigger threat than the many people in your own party think.

CHRÉTIEN: I don't know. You know, the people will decide in an election. You don't chose your opponents. You go there, you speak about your program, what you intend to do, and when you're the government you have to defend what you've done in the last previous years. So, I'm not choosing my opponents. In a democracy -- I hope that they be ready and that they'll offer programs to the people. And I will be ready, and I will have a program, and I will depend on the record of the government and I will tell them what we're planning for the next four, five years.

MANSBRIDGE: What about the Bloc Quebecois, do you still consider it a threat against you in Quebec, or is the threat of the Bloc receded given their leadership problems?

CHRÉTIEN: For me, when it comes time for the election, I think normally they will be weaker than last time. We don't know what will emerge, but . . .

MANSBRIDGE: What if Jaques Parizeau is their Leader, would that bother you?

CHRÉTIEN: No, not at all. I will enjoy it.

MANSBRIDGE: You'd enjoy it? You'd enjoy . . .

CHRÉTIEN: I will enjoy it very much. You know, I love a good fight. I'm not to run away. At least he's a clear separatist. Not a . . . He does not . . . He does not fudge the issues -- And that's all right with me. Everyone in Quebec know I'm a federalist, that I'm a Canadian, and they all know that. And I like clear debate. So I will welcome him if he were to become their leader.

MANSBRIDGE: All right well--

CHRÉTIEN: And I know him well.

MANSBRIDGE: Well there are--

CHRÉTIEN: And we never agree.

MANSBRIDGE: Well, let's see how you make out with the audience in here and whether they end up agreeing with you As we have suggested, your party and you in particular are doing extremely well in the public opinion polls, but you do know that Canadians do have concerns and questions and guess what, some of those Canadians are right here in the audience today. So we want to hear from them. And if we could start, this year once again I'm going to recognize people by the color of the microphone they are holding. It's usually the easier way to do this. So, With the a ... green microphone first.

BARTON: Mr. Chrétien, as a registered nurse who has been at the bedside for more than 30 years, I have seen a lot of changes. The changes that I am seeing now are hurting. Patients are discharged too soon without adequate home care set-up. Others are waiting for long periods of time for a bed resulting in a worsening of their condition, sometimes we've premature death. You promised universal access ability for medi-care, but with the reduction in funds, some people are already using private systems -- those that can afford to -- while others have to wait. As the person responsible for the transfer of funds from the federal tax system to the provincial health care system, are you not the person responsible for that health care cut?

CHRÉTIEN: We are partly responsible, but we're not administering the hospital ourself. It is run by the provincial governments. As the way that they are rendering the service, it is their responsibility. Yes we had to cut because the finances of the nation were asking to reduce the deficit, and we could not spare any sector. When I look at the situation in Canada, we were spending 10.5% of G.D.P. for the medi-care in Canada while in Europe, where they have the same type of free media-care for all citizens, they can do it with 8 or 7 per cent of G.D.P. Now, the reduction has gone from 10.5 to close to 9. Of course, there is some very dramatic change. I know it's not easy. Yesterday I was discussing with a forum of health that I've established under my authority three years ago, and they studied that; the need for changes and new approaches, and so on. But we are responsible for part of the financing. The way that it is administered at the level of the recipient of the service, we're not directly responsible. But the nation has to face the reality that money is scarce. When I became Prime Minister, we had a deficit of 42 billion dollars. For about 3.5 to 3.6 per cent of all the money we're collecting from the taxpayers were going to pay interest on the debt and it was increasing every year, so we had to do something. So we have reduced it by now, in our transfer, and the provinces have cut them in their participation in that because they face the same problem as us to manage the problem of provincial deficit.

MANSBRIDGE: You have a brief follow-up on that?

BARTON: Yes. You cut this year, you're planning to cut more next year. If you have a coronary, or a stroke, you need a doctor right now, and a nurse and a hospital. You just think about that.

CHRÉTIEN: We think about that all the time and we want to make sure that we maintain a good medi-care in Canada. I explained to you a minute ago that they have a universal health care in Europe, like in Germany, or in France, or in Denmark, and Sweden and so on. And they spend less money than we spend in Canada per capita to have this system. So we're asking the people to do probably more with less. And we have been obliged to ask every sector of our sector to do the same thing. It's difficult to manage the affairs of a nation. We don't do that because we love to do it.

[MANSBRIDGE: Okay . . . ]We think that it was in the interest of the nation to put the finances of the nation in good shape.



[MANSBRIDGE: *All right*] And we see the result at this time.

MANSBRIDGE: All right Prime Minister, the blue microphone

NORTHCOTT: Thank you Mister Prime Minister. David Northcott from Winnipeg and its a dry cold there--

CHRÉTIEN: Corner of Main and Portage.

NORTHCOTT: Portage very much so. I work with a food bank in Winnipeg and the majority of people I work with on my team eat the food bank food to survive. In Manitoba, we share about 40 to about 41 to 42 thousand people a month eat food bank food. Almost half are kids. So you know what food banks are doing, you know what food banks in Canada are doing just top survive, what are you going to do to take the Band-Aid off?

