



INFORMATION DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
OTTAWA - CANADA

NO. 27

Ottawa, February 17, 1948.

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, five of the world's twelve time zones, a scattered population of only twelve million, and two languages. In Canada, network announcers can be heard saying "This is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation," or "Ici Radio-Canada;" for broadcasting is carried on every day in English and French, on separate networks.

From time to time, in most democratic countries, radio broadcasting becomes a controversial issue. In Great Britain, the BBC operates under a Royal Charter which comes up for renewal every five years, and which usually sets off lengthy debates on broadcasting operations. In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission has given radio companies strongly-worded reminders that they have responsibilities to the public as well as to the advertising sponsor, and there has been talk of greater government supervision of broadcasting. Radio broadcasting in Canada is studied from time to time by parliamentary committees, which make a careful examination of policies and operations.

Of the three systems mentioned above, Canada's is unique for it is a combination of public ownership and private enterprise. Privately-owned radio stations across the country provide local community service. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, or the CBC, as it is known, provides national service by means of networks made up of its own, and privately-owned stations.

The reason for this system of operation goes back to the early 1920's, when the commercial possibilities of radio had caught on. The first commercial broadcasting licences were issued by the Canadian Government in 1922. Thereafter, like Topsy, Canadian radio "just grewed" -- and its growing pains were felt all over the country.

By 1930, Canadian radio stations had a total power of 33,000 watts. But half of this total was concentrated in the districts surrounding the two largest cities -- Toronto and Montreal. Because of the commercial possibilities, there was a tendency for radio stations to be concentrated in the centres of population, with the result that the large and important part of Canada's population on the farms and in the smaller towns and villages was seriously neglected.