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with their own shows. The Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto, for example, was built in 1905 largely with money from the Shubert organization – and did not house a Canadian production of a Canadian play until 1949, almost a half-century later. And yet, during the 1920s, in that same Toronto, there were six full-time stock companies running – usually with American managements and English stars and Canadian spear-carriers, who had to go to New York to get themselves hired. Meantime, also during the twenties, Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto launched a series of Canadian plays that promised a renaissance here like the one spearheaded by the Art Theatres of the U.S. I need hardly tell you what happened to *that* renaissance. With the simultaneous arrival of the Depression and the talkies in 1929, it came to an abrupt end. The illusion this time was almost perfect: indeed there *was* no such thing as Canadian theatre. And most people refused to believe there ever had been.

The 1930s brought vast changes to Canada. Industry, not agriculture, was becoming the majority occupation; people were moving from the country to the cities. National politics, business and labour unions became increasingly important to everyone, and there was an obvious need for better communications, and a yearning for some sort of self-image. In other times and other places, one might have expected the theatre or films to provide this self-image, as they did in Europe and the United States. But our theatre was moribund and our film industry, after several false starts, almost nonexistent. Instead the job was assumed by radio, which seemed tailor-made for the Canadian problem – so few people strung out so far. Canadian radio drama, especially during its zenith under the producer-director Andrew Allan, not only succeeded in linking Canadians together but achieved front-rank international status, for the first time, for our actors and playwrights. At the same time, our public affairs programs such as *Citizen's Forum* and *Farm Forum* played to the largest organized listening groups in

the world. But you all know what happened to radio.

The next renaissance occurred just after World War II. The necessary critical mass for a reborn professional theatre was brought together from three sources: the skilled craftsmen of radio drama, veterans returning home from years of performing in service shows and determined to pursue careers in the theatre, and the corps of old theatre veterans who had managed to survive the drought. By the late forties, professional companies were again active in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Calgary and Vancouver – and *inter alia* they were producing new plays by our own writers.

### **The Massey Commission and its Aftermath**

In 1949 the Canadian government established a Royal Commission on the Arts, Letters and Sciences – it always establishes a Royal Commission when it feels a groundswell but doesn't know what to do about it – under the chairmanship of Vincent Massey, brother of the actor Raymond and subsequently our first Canadian Governor General. The Massey Commission, as it was called, recommended federal funding for the arts and letters, and the entry of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation into television. These proposals were less to prime the pump than to cope with an existing flood. Both Winnipeg and Toronto already had ballet companies, symphony orchestras were proliferating, opera was being performed, and new plays were being produced with longer and longer runs. Moreover, we had found an extremely successful theatrical vein to mine: the topical satire – and it happened at the same moment that Americans under the rule of McCarthyism were being denied their own satire. If Canadians were not sure what they were, they began to have a collective sense of what they were *not*; it began to dawn on them that fate had handed them a license to mock