CHRÉTIEN: For us we try to, and we are aiming to put the economy of Canada in good shape so that there will be job creation. In the last three years there was a lot of jobs created in Canada: 672,000 new jobs. It's a lot, it's not enough because the economy needs more. When we started in January of 1994, the unemployment was at 11.5. It went down to 9.5. Now, unfortunately, it went back to 10. But during the three years, because jobs is the way that people get the money to get the food that they need, and ...uh --At this moment we have created more jobs but people are coming more in the labour force in Canada than anywhere else. I was reading yesterday that Canada has created more jobs in the last three years than Germany, France, Italy, Great Britain, and Japan put together. But of course the participation rate is not over in Canada. The labour force is not as mature as other nations so we create jobs but this is not reducing unemployment as quickly as we like.

NORTHCOTT: But the biggest growth I've got are people that are working. They are working part-time or slow income jobs at full-time. And we're seeing more and more of those folks than we are seeing people on welfare

CHRÉTIEN: Yeah, of course, some people have a very tough time in Canada, I will not deny it. And that breaks my heart. But at the same time, you have to put the fundamentals of the economy in good shape. Look to take over the -  
[NORTHCOTT: *How long do we have to wait*]- to control the deficit it was not fun for any of the Premiers or us. And it has nothing to do with the political parties. You know, Romanow had to cut in Saskatchewan. Clark had to cut in B.C. They are N.D.P. Filmond is cutting the conservatives.  
[NORTHCOTT: *How long*]

MANSBRIDGE: But the question Prime Minister is how long. How long do they have to wait.

CHRÉTIEN: You know, any month is too long, that is my feeling. But look at this moment we have interest rates the lowest in 40 years. I was reading in the Globe and Mail this morning --

NORTHCOTT: You still have to pay it back. No matter how much money you borrow at low interest you still have to have the money to pay it back.

CHRÉTIEN : Now look. Just to give you an example  
[NORTHCOTT: *How long do we have to wait*] We were to spend something like 51 billion on interest alone this year if we have not move. now we will be paying 46, or around 46, *en tout cas*, much less because when we renew the bonds, you know interest rates were 14 per cent 5 or 6 year ago. Now we can borrow long term at 7 or 8 per cent.  
[MANSBRIDGE: *Prime Minister I . . .* ] Look at the mortgage. You know, some people renew their mortgage at half the cost that it was a few years ago. so that gave them cash to buy what is needed: food and clothing of the kids.

MANSBRIDGE: All right Prime Minister we've got to move on. The orange microphone.

IKEJANI: Hi. Mr. Prime Minister. My name is Chiomo, and I'm from Toronto, Ontario. I'm glad that I'm sitting here, because it's good that you are saying that it breaks your heart to hear that people are on welfare. Mr. Prime Minister, I was one of those people six years ago, that was unemployed and on welfare. The issue that concerns me, Mr. Prime Minister, has to do with unemployment. It seems that both the provincial and federal government are engaged in aggressive downsizing in trying to bring down the deficit. Is there a relationship between deficit-cutting and unemployment? Because, you see, the unemployment rate seems to be at that 10 per cent mark. Is there a relationship, Mr. Prime Minister?

CHRÉTIEN: But look, the deficit and the level of unemployment three years ago -- the unemployment was 11.5. It was down to 9.5, went back to 10. I just said to you that the economy has created 672,000 new jobs in Canada.

IKEJANI: Excuse me, Mr. Prime Minister. Are you talking full-time jobs, or are you talking part-time jobs?

CHRÉTIEN: Most of the jobs that have been created have been full-time jobs. Some are part-time jobs, no doubt about it.

IKEJANI: Hasn't there been an increase in part-time jobs? I think we need to see more full-time jobs, Mr. Prime Minister.

CHRÉTIEN: I agree with you, that it will be marvelous if it were everybody will have a full-time job in Canada. That is why we will never stop trying, but the reality is the economy in Canada -- it's not the government who create the jobs. We have to cut down.

It is the private sector who created jobs in Canada and in most of the countries. And yes, there have been growth in jobs. I gave you the example. We have created more jobs in Canada than in the five European members of the . . . four of the European members plus Japan of the G7.

IKEJANI: But Mr. Prime Minister, if deficit-cutting is good for the country, then why is the unemployment rate at that double figure mark?

CHRÉTIEN: But I said to you that it's going down, but not as rapidly as we would like to. You know 672,000 new jobs -- it's a great performance; it's the best performance of the G-7, but the United States. But it's never good enough. Government and governments should not stop working, as long as people who want to work can get a job.

MANSBRIDGE: Prime Minister we have to take a break but just before we go to it, let me remind you of a little more than three years ago, in the middle of the election campaign, when Kim Campbell, the Prime Minister of the day said I think it was on day one of the campaign that unemployment was to remain high through the nineties perhaps until the end of the century. Now, when you look at that comment and the way you reacted to it that day saying the liberals would never allow that to happen. And when you see the figures today, you're right, they're down today one percentage point from when you took office, but still in the double digits; was Kim Campbell right when she that?

CHRÉTIEN: What she said was that not to expect creation of new jobs until the turn of the century. And there was job creation, 600 -

MANSBRIDGE: But still

CHRÉTIEN: Yeah, yeah . . .

