

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

POLITICAL AND CONTROVERSIAL BROADCASTING

- A Manual of Policies and Regulations -

PREFACE

This manual is for the guidance of CBC officers, producers, and others engaged in the planning, production and presentation of programs dealing with political or controversial topics. It contains a statement of the rules governing this kind of broadcasting as laid down by statute (the Broadcasting Act, 1958), by the Radio Broadcasting Stations Regulations and the Radio (TV) Broadcasting Regulations issued by the Board of Broadcast Governors, the body established by statute to regulate the activities of public and private broadcasting stations in Canada. The statutory rules are, of course, binding upon all broadcasting stations.

The Broadcasting Act further imposes upon the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation the responsibility for operating "a national broadcasting service". This continues a responsibility which the Corporation has exercised since 1936. Consequently, this manual also contains statements of those established CBC policies and practices which are applicable to political and controversial broadcasting.

The CBC, both in political and in other controversial matters of public interest and concern, has always taken the view that in holding a broadcasting license the station assumes wider general responsibilities than those specifically required by these regulations.

The responsibilities include fair opportunity for the presentation of the principal points of view on issues of public interest and concern.

CBC policy with regard to party political broadcasting is based on the fact that for the proper functioning of representative and democratic government, it is essential that the public should be fully informed of the issues at stake in any provincial or federal election, and of the position and policies of the various parties on these issues. To carry out this policy, the CBC established a general plan for party political broadcasting which includes the provision of network time free of charge to recognized political parties during general elections. This gives all qualifying parties the opportunity of speaking to a wide public, irrespective of their capacity to buy time. In the periods between elections, an amount of free network time is made available to recognized party leaders or their representatives.

The Corporation policy for controversial broadcasting could not be better expressed than it has been in the past. This is now included in the BBC statement on Policy for Political and Controversial Broadcasting, which states:

1. The air belongs to the people, who are entitled to hear the principal points of view on all questions of importance.
2. The air must not fall under the control of any individuals or groups influential by reason of their wealth or social position.
3. The right to answer is inherent in the democratic doctrine of free speech.