*An organizing tool*

"Could we have stopped people in the street and questioned them, the same way, if we had not had the camera a microphone? I don't think so. It's a good pretext for talking to them."

"When people were interviewed, they became interested in the Committee. Then they came to the public meetings and became involved and eventually joined the team."

"During the public meetings, with the video program, I had the impression that people really recognized the face of the neighborhood. And they had felt very isolated from one another."

"People could tell it was another citizen like themselves doing the interview, and they had more confidence in us than they would someone from the CBC or NFB, or other media. Often the press deforms what is said."

Their experience with video—conceiving, shooting, editing and presenting their own programs—made the citizens particularly aware of the myth of objectivity in mass media reporting and sensitive to conscious and unscious manipulation. They have become a less guillible public . . . It should be clear that community self-awareness and inter-commmunications are powerful leavening agents and can set off an unpredictable chain of reaction. There must be a real sense of continuity, and commitment for continuity, if film and video are to be used for real social gain, rather than social disaster. Communities cannot be used as guinea pigs for technology. Technology must serve the communities.

"The people we interviewed on the street—I really felt they wanted to get a message across. They wanted other people to hear about their problems, to share them. People feel pretty isolated."

"I think people hoped their message would reach the powers-that-be. They had never had the chance before."

"When we watch the tapes, we don't just learn to know ourselves better. We also come to understand others better. After that, it's much more fun to work together."

In Saint-Jacques, a strongly organized Citizens' Committee guaranteed responsibility and continuity. These same video techniques could be used in the early stages of organizing by a community organizer who is committed to stay in the community a certain length of time. Social continuity is essential.

Video should not be used in a vacuum, and it should not be used to divert citizens from their social aims.

*Video equipment does not create dynamism where none is latent; it does not create action or ideas; these depend on the people who use it. Used responsibility and creatively, it can accelerate perception and understanding, and threrefore accelerate action.*

The Comite des Citroyens de Saint-Jacques could have accomplished any of their actions without the video equipment. We could not say that at any time it made the difference between success and failure. But it made good things better and helped people to grow. It *is* a useful tool.



Photo: Dorothy Todd Hénaut