MANSBRIDGE: No, no. I think everybody appreciates that but there is still this double digit figure and you were saying that day that when she said that, that that was unacceptable to Liberals and that they would change that  
[CHRÉTIEN: *Yeah* ] That they would in fact lower unemployment [*And we did* ] It would be -- [*we did* ]

CHRÉTIEN: If you reject easily the creation of 672,000 jobs, it's easy for you to do-  
[MANSBRIDGE: *But I'm not* ] - But it's the economy that produced that 11.5 down to 9.5 the last two months it would moved back to 10. I disappointed with that but it is a better performance than the other economies around the world. And it's what I'm trying to explain to you. If it were easy -- but we said it has to be the priority. And we have, for example, invested hundreds of thousands of job -- of millions of dollars for jobs for the young people in the last budget.

MANSBRIDGE: Well there are going to be questions about young people's jobs and other jobs coming up right after we take this break. More questions from our audience in just a few moments.

MUSIC

CHRÉTIEN (clip): It's inevitable, that in a modern economy, some jobs will disappear and they have to be replaced by the new economic jobs.

MUSIC

GRAPHIC

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN		CANADA	THE UNITED STATES
NOV. 1994		10.4%	
NOV. 1995	9.7%		
NOV. 1996		10.0%	5.4%

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MUSIC

VOX POP: Hello Mr. Chrétien. Yes, my question is, I'm a recent graduate of University, and I'm wondering what you would do for the young people of this century in the current job situation.

VOX POP: Mr. Chrétien, I just would like to know what you would do with job creation in the future.

MUSIC

MANSBRIDGE: And welcome back to the nation's capitol and our Town Hall with the Prime Minister. Let's go back to the audience and the red microphone is next.

MacKEIGAN: Mr. Prime Minister, my name is Juanita MacKeigan and I've heard you talking today about the 11.5% unemployment rate, and I should be so lucky. I live in Cape Breton and we have an official unemployment rate that's much higher. You live in central Canada and you have a rate of 9%. What I'd like to know is how you can sleep at night knowing that there's people and workers in Atlantic Canada that live everyday with these statistics. And when is your government going to give us some legislation that's going to give us some real job creation in my area

CRETIEN: But I've said earlier that we're very disappointed that we have 10% unemployment. It was 11.5 before, the economy has created 672,000 new jobs. You say that, umm . . . Of course some regions are more affected than others. That's why we have programs like ACOA to help the local business get some help from the government to develop new enterprises. It's always -- And I know, I've been often to Cape Breton and it's more difficult there. Even in my own riding, in rural Quebec, it's a very high level of

unemployment. And we have to create the proper conditions so that the people will have the initiatives to create jobs. The government cannot take everyone on the payroll because exactly too much of it was done too much in the past and we end up in an extremely difficult financial situation. Now what we're doing is we are putting the fundamentals right so that the people who want, for example, to start an enterprise in Cape Breton or anywhere else. They will have interest rates the lowest in 40 years. So that will make them very competitive to able to compete in international markets. Jobs are always created in relation to products that you produce that you can sell. And it's exactly what we're trying to do make Canada extremely competitive. And for the regions that have some difficulties we have ACOA in the Maritime, we have Western in diversification in the West and--

MANSBRIDGE: But should people in Cape Breton-- Should this lady-- Should they stay in Cape Breton with an unemployment rate of 25% and other parts of Atlantic Canada that are facing the same kind of-- I mean are the days over for Cape Breton.

CHRÉTIEN: But no it's-- Some people will always live in Cape Breton and some initiatives and some entrepreneurs will create jobs. I was in my district 2 weeks ago or 3 weeks ago, rather, before my trip to abroad. And I met two young men who started a little enterprise and they went from they were both 33 and 34 and they and now they have 350 employees. And they are in high tech and they were 53 three years ago. And they found a market, and they found a technology, and they are expanding. And it is-- Canadians are very competitive. When I go on Mission Canada, abroad Canada, Team Canada, I am amazed by the ability of people coming from all over Canada including Nova Scotia able to penetrate new markets. But it is--

MacKEIGAN: Excuse me, but wouldn't you have to have money to start a new business. If you don't have a job you pay your rent, you buy your groceries you pay your power bills. You don't go out and start a new business. If people aren't working they don't have the resources to put into starting a new business. And that's what's happening in Cape Breton

CHRÉTIEN: I say that it's more difficult in Cape Breton.

[MacKEIGAN; *Much more difficult*] It's always more difficult because the economy has changed it used to be an economy based on coal and steel, and it's not like that. Many dis-- many areas in the land are facing these changes. My own sector, my own district was in the 40's one of the most prosperous cities in Canada; Shawinigan. It was where the electrochemistry was established in Canada, if not North America. Today, electrochemistry doesn't exist anymore. It's been replaced by petro-chemistry and we lost 3,000 jobs. In the industrial sector, that has been replaced by other jobs. But we still have 13 or 12 per cent unemployment. It's not easy.

MANSBRIDGE: We've got to -- we've got to move on. The green microphone.

FOSTER: My name is Lori Foster. I'm from Regina. I have three degrees and I have spent four years looking for work. All I have managed to find is short term contract work so I spend more time without work than with work, and I want to know when your government is going to intervene directly in the economy to create jobs so that people like me can contribute to our communities

CHRÉTIEN: But in fact you live in a province that has the lowest unemployment--

FOSTER: That hasn't helped me.

