

Thirty years of Canadian television

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Canadian television celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this year. As elsewhere in the world, Canadian society has been deeply influenced by this medium.

It was in London in 1926 that John Logie Baird first demonstrated television. Research into moving images had actually begun much earlier, in 1887, and had led to the development in 1923 of the iconoscope by Vladimir Zworykin (1889-1982). Europe at that time was the centre of television research; in fact, broadcasts began in Germany in 1934, in Great Britain in 1936, and in France in 1937-38. The United States, in spite of Zworykin's discoveries and the work done in 1928 by C F Jenkins and the Bell Telephone Company, remained without a television service until 1939.

research throughout the world. The United States nonetheless increased the number of lines to 525, and the resulting improvement in image definition prompted Canada to adopt the same standard after the war, thereby assuring itself access to the North American market. Canada took a keen interest in the international conferences in Atlantic City and Paris in 1948 and in Mexico City and Milan in 1949 with a view to laying the foundation for Canadian television.

In March 1949 the federal government proposed a 15-year plan for the development of television in Canada. The Massey Commission was established and, after two years of study, submitted its recommendations. The government decided that television would be established under official auspices in Canada and that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation would be responsible for setting up television stations in Montreal and Toronto, with the help of a \$4.5 million loan that had been approved in 1949. The CBC wasted no time and in 1951 assigned 19 of its 1,454 employees to television. By 1952, this number had increased to 103, of whom 49 were technicians. After experimental coverage of baseball games at the Delorimier Stadium in Montreal (July and August) and the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto (August), Canadian television was officially inaugurated on 6 September 1952, in Montreal and two days later in Toronto.

With the country's fascination for the new medium growing by leaps and bounds, the number of broadcasting hours per week was increased from 18 in 1952 to 30 in January 1953. Sales of television sets show how popular TV was becoming: from 146,000 in September 1952, sales climbed to 224,000 in December of the same year. By December 1953 this number had more than doubled, and by the end of 1954 approximately 1,200,000 sets had been sold. By late December 1960, the four million mark had almost been reached. This growth continued when colour television sets came onto the Canadian market in 1966.

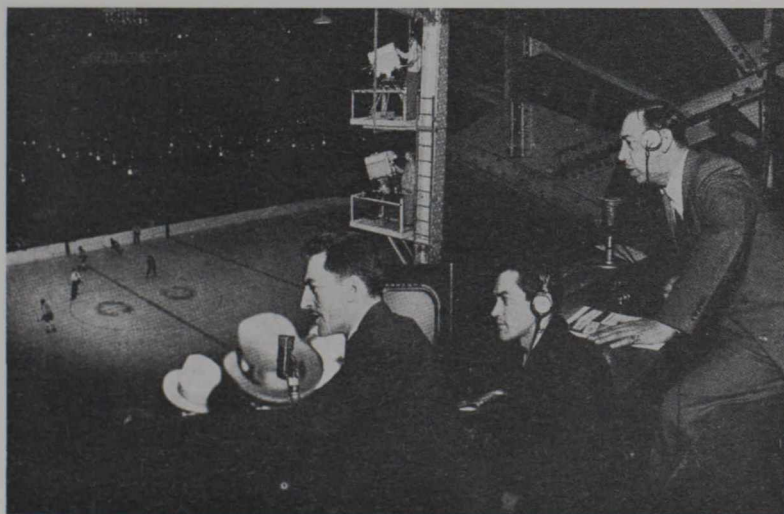
The 'firsts' that the CBC broadcast over Canadian airwaves contributed to this growth, and continuing advances in technology made the programs more attractive. Here are just a few of these highlights: the coverage of the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953 using kinescopes taken by the BBC; the tuning in of our microwave receivers to Buffalo and the American networks on 19 January 1952; the World Hockey Championship 'live' from Germany in February 1955 and the Grey Cup in Vancouver the same year; the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956; the royal visit in 1957; the Liberal Party convention from 14 to 16 February 1958, at which Lester B. Pearson was chosen leader, and the federal elections of the same year; the first televised Stanley Cup final (between Montreal and Boston) on 17 April 1959; Expo '67; the televised debate between Trudeau, Stanfield, Douglas and Caouette on 9 June 1968; the 1976 Olympic Games; and the 1982 World Cup live from Spain.

And then there were all the daily productions which, for the first time, could be seen as well as heard. Between 1952 and 1954, *Concert hour*, *The Plouffe family* and the first school broadcasts began appearing on the screen. Television drama and serials such as *Le survenant* and *Capaux-sorciers* made their debut in the mid-50s under the guidance of Robert 'Bob' Allen, Guy Beaulne and a number of others. The second half of the



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Les éliminatoires du hockey à la radio et à la télévision



Les éliminatoires pour le championnat mondial du hockey débiteront cette semaine. Ce sera encore l'occasion de grands reportages à la radio et à la télévision. Michel Normandin (que l'on aperçoit à l'extrême droite sur notre photo) fera la description des deux dernières périodes au réseau Français. CBFT permettra également à ses spectateurs de voir une bonne partie des parties. Les reportages commenceront à 9 heures 30 et se poursuivront jusqu'à 11 heures s'il le faut. René Lecardier commentera les jeux que les caméras capteront. On le voit au premier plan avec Louis Bédard, régisseur. Accrochées à une colonne du Forum, on aperçoit les plates-formes des caméramen.

Toscanini dirigera la "Missa Solemnis" de Beethoven

Cover of an early program guide for Radio Canada, the French language network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Canada, as a member of the Commonwealth, followed British research closely from 1930 to 1936. Alphonse Ouimet, later president of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, developed its first prototypes during this period. Between 1936 and 1939, with picture sharpness improving in Europe (the number of scanning lines was increased from 343 to 405), Canada kept an eye on its southern neighbours, who increased the number of lines per frame to 441. The Second World War temporarily interrupted television

Photo: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation