

The legislation prohibited anyone from owning a private radio network in Canada.

By the spring of 1933 the CRBC had begun to assemble its own broadcasting staff and to acquire the CNR's stations. It carried programs in both English and French, and symphony concerts, plays, children's programs, sports, radio variety, news and the "Northern Messenger" broadcasts to the Arctic and sub-Arctic that have continued in one form or another until today. Moreover even in its extreme infancy the CRBC, precursor of the CBC, began happily to assume its beloved role as the mother of performing and theatrical talent across Canada.

From Lorne Greene to Chris Plummer, from Rich Little to Richard Tucker, from Glenn Gould to Theresa Stratas and Maureen Forrester, to scores of writers of U.S. network television shows and directors of Hollywood movies, to quite literally tens of thousands of singers, dancers, musicians, ventriloquists, magicians, outdoorsmen, guitar-strummers, yodellers, comedians, mimics, gardeners, weathermen, cooks, puppeteers, fashion experts, pundits, announcers, stage hands, set designers, ladies' choirs, make-up artists, seamstresses, and just people who have a certain talent for talking about the affairs of the day . . . for all of these, the CBC has served either as an extensive training ground, or as an occasional source of cash and public exposure, or as a sole means of survival. During 1970-71 alone, the Corporation reports, it "brought before its television and radio audiences some 30,000 Canadian artists, musicians, commentators, actors and actresses, performers of many kinds; paying fees amounting to \$21,600,000."

The CBC's role as chief patron of the performing arts in Canada was particularly important for a long time simply because the arts had so few other well-endowed patrons. "One significant

---

*In the twenties the brave new world of sound began. It came out of ten Canadian National Railways broadcasting stations from coast to coast and it landed in observation cars like the one center, rolling across the prairies. The unseen performers, upper left, dressed up sometimes and produced simulated sound effects from strange gadgets. Transmission involved tons of magnificent tubes. By the late Thirties times were grimmer, but when King George VI came to Winnipeg in 1939, CBC rose to the occasion and furnished him with two golden microphones through which he said a few words to the Empire. By the Forties it was grim indeed and Rooney Pelletier, the CBC war correspondent in London, interviewed home town boys such as Lieut. Kemp Edwards, of Ottawa for the faithful listeners at home.*

medium," Edgar McInnis says in his history of Canada, "was the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which not only gave hospitality at intervals to Canadian compositions in its serious musical programs but also provided an outlet for composers of incidental music. Even more than the musician, the aspiring dramatist had to rely largely on the CBC as a vehicle for his talents in the absence of anything resembling a national theatre . . ." In short, no institution in the country has come close to rivalling the CBC's long record as a public teat for the entertaining arts.

Some of the talent back in '33 gave a hint of just how widely the Corporation would search in the decades to come. The CRBC's first annual report describes "a novelty mandolin orchestra under the direction of a fifteen-year-old boy. This mandolin orchestra was composed of five children from one family."

In 1936, the CRBC made dramatic history in radio journalism with a marathon "actuality" report from the scene of a mine cave-in at Moose River, Nova Scotia. For three days and nights, a small crew, working with improvised equipment out of a borrowed car as a studio, put bulletins on the air every fifteen or thirty minutes. Every station in Canada and 650 in the United States carried some of this coverage.

In these early days, the CRBC-CBC also got its first taste of an accusation that has stuck with it for all of its forty years, and may well be with it throughout the next forty as well. It is the accusation of political bias in CBC programs, and it arose during the 1935 election campaign in connection with a radio series called "Mr. Sage." "Mr. Sage" was not labelled a party production but he was cheerfully partisan nonetheless, and a committee of Parliament decided the show contained "offensive personal references." The 1936 Broadcasting Act prohibited "dramatized political broadcasts," and, nowadays, the controversy spins primarily and endlessly around the CBC's handling of television news and public affairs shows.

In 1936, the CRBC disappeared and the CBC replaced it. The Corporation inherited a staff of 132 (or roughly one sixty-eighth of its total staff in '72). The new CBC was modelled more closely on the lines of a private corporation, but the Parliamentary committee that recommended its establishment reaffirmed "the principle of complete nationalization of radio broadcasting in Canada. Pending . . . this . . . the fullest cooperation should be maintained between the Corporation and the private stations."

In the late Thirties, the CBC carried the predictable run of music, drama, talks, news, religious broadcasts, variety shows such as "The Happy Gang," dance music "distinctively styled