CHRÉTIEN: No, I know. But you know, the problem is you say 'when the government will intervene.' You have an N.D.P. government in Saskatchewan. And ah . . .  
[FOSTER: *The federal government needs to intervene in the economy* ] You know the problem is-- The reality . . . The reality is that the market force exists in production of goods and services that we sell to Canadians and we sell abroad. We live in a global economy and some people, unfortunately, like you are . . . finds some . . . it very difficult to find a job. Some are lucky. Some are unlucky. And that's life. I think that you have to keep trying and uh . . . you know . . . if your specialty does not lead to give you a job in Saskatoon, perhaps you can go to Regina or elsewhere. But I'm not living there. I think that if you decide to live with the probation to stay in one town and its not working you have to look at different types of jobs. I don't know. In the economy of tomorrow people will be forced to change their job four or five times in their career. When I was a kid, the dream of the young people were to go in the paper mill across the street at 16 or 18 and go out on their pension at 65. But now it's over, they will have to recycle themselves in news jobs 3 or 4 times in their career.

MANSBRIDGE: Yellow microphone

GREENBERG: Mr. Prime Minister. I'm a university professor and a director at a research institute in Manitoba. Many of the levels of government have encouraged Canadians to believe that the future economy of Canada is dependent upon the development of high technology industries in Canada. The success of these industries is dependent upon investment in research and development. Yet, Canada remains at the lowest level in the G-7 in investment in R & D and for many years has been at the level of countries like Greece. The end result is that our young people don't have high quality jobs in Canada and many of our best young minds leave the country and go to the U.S. Does the government have a plan to deal with long term investment in high technology industries in Canada to change the situation?

CHRÉTIEN: For us, we had to cut everywhere. In order to put the finances of the nation in good shape. And your sector was not spared, no more than the health sector, and other sectors. I think the only sector in the government that has not seen its budget reduced in the last two years is Indian Affairs, and because we have a special responsibility and its an extremely difficult situation there. But, you say that we should put more money in research and development Of course, if we could we do. But to give you the example of

the two entrepreneurs in my district who moved into high tech sector. they have created 350 jobs and they were telling me. I said . . . can we help you? They said just keep the incentive you have at this moment-- that the tax incentive for research and development. They have

[*GREENBERG: Excuse me Mr. Prime Minister* ] something like 75 people working only on research and development in that factory.

MANSBRIDGE: Okay, it's got to be a brief follow-up.

GREENBERG: Excuse me but the policies of Quebec are more responsible for the development of high technology in Quebec than the federal policies

CHRÉTIEN: I don't know I'm happy that you pay a compliment to my province. but the level of unemployment is higher there than elsewhere.

MANSBRIDGE: I've got to move on. Orange microphone.

MacEACHERN: Mr. Prime Minister. Lou MacEachern from Calgary In the past four years the government revenue has increased by 17 billion dollars. In the same time frame. the deficit has been reduced by 17.7 billion dollars. And during this time taxes have increased, interest rates have been reduced considerably, transfer payments to the provinces have been reduced. the economy is in fair condition and yet there's been no real reduction in expenditures at the federal government level

MANSBRIDGE: And the question is?

MacEACHERN: And the question is; when can we expect a real reduction in the expenditures of the federal government do that we may reduce the deficit even farther and come at a balanced budget or better still. a surplus.

CHRÉTIEN: I think you should talk to the lady in front of you because there was cuts in the federal government and we reduced the expenditures quite substantially from about 120 to 170 billion dollars. You keep in mind and you keep adding the interest on the debt. This has increased substantially because we had a huge debt of more than 300 billion dollars. But we have-- we're stopping that. We have-- you just recognized that we have done quite well. When I was in Japan two weeks ago there was an article praising Canada for being the one country that has managed to put the finances of the nation in good shape. And according to the report of the OECD we will be the country with the best growth of the G-7 next year and the year after, because-- and they all attribute that potential to the fact that we have put our financial affairs in order.

MANSBRIDGE: I've got to move on. Quickly, the blue microphone.

SAVOIE: Mr. Prime Minister, I'm Johanne Savoie, from Montreal. Recently, your government awarded itself a very generous grade, "B+", based on your Red Book of

campaign promises. But I mean, anyone who has taken a test, knows that on any test, some questions are worth more than others. Now, when I voted for you, I voted for you -- I didn't read the Red Book. I voted for you based on your promise to repeal the GST And you did not--

CHRÉTIEN: Did you read the Red Book on that. It's not what we said in the Red Book. You should have read it.

AUDIENCE: LAUGHTER

SAVOIE: You said-- But you were saying in all your speeches, that you were promising to repeal the GST

CHRÉTIEN: No, no. We always said that we were to harmonize the tax with the provincial government and we have done it with the Quebec and the Maritime provinces. We never say that it was to be repealed. Read the Red Book. It was written quite clearly. [MANSBRIDGE: *The Red Book . . .*] And in fact Sheila Copps who had said clearly that it was to disappear [SAVOIE: *Yes that's what we heard during the--.*] Because She went further than the Red Book. And she resigned and was re-elected by her constituents.

SAVOIE: What we heard during the campaign, for those of us who didn't read the Red Book and that's most of us, was that the GST was going to be repealed.

