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RADIO IN CANADA

The story of radio broadcasting in Canada is one of a unique system designed to overcome the problems posed by vast distances, six of the world's twelve time zones, a scattered population of only thirteen and a half million, and two languages, English and French.

After more than two years of studying briefs, hearing representations and questioning witnesses, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences made its Report to Parliament June 1, 1951. Its section on radio broadcasting states in part:

"Radio broadcasting is akin to a monopoly. Any man who has the impulse and the means may produce a book, may publish a newspaper or may operate a motion picture theatre, but he may not in the same way operate a radio station. The air-channels are limited in number and normal competition in any air-channel is impossible. Throughout the world these channels are recognized as part of the public domain; and radio stations may operate only with the permission of the state.

"The state, having the right and the duty of issuing licences, must impose certain conditions on radio broadcasting. There are, it seems to us, two alternative views between which every country must choose. First, radio may be regarded primarily as a means of entertainment, a by-product of the advertising business. Such a view does not imply that it may not be used for education, for enlightenment and for the cultivation of taste; all these bring entertainment to many people. On the other hand, radio, as one of the most powerful means of education, may be regarded as a social influence too potent and too perilous to be ignored by the state which, in modern times, increasingly has assumed responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. This second view of radio operation assumes that this medium of communication is a public trust to be used for the benefit of society in the education and the enlightenment as well as for the entertainment of its members.

"In Canada, we conceive, the principle that radio broadcasting is a public trust has been followed consistently for twenty years. We have noted the principle advocated by the Aird Report of 1929, which, starting with the proposition that "Canadian radio listeners want Canadian broadcasting", stated that although the enterprise of private broadcasters was providing free entertainment for the benefit of the public, Canadian broadcasting showed an increasing tendency to excessive advertising, importing most of its programmes from outside the country and catering mainly to urban centres. The authors of the Report stressed the importance of complete coverage, of varied programmes including information and education as well as entertainment, of an exchange of programmes between different parts of the country, and, in general, emphasized the necessity of carrying on broadcasting "in the