

carried more than a hundred news broadcasts in seventeen days. During World War II CBC correspondents were among the first to have mobile equipment and, therefore, among the first to broadcast the evocative sounds of blitz and battle.

At home CBC Stage was cited as the "best repertory group in this hemisphere" by *The New York Times*, and Igor Stravinsky called the CBC Symphony "brilliant."

As radio lost much of its round-the-clock audience to the emerging TV, the job got tougher. By the 1960s CBC was playing the same pop music as an enormous number of private radio stations. In 1974 it said goodbye to all that, dropped advertising and top 40 programs on both its AM and FM networks and focused on distinctive programming. There were happy results. Today CBC Radio offers many kinds of entertainment for many kinds of people. It is the main source of radio dramas, serious music, children's shows, public affairs, science, and literary and arts coverage, in addition to its first-rate coverage of the news. The CBC share of the English AM audience rose 50 per cent between 1973 and 1980. In the Toronto and Vancouver metropolitan areas, the increases were 100 and 133 per cent, and in Montreal 20 per cent.

### Television

CBC Television began a limited microwave service in 1952 and found itself engaged in an immediate competition with the high-cost products of ABC, CBS and NBC.

It did not do too badly, particularly in Quebec, where for the first time viewers could see a full sweep of programs in French. That first year the French TV network delighted enfants with "Pépinot et Capucine," and grown-ups with the live presentation of the hockey game in which Maurice "Rocket" Richard of the Canadiens scored his 325th goal. The English side offered "The Big Revue," full-hour musicals with sketches and production numbers, all live, with the orchestra jammed into one corner of the studio. It also covered news and offered "Fighting Words," a discussion program that was both live and lively.

"Les Plouffe," a slice of family life in Quebec City, became the big hit of both networks. It would last six years and then be reproduced again as a film and TV mini-series in 1981. The hardest English-



language perennial, the comedy team of Wayne and Shuster, came in 1954 and delighted audiences at home and, through frequent appearances on the "Ed Sullivan Show," abroad. It is still going strong. René Lévesque, the founder of the Parti Québécois and the present Premier of Quebec, was immensely popular as the principal of "Point de Mire," a news commentary which, in his words, "attracted not just the experts who sometimes criticized the show but the taxi drivers and the guy on the street. It was the soap opera of current affairs."

By 1958 CBC-TV was covering Canada coast-to-coast, a triumph with built-in difficulties. The competition from the American networks had been formidable from the start, but in the earliest days audiences were relatively small on both sides of the border and production costs relatively modest. As the American audiences grew enormously, American networks set a new and extravagant pace. Canadian set owners tuned in. When colour came to CBC in 1966, costs took another great leap.

CBC continued to emphasize Canadian programming, but the competition, first the American networks and later the privately owned CTV, grew more formidable. To maintain its share of the national audience, it bought and broadcast the most popular American shows – it could buy one for one-tenth of the cost of producing a comparable program of its own – and concentrated its own production efforts on drama and music, with some world-class results. "Louis Riel," an opera concerning the leader of the Métis rebellions of 1870 and 1885, was hailed as "an event of the first magnitude in the history of Canadian music"; and "The National Dream," the story of the building of the Canadian Pacific, was a success with both critics and viewers. "The Whiteoaks of Jalna," by CBC's own reckoning, "the most ambitious single project ever undertaken by its drama department," was not. It was a blockbuster only in the sense that it bombed for thirteen successive weeks. Harry Bruce wrote that it could at least "be regarded as a force for national unity" since "it gave Canadians something they could all talk about."

The competition in news programs has been less formidable. The American networks do not deliver detailed news about Canada, and Canadians watch home-grown news, commentary and public