CHRÉTIEN: No, no -- we said that we were to harmonize the taxes to have a better system, because of the duplication that existed, tried to make it more simpler: but we never said in the Red Book, or directly, that it was to be scrapped.

SAVOIE: I didn't hear simpler -- I heard scrapped

CHRÉTIEN: From whom?

SAVOIE: Well from you on television and on the radio.

CHRÉTIEN: When?

SAVOIE: During the campaign.

CHRÉTIEN: Which radio?

SAVOIE: This is what I heard Okay, this is what I heard. Maybe they should pull tape. I don't know.

MANSBRIDGE: But Prime Minister you've got to concede that in the run-up to that election, before the Red Book, in interviews that you did in the -- you know-- in the run-



up in the months and the years before. You always said scrapped the GST, you know. Now, not everybody did read the Red Book. So on the book--

CHRÉTIEN: But you know, now you're reproaching us to put in writing what we would do. It was the first party who ever have such a detailed program to be distributed to everybody. Now you say it does not matter

[ MANSBRIDGE: *No, no. Nobody is saying that it doesn't matter* ] It does matter. We always said that . . . we were opposed to the GST. When they introduced the GST we were opposed. We fought against it.

SAVOIE: Well, you opposed the GST when you were in opposition.

CHRÉTIEN: But when it's there you cannot you cannot always . . . put back to square one when you're in government. When we elaborated the policies, it was very clear what we were to do. We had this debate. We were not happy. We voted against the GST. But by the time we were the government we have to have the revenues. We never said that we were not have the revenues, because we have to reduce the deficit.

SAVOIE: Well, I mean, we basically as Canadians, we've got rid of the Conservative Party completely. I mean, I think they were astounded. Because, you know, I think there was a lot of opposition to the GST for one thing . . . and secondly, we saw the government as being duplicitous as, you know, kind of saying one thing and doing another. How does this make you any different in the next election campaign?

CHRÉTIEN: Because, you know I had the Red Book, and it's everything we said to do and we have done more than we mentioned in the Red Book. We have not done everything in the Red Book.

[ MANSBRIDGE: *Okay we have to . . .* ] We said that the report that we-- and it's the first time that we had an analysis of what we made as promises in writing that were distributed to everybody at the time of the convention a month ago. Now we have met 78% of the promises.

[ MANSBRIDGE: *Okay, we've got to move on* ] And we're working another-- Were in the fourth year of the mandate. Probably we will not be able to fulfill exactly all of them. But for any business who had a business plan and realized 90% of the business, either a business or someone in the university field, and so on--

SAVOIE: So you're saying mediocrity is policy.

CHRÉTIEN: No, no--

[ MANSBRIDGE: *we've got to . . .* ]- if 90% is mediocrity, I'm sorry, [ *we've got to leave it at . . .* ] I'm not perfect Madam. [ *Okay We've got to leave it at that* ] 90% is not bad.

MANSBRIDGE: I don't think we're going to reach 100% agreement here between these two.

CHRÉTIEN: I hope so.

MANSBRIDGE: Stay . . . Stay with us, our Town Hall with the Prime Minister continues in a moment.

MUSIC

CHRÉTIEN (clip): It seems to be that the public is on our side. They are today, we don't know if they will be tomorrow.

MUSIC

**(COMMERCIAL BREAK)**

MUSIC

CHRÉTIEN (clip): I will make sure that the next time the question will be clear.

MUSIC

MANSBRIDGE: And welcome back to Tabaray Hall at the University of Ottawa for our Town Hall with the Prime Minister. We go right to the next question and its the green microphone.

BOLDUC: Mr. Chrétien, Jocelyne Bolduc from Quebec City. I voted "yes" in the last referendum. My question is that your government seems to have adopted plan "b" and to scare us away from independence. As Prime Minister of Canada, would you be satisfied if we stayed in Canada just because you've used fear as a tactic, just because you've scared us?

CHRÉTIEN: I want you to stay in Canada because Canada is the best country in the world, Madam. When you go around--

AUDIENCE: APPLAUSE

BOLDUC: But you're not trying to accommodate any of our demands. You're not -- you're clearly saying well, if you vote yes, we won't recognize the question, we won't recognize the results of a tight vote. You are even asking the Supreme Court to tell us that we cannot decide on our own future. And we don't see any goodwill on your part to try to bring us willingly into Canada.

CHRÉTIEN: But do you know what we put in the speech from the Throne in February? Do you know that we are signing agreements at this time with the provinces on manpower

agreement for devolution of this power?

**BOLDUC:** We've been asking that for a long time.

**CHRÉTIEN:** Don't you realize that the House of Commons voted a year ago in December to give Quebec a Distinct Society?

**BOLDUC:** It doesn't give us any more power.

**CHRÉTIEN:** Which power are you talking about? We said that we were to get out of mining. We're out of it. We said we were to get out of forestry. We're out of it. We've done a lot. Of course, you know you cannot get out of Canada and have all the benefit of being in Canada.

**BOLDUC:** I don't think that's what we want.

**CHRÉTIEN:** You have to be in Canada, or not in Canada. You have to make up your mind about it.

**BOLDUC:** But I think that . . .

**AUDIENCE:** APPLAUSE

**MANSBRIDGE:** Yes? Last point.

**BOLDUC:** I think that we would like to stay in Canada because we are happy to be with Canada. Right now, the way I feel -- it's that you're trying to scare us and say no, no, you can't go away -- because this will be terrible with you, we won't negotiate with you. There's no good -- there's not much goodwill on your part. If everything you can do you've done -- I don't think that's enough.

