

In December 1947, Citizens' Forum became part of a type of radio service new to the North American continent -- CBC Wednesday Night. In the belief that a considerable number of listeners would welcome a whole evening on one network of a more advanced and challenging type of broadcasting, the CBC has devoted Wednesday evening on its Trans-Canada network since December, 1947, entirely to non-commercial programs designed to be stimulating, substantial, and at times more demanding on the attention of the listener. CBC Wednesday Night includes radio fare that is unusual and significant. On different weeks it offers works that are new or seldom heard on the air. Types of performances vary, with the criterion being the interest and quality of the work and of the production, and items are chosen for imagination, humor, and lightness of touch as well as for serious value. Wednesday Night programs regularly include good music by various groups of different sizes and kinds, and recitals by distinguished artists, Canadians as well as those from other countries, who have acquired an international reputation. The CBC believes that it is to the general advantage of broadcasting and the listening public to endeavor in this way to show wider possibilities of radio as a force in the cultural life of Canada.

Political and Controversial Broadcasts

The CBC has a heavy responsibility in connection with broadcasts in which opinions are expressed, and its policy in this regard has been laid down in a White Paper on Political and Controversial Broadcasting.

This policy is based on the principle that the air waves belong to the people, and that therefore no person or group may acquire a proprietary right to them, by reason of position or wealth.

For this reason, the CBC will not sell time to anyone for broadcasts of matters of opinion, on controversial questions. Instead, it gives time for these purposes free of charge, providing equal opportunity for the expression of varying points of view. All major points of view about social, economic, or political questions are represented among the licence payers, who have a right to hear an expression of the major points of view. It is felt that while frank expression of opinion may arouse more criticism on one side or another, this is in the interests not only of good broadcasting, but of the preservation of democracy in Canada.

Democracy is the keynote of broadcasts of matters of opinion. Freedom of the air does not mean the right of anyone who has permission to use a radio frequency to broadcast what he likes. It must mean freedom for different sections of the public to get at least some of the service and ideas they want broadcast over that frequency. Freedom of the air is freedom to share in the opportunities to be derived from a piece of public property.

The CBC encourages speakers to express their views frankly and honestly, while insisting that they should be accurate in the presentation of facts. Both the CBC and private stations are responsible for seeing that speakers do not violate general broadcasting regulations, and that their scripts do not contain libel or obscenity. But the CBC does not in any way check the expression of ideas, or censor a speaker's script.