

ABSTRACT

POLITICS, IDEOLOGY AND THE MEDIA IN JAMAICA: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA; 1972 - 1992

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This thesis examines the role of politics and ideology in influencing the development of the electronic media in Jamaica during the period 1972 - 1992. The contention is that ideology, manifested in public policy and political practice, has exerted an influence over the electronic media, which has tended to structure their role and function as tools of hegemony of the state.

In arriving at a conceptual framework with which to guide the study, the notions of hegemony, pluralism and political development have been critical areas of focus. These have helped to contextualize the importance of the electronic media as institutions of meaning creation and transmission, thus providing a basis for understanding the close interest taken by the political elites in their operation.

Extensive use has also been made of primary sources. These include structured elite interviews with persons who have been involved in the media during the period under consideration, as well as consultation of official documents, Ministry Papers and official statements from policy makers concerning the electronic media.

The conclusion has been drawn that the relationship between ideology and the electronic media is a highly complex one. Hegemony has been exerted by the political elites in an attempt to control and direct the institutions of the media to serve their particular interests. This has been so despite the fact that ideological differences have been discerned in the ways in which the political elites have sought to maintain hegemony.

The empirical data shows that this was not a straightforward process. While it is evident that attempts at manipulation and control were present, the situation was also created whereby new avenues of access were opened. This is reflected in the development of talk show radio, community broadcasting and ultimately

in the granting of licences to new communication entities.

The emerging political orthodoxy in the eighties initiated by the JLP and subscribed to by the PNP created a situation in which there was a re-examination of the role of the state in directing social, economic and political development. The result so far has been the retreat of the state, which appears to have conceded its hegemonic position in relation to the media as institutions of meaning creation. In the new dispensation, the impact of this retreat remains to be seen.