**CHRÉTIEN:** Yeah but, to say, you know-- We don't want to scare you, we want you to understand that Canada is a great country for all of us. That in Canada you can be a francophone and live outside Quebec. That you can come to Ottawa, come from Quebec. I am from rural Quebec. I came here, I cannot speak a word of English, you know. And no one discriminated against me in Canada- I've done reasonably well as a citizen from Quebec.

**BOLDUC:** I don't think that's the point--

**MANSBRIDGE:** Red microphone.

**MILLER:** Mr. Prime Minister, I'm a former Montrealer, presently living in the French town of Gaspé Bay. Many of the anglophones that I know, both rural and urban, feel abandoned by our federal government. We live in fear of the next Quebec referendum

with the distinct possibility that the nationalists may win this vote next time. And the anglophones that I know, again, both rural and urban, would probably be compelled, in their own minds, to leave Quebec to -- of course, the best country in the world, Canada.

MANSBRIDGE: The question?

MILLER: The question is, in such an event, could we expect any assistance, financial or otherwise, from our Canadian government in that disastrous scenario?

CHRÉTIEN: Yeah, but I do not want to spend a lot of time on the disastrous scenario. I think that what I said a year ago, that we were to bring about some changes--

MILLER: Excuse me, Mr. Prime Minister, I do want to point out to you, that prior to the last referendum, you also said that you did not want to spend a lot of time on the scenario. We came within one percentage point. The *Partie Québécois* had a plan. They had a contingency plan. I'm asking you right now, for my fellow anglophone Quebecers, what type of contingency plan is in place in the event Quebec does separate. That's a realistic possibility, with a one per cent differential.

MANSBRIDGE: You've asked your question. And the answer?

CHRÉTIEN: For me, I just say that the goal of this government is to make sure that if there is a referendum, that it will be won. We are proposing some changes at this time. You saw yesterday, for example, the reaction of most of the premiers -- quite positive to recognize the fact, that in fact, Quebec is a different society. You know that.

MILLER: Based on your answer, I can assume that we will be abandoned then.

CHRÉTIEN: No you cannot-- No, because we will fight for you. We're fighting for you. You know that.

MILLER: But if we lose

CHRÉTIEN: But if you lose-- My task-- I said that next time the question has to be clear. You know they cannot expect that the people will just sit there and have a confusing question like last time: Let's separate but we'll keep the Canadian Passport, we keep the Canadian money, we keep the Canadian citizenship keep economic union and we'll keep political union It won't work like that. They have to be realistic.-

[MANSBRIDGE: *All right* ]- Parizeau is clear. He's not interested in partnership. He said 'let's go alone.' But most of the separatists, or so called sovereignists say 'oh no, we will stay partly in Canada'. you know, but-

[MANSBRIDGE: *But, yes or no . . .*]- This day you cannot be half and half. You're one way or the other.

MANSBRIDGE: Yes or . . . Yes or no, on his question. Is there, or is there not, a contingency plan to protect anglophone Quebecers who want protection in the case of a "yes" vote; just yes or no. If there was a contingency plan, would you tell us?

CHRÉTIEN: What do you mean yes or no the problem . . . The problem is you're putting me a hypothetical question to the limit.

MILLER: It's not hypothetical with a one per cent differential

CHRÉTIEN: Yes sir.

MILLER: No sir, it is not.

CHRÉTIEN: We said that the question has to be clear. She said that we went to the Supreme Court. Why we went to the Supreme Court, for one reason; is everything has to be done legally, according to the Constitution of Canada. I believe very strongly on that. But if the Quebecers, a real majority of Quebecers, on a clear question with a wanting to - I'm a democrat.

MILLER: Then what happens to us?

CHRÉTIEN: But you can live in Quebec or go.

MILLER: What happens to the best country of the world, who we want to be part of?

CHRÉTIEN: Are you telling me that we should not have a democratic institution that can be respected? If I said that I hate the notion--

MILLER: Are you telling me that we will lose our Canadian citizenship by virtue of the fact that we're in Quebec, if they do declare unilaterally?

CHRÉTIEN: The problem is they cannot declare unilaterally.

MILLER: They were ready to. Parizeau said it.

MANSBRIDGE: Okay, we're moving on--

CHRÉTIEN: I said at that time, that the Canadian Constitution has to be respected. And there will be no unilateral Declaration Of Independence, because I have the obligation to protect you -- the minorities in Quebec.

MILLER: I hope so . . .

CHRÉTIEN: -

[MANSBRIDGE: Okay . . .]- Just like I want to protect the minority French outside of Quebec. It's through the respect of the Constitution, that will do that. But if the majority of people with the clear vote, not on a fuzzy question; I'm a democrat. But not by one vote. Come on.

MANSBRIDGE: Prime minister, let me ask you a question on that point. A clear majority -- what is that? Is that 50.1?

CHRÉTIEN: A clear majority is on the clear question--

MANSBRIDGE: Let's say the question is clear; you like the question, they get 50.1.

CHRÉTIEN: Even to break up a factory in Quebec or a corporation, you need two-thirds of the vote. So we will negotiate if there is another referendum. If they want to have a clear questions we will debate that; but when you have a negotiation, you don't give your answer before the negotiations start. You have to protect the minorities. You have to have some questions very clearly stated to the people.

MANSBRIDGE: So a clear majority in your mind is somewhere between 50.1 and 66 and two thirds.

CHRÉTIEN: You know, Joe Clark thought it was 70 that was needed, so ah . . .

AUDIENCE: LAUGHTER

MANSBRIDGE: Joe Clark's not the Prime Minister.

CHRÉTIEN: No, no. What I say is that it's a variation depending on the circumstances. But the future of the nation, the protection of minorities, you let that go with one vote. I don't think so.

MANSBRIDGE: Okay the green microphone. And we are running late.

LaCOUVEE: Mr. Prime Minister, My name is Francis LaCouvee from Qualicum Beach, British Columbia. My question to you is one of a national unity issue. I'm a federalist and I believe in a strong and united country. I've had the opportunity to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces as an officer and I've worked with both anglophone and francophone soldiers. To me, I felt that we shared common concerns and aspirations as Canadians for this country. Now, as a British Colombian, I am wondering if you are still pursuing this issue of distinct society for Quebec. And where do you see Canada going on this issue when we in B.C. feel as equally unique and distinct

CHRÉTIEN: But distinct society, what that mean. It's a reflection of the reality of Quebec. The majority of the people of Quebec, you cannot deny it, speak French. They have a French culture. The fathers of confederation in 1867 gave Quebec in the

constitution the civil code. Not the common law, the civil code. If-- you are from B.C. Reverse the situation. If you are anglophone in B.C.; the only province with a majority of anglophones in Canada. Wouldn't you . . . would you not make sure that your identity and as an anglophone would be protected. That you can survive with a majority that don't speak your language. And wouldn't you expect the people to show that-  
[LaCOUVEE: *Mr. Prime Minister* ]- generosity of spirit to recognize your differences?

MANSBRIDGE: Very briefly.

LaCOUVEE: We already believe that Quebec is very unique and distinct in this confederation and we don't know-  
[CHRÉTIEN: *so tell you premiers to support the . . .*]- why it has to be interpreted in the constitution at possibly the . . . hardship to the rest of the country

MANSBRIDGE: Is that your goal, to entrench that in the constitution? and if so, would there be a referendum-- would there be a national referendum to let Canadians have their vote?

CHRÉTIEN: It is the goal ... It is the goal and the constitution says that you need the consent of the legislative assemblies of the nation. And so far, six premiers seem favourable to putting it in the constitution. We a--

MANSBRIDGE: Which six.

CHRÉTIEN: Huh?

MANSBRIDGE: Which six.

CHRÉTIEN: But they were-- you know, the Maritimes, I think. Manitoba.

MANSBRIDGE: Saskatchewan.

CHRÉTIEN: Saskatchewan.

MANSBRIDGE: Newfoundland.

CHRÉTIEN: Ontario is wavering, and so on. But we're not there--

MANSBRIDGE: Ontario is wavering or have they said no.

CHRÉTIEN: No, no. They did not say no. They said that it was not a priority, that it not a priority for them.-

[AUDIENCE: *LAUGHTER* ]- It's not a priority for a lot of people.

MANSBRIDGE: So Mike Harris has left the door open for you on that. It's a possibility.

CHRÉTIEN: He said he has a problems with that like a lot of people have problems.

MANSBRIDGE: But he hasn't said no.

CHRÉTIEN: No, he never said a flat no to me. He said-  
[MANSBRIDGE: *Yellow . . .*]- that it was not the time and that he has problems like everybody else has problems. But the reality is, is it worth to show some generosity to keep the country together. In my judgment, the majority of the people in Quebec, and of Canada, want to keep Quebec in Canada. And they want them to be as comfortable as possible within Canada.

MANSBRIDGE: And would you-- I know the legislation doesn't say it-- or the way to amend the constitution says national referendum but would you . . . would you have a national referendum if you had the province--

CHRÉTIEN: Well anyway, you had two "ifs" in a row.

AUDIENCE: LAUGHTER

MANSBRIDGE: Okay, yellow microphone.

DEDAM: Mr. Prime minister, I'm from New Brunswick. Five years and \$57 million later, the long-awaited report on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People has been released last month. A lot of aboriginal people poured their heart and soul into the recommendations and took part in public discussions and round table. My fear, Mr. Prime Minister, is that this report is going to be tabled by your government and not going to be acted upon. What is your government going to do, Mr. Prime Minister in acting on the recommendations, and when?

CHRÉTIEN: But we received the document this month-  
[DEDAM: *Last month*]- that took six years-- Or last month. I received the two chairs in my office, we discussed it. It is a very comprehensive report, very complicated. Some elements of it are -- in terms of money, extremely expensive -- that we have to keep that in mind. The minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was a very competent minister. He's looking into that. We will do like we do with every report. We get committees of the House of Commons and the Senate to look into the recommendation. Some elements of it, the minister has already said that they were positive, that they were interested to do it. I don't expect that the whole report can be fully implemented in the present form.

MANSBRIDGE: Any particular part of it that you could not accept?

CHRÉTIEN: But I have to -- I have not studied that. It's how many pages? Thousands of pages.



