

STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
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No. 55/37 CANADIAN TELEVISION IN PERSPECTIVE

The text of an address given by the chairman of the CBC Board of Governors, Mr. A. Davidson Dunton, at the Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, on September 9, 1955.

Very vividly I remember sitting in this room at a luncheon just three years ago. It was at the opening of the 1952 Exhibition. I remember I sat just over there, and had to try awfully hard to keep up my end of the conversation with my neighbors, because right after the lunch Canadian television in English was to come into the world with a broadcast of the opening ceremonies. I found it hard to pay attention to lunch, to say the least.

I think everyone concerned with television in Canada in those days had reason to be a little tremulous. The brand new intricacies and demands of television broadcasting had to be wrestled with. And the job lying ahead for the new Canadian infant was enough to inspire awe in anybody who thought about it.

The challenge had to be faced of bringing television service across a country 3,500 miles broad and containing only some 15-odd million people. Two full separate program services in two different languages had to be started and built up simultaneously. (Incidentally, Canada is the only country I know of which has so far done this.) In some big areas Canadian television had to present itself to a public quite a few of whom were already used to the lavish fare of United States television. Canadian English-language television programs produced for a potential public of 11,000,000 were going to have to compete with American programming produced for a public of over 160,000,000. Yet Canadian programs were going to have to be good enough, too, for national distribution in spite of the fact that very attractive programs could be brought in from the United States for much less actual cost and with little effort.

No Heart Failed

Well, the telecast did go on that afternoon with only a couple of very minor "fluffs", and probably more people saw the opening of the Exhibition than during the previous 10 years. No one had heart-failure; the first post mortems were held, and the crews started right away getting ready for the next broadcast. What was to be probably the quickest national development in the history of Canada had begun.