

What Lies Ahead?

That is a very quick summary of Canadian television after three years of existence. But what lies ahead for it?

In trying to look into the future we have to consider not only how Canadian television looks, but what it lives on. I know it is much more interesting to sit in front of a television set and appraise or condemn, make nice sweeping statements about what it should or shouldn't be. And living too, in one city it is easy to forget about the television wants of people in Cape Breton and Brandon and Chicoutimi. But I think that everyone here is a business-minded person and knows that in all activities we have to look at income and outgo; that economic possibilities set limits on desires.

Everybody knows that television operations are very expensive. And of course they have to be paid for somehow. In other mass communication media money comes in various ways, but it always has to come. Newspapers live both by advertising revenues and by the sale of their product. The theatrical moving picture industry practically is without such advertising revenues and relies almost entirely on paid admissions to theatres.

Dollars and Cents

In various countries different ways of paying for television are used. In United States revenues from advertisers using the medium support it entirely, up to now at least. On the other hand in Great Britain television has been supported so far without any advertising revenue but rather from the proceeds of an annual subscription fee paid by members of the television public in the form of a receiving set licence. Starting this month, Britain will have a second system supported entirely by advertising. In the United States there are a number of people who think that revenue from advertising is not sufficient, and that there should be at least some programming paid for directly by the television public who want to look at it, by means of one or other of the proposed pay-as-you-see systems.

In Canada, television broadcasting as a whole has had two sources of operating money; advertising; and a kind of one-time admission fee to television viewing paid by members of the public in the form of a 15-per-cent excise tax on the wholesale price of their television set when they buy it.

Canadian Factors

The question that pops out immediately is why Canada does not follow the example of her neighbor to the south and let television develop entirely on money from advertisers, or why she does not do as Great Britain is doing and provide for at least a separate alternate system operating throughout the country, living on advertising revenues alone. I believe the answer lies in Canadian conditions that are quite different from either of these two other countries. Those conditions are the comparatively small population of Canada and her enormous size, the division of two main language groups, and the very proximity to the United States itself. Canada has an enormous populated area to cover with television, although