MANSBRIDGE: You know the highlights.

CHRÉTIEN: Yeah. I know the highlights. I just said we will do it the normal way.-  
[*DEDAM: How long does that take?*]- We have to study that. It took six years to make.  
We have the right and the obligation to look at it, analyze it and put it into the fiscal  
framework of the nation.

MANSBRIDGE: Before the next election?

CHRÉTIEN: No, it's impossible.

MANSBRIDGE: All right

DEDAM: Thank you

MANSBRIDGE: Thank you very much. When we come back, some final questions for  
the Prime Minister. Stay with us as our Town Hall continues.

CHRÉTIEN (clip): Sometimes, in the course of a mandate, you are faced with a situation  
where you can't deliver.

MUSIC

GRAPHIC

**MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM FOR CANADIANS**

Unemployment	42%
Economy	14%
National Unity	7%
Deficit	7%
Health Care	7%

Enviroics Oct .96

MUSIC

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MUSIC

MANSBRIDGE: And we're back with the Prime Minister in our final segment with  
questions. And the last question from the audience. The green microphone.

SIROTA: Mr. Prime Minister, to Canada's youth, it seems as if this country has always been in a recession. What can you do to prevent our best and brightest from leaving the nation.

CHRÉTIEN: It's to have a very good economy. To make sure that jobs growth will be here, that we'll export a lot of goods and services. That young people who have imagination, and drive and so on, have a good opportunity to find a good place for themselves. To make resources available to them for training, for mobility if need be and so on. It's what we've been trying to do. You know, it's very difficult to run a business and any government, in a vast country like Canada. But I believe very strongly that if you want a future despite the difficulties in Canada-- When I am traveling around the world, everybody envies Canada because it's the land of opportunity. It's the land of freedom. The land of generosity by excellence. But what that does not mean that we do not have difficult problems. And that is why we are working to make this society better. But it's never ending. I've been elected in '63. you were not born then, obviously. And ah . . . And ah . . . -

[ AUDIENCE: LAUGHS ]- And ah . . . And it's a constant struggle.-

[MANSBRIDGE: All right ]- But the resolve is that, you know, a lot of people around the world will give their last penny to come and share the Canadian citizenship with us.

MANSBRIDGE: Prime Minister, you referred to, a number of times in this hour, and you just did again, to your international travel. And to you, that is one of the solutions to jobs in this country; is trade with other nations and opening certain doors. One of the most lasting images for many Canadians of your most recent trip, was you with the Chinese Premier Lee Pung, arms around him, hugging him . . . - just a minute- -

CHRÉTIEN: Why you said that . . . No, no. Don't --

[AUDIENCE: LAUGHTER] I met with him, and I mentioned human rights with him. And I had a 15 minute discussion on human rights and election with the President Xian Xe Minh, and 15 minutes discussing the type of society they have. If you isolate them completely, you know, it will be worse. If you help to open up, you know . . .

MANSBRIDGE: I guess the question is: Where do you draw the line in trying to better Canada's trade overseas and dealing with countries where you yourself have said that there have been clear human rights violations. I guess what I'm getting at is, if the Chinese government did what it did at Tienamin Square, again, would you cancel. Would you cancel arrangements with China? Is that out of line at all.

CHRÉTIEN: We have at that time, at Tienamin Square, the government did something . . . all governments did something . . . You know , the problem of boycotting people, it works when everybody boycotts. It was the case in South Africa. In South Africa everybody boycott. But to come as Canadians--

MANSBRIDGE: Well not everybody, I mean we took a stand that Britain didn't agree on.

CHRÉTIEN: Well, a few countries did not boycott, but most countries did the boycott.

MANSBRIDGE: Well, Britain didn't and it's a pretty big trade partner with South Africa.

CHRÉTIEN: No Britain didn't do that and a few others. Yeah, but we did. But if we did it alone with China, I think you're the only soldier in the army that's in step. And my view, and I believe very strongly, that look what happened in the USSR. The penetration of western information broke the system there. That's why, you know, the wall of Berlin fell. It's because our system started to be known by them. I was in 1972, in Siberia, and I knew that it could not last because they were being informed in Siberia about modern things - what I call modern. You know, I'll tell you a story

[MANSBRIDGE: *All right* ] I learned that there was a group called the Animals. Have you ever heard of them?

MANSBRIDGE: They were a great band.

AUDIENCE: LAUGHS

CHRÉTIEN: Yeah, but I learned in Norilsk in Siberia about that group because the young guys-- I was walking down the street. I heard this noise, I moved in-

[AUDIENCE: LAUGHS ]- and there was this group there from Leningrad teaching them what was in Canada. They all asked me; Is it true in Canada that you all have a car in every home? Do you have a TV in every home? and so on. And I knew that when they were asking that question, eventually, that the opening of that society was to make them break the chains they were in. And it's the same thing that will happen in China.

MANSBRIDGE: I'm not too sure how we got to Eric Burton and the Animals. He was their lead singer and he was very good. But, Prime Minister, look we appreciate once again this year the your time. I know there are many more questions. We're going to have to stop it here. When we come back, highlights of another event that the Prime Minister participated in here at the Tabaray Hall here today. stay with us, as our special extended edition continues after the National news.

AMBIENT NOISE

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