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Television in Canada

(Based on an address by A.D. Dunton, Chairman,
CBC Board of Governors, delivered to the
Canadian Club of Montreal, January 9, 1956.)

Canadian Television began in the Fall of 1952 when one station in Montreal and another in Toronto started operating a few hours a day. There were some 180,000 sets in all Canada. Canadian television faced several problems: the enormous size of the country; the small population in relation to the high costs of producing television programs and in relation to the facilities and costs needed to distribute programs over such a large area; the two official languages which doubled program production effort; and the fact that many Canadians had already acquired a taste for lavish U.S. television programs which were readily and cheaply available in Canada. Despite these difficulties it was decided that Canadian television would aim to produce a fair share of its own programming as well as to consume some of the available products of others.

After just three years there are nearly 2,000,000 television sets operating in the Dominion, and 80 per cent of the population are within reach of national network service. Now Canada has more television stations (33), covers a much greater area with service (over half a million square miles), and has a higher proportion of the population with television sets, than any other country except the United States. The challenge that Canada sets in television is well illustrated by the fact that the 28 English language stations in Canada still only cover a population which is less than reached by one station in New York or the South of England.

The Canadian system brings in quite a number of programs from the United States which many Canadians want to see and which provide revenues. But in spite of these importations Canada is also second in the world in the original production of television programs. Montreal and Toronto rate third and fourth on this Continent, after New York and Hollywood, as program production centres, and fourth and fifth in the whole world. Montreal is the world's largest producer of French language television programs.

In these three years television has become a major factor in the economic life of the country. Altogether, taking both the broadcasting and viewing sides of television, it has become an activity involving an output of goods and services well over \$300,000,000 a year, and representing more than one per cent of the total gross national product of the country. Altogether nearly a billion dollars has been spent in Canada on television in one way or another.