



REFERENCE PAPERS

INFORMATION DIVISION

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

OTTAWA - CANADA

No. 66 THE DEVELOPMENT OF TELEVISION IN CANADA

Television in Canada is being developed on the same basic principles that governed the establishment of the national radio system -- a combination of public and private ownership and operation of transmitting stations co-operating in extending programme coverage over a vast area.

The first two television transmitters and programme-production centres of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation began regular service in the cities of Toronto and Montreal in September 1952. Another station will be opened in the late spring of 1953 in Ottawa, the capital city. These three stations, situated in the most densely populated areas of Canada, will cover more than 40 per cent of the Canadian population. They will be connected by microwave relay by June of 1953, forming the first direct-connection television network in Canada.

Other CBC television stations are planned for Vancouver, on the West coast; Winnipeg, in Central Canada; and Halifax, on the East coast. The Government of Canada has announced that applications for licences to establish privately-owned television stations will now be accepted for areas not now served or for those to be served, as listed above, by publicly-owned CBC stations. The object is to provide television in as many different areas of Canada as possible, as quickly as possible, and therefore two stations will not be licensed at present to serve the same area.

The Government announced in February 1953, that the radio listener-license fee of \$2.50, established at the inception of the national broadcasting system, would be abolished and that there would be no licence fee to be paid by owners of television sets. Instead, revenues of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation will come from the existing excise tax on radio and television sets and tubes in addition to revenue from the sale of advertising time and statutory grants as provided by Parliament. The income of privately-owned commercial radio stations comes exclusively from the sale of advertising time to sponsors. A large number of these stations, as CBC network affiliates, are provided with network programmes. Like the private radio stations, the income of private television stations will come exclusively from the sale of time. All such TV stations will be provided with a certain number of hours per week of CBC programmes, free of charge, and, like radio stations, they will, in addition, benefit from a share of the income from

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commercial programmes sold on a network basis. Until such time as network facilities become available in Canada, either through use of coaxial cable or microwave relay, distribution of programmes will be made by kinescope recording.

To understand the development of television in Canada, it is necessary to understand the development over the past 20 years of radio broadcasting. For radio, the publicly-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was established as the national system, operating all radio networks in Canada and a chain of CBC-owned production centres and transmitting stations, most of them of high power. Privately-owned radio stations perform a local, community service, and many of them (85 out of a total of 137) are affiliated with the CBC networks in giving national distribution of programmes. Privately-owned radio stations are established on the recommendation of the CBC Board of Governors, the trustees for the public interest in broadcasting, to the Federal Department of Transport which is the licensing authority. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation operates under the Broadcasting Act of 1936 and amendments, and is responsible not to the Government of the day but to Parliament, to which it reports through a Minister of the Crown. Autonomous in the sense that it is free from governmental direction and control, the Corporation's policies and operations are carefully scrutinized by Parliament through the establishment of special Parliamentary Committees, ten of which have been appointed since 1936 to review CBC activities. The national system was established as the result of a widespread enquiry by a Royal Commission into broadcasting as it existed in Canada before 1930. The principles under which it operates have been endorsed not only by the ten Parliamentary Committees established during its history but by the findings of another Royal Commission, appointed in 1948 to examine and make recommendations upon "the principles upon which the policy of Canada should be based in the fields of radio and television broadcasting," together with other matters in the fields of the arts, letters, and sciences.

The measures taken to meet the special problems existing in Canada for national broadcasting -- the vast distances, six different time-zones, the relatively small and scattered population, regional differences, and two official languages, English and French, -- have been closely studied and reviewed, therefore, for over 17 years. And the basic problems which led to the conception of a publicly-owned national broadcasting system have pointed as directly toward a continuance of basic principles in the development of television. It was of prime concern that radio in Canada, an under-populated country bordering on the great and friendly United States of America, should not be lost as a means of Canadian development. Under purely commercial operation, it is cheaper to bring in American programmes across the border than to originate Canadian programmes, using Canadian talent and expressing Canadian ideas and aspirations. Public-ownership and control of radio broadcasting was deemed advisable, for "without such control radio broadcasting can never become a great agency for the communication of matters of national concern and for the diffusion of national thoughts and ideals, and without such control it can never be the agency by which

national consciousness may be featured and sustained and national unity still further strengthened...(1)..." Nearly 20 years later, the Parliamentary Committee of 1951 reported:

"Your Committee shares the view of the Royal Commission and of previous committees of the House that the national broadcasting service carried on by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is essential in the development of our national life in Canada, and is efficiently performing an extremely valuable and important function... Your Committee wishes to endorse the first recommendation of the 1949-1951 Royal Commission on Broadcasting which also expresses what has been said in the past by successive Parliamentary Committees. That recommendation is as follows:

'That the grant of the privilege of radio broadcasting in Canada continue to be under the control of the National Government; that the control of the national broadcasting system continue to be vested in a single body responsible to Parliament; that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as now constituted be that authority and continue to provide directly by its operations and indirectly by its control of the operations of others a national radio broadcasting service free from partisan influence....'

"Your Committee agrees with the Royal Commission when it says on page 301 of its Report:

'....the considerations leading us to recommend the continuation of a national system of broadcasting seems to us to dictate much more strongly and urgently a similar system for television. Television, like radio, is akin to a monopoly, but its much more limited channels give added importance to a system of co-ordination and control. Like radio it is a valuable instrument of national unity, of education, and of entertainment; how much more valuable it is difficult to say at present, but it promises to be a more popular as well as a more persuasive medium.'

"Your Committee is strongly impressed with the vital need for the development of a television system that is essentially Canadian and which gives expression in this new form of broadcasting to Canadian ideas and aspiration. It agrees with the Royal Commission that the situation must be avoided under which commercial pressures will lead to the major part of the material or Canadian channels being non-Canadian. Your Committee supports the recommendations of the Royal Commission regarding

(1) Mr. R.B. Bennett, Prime Minister of Canada introducing in May 1932, the bill establishing the national radio system.

television development and your Committee recommends that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation proceed as soon as practicable with the extension of television coverage."

The Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had begun a study of the possibilities of developing publicly-owned television production centres in Toronto and Montreal as early as 1946; and in 1948 the Board issued a statement of its preliminary policy on television, and stated that it would proceed with the publicly-owned facilities as soon as adequate financing could be arranged. In March 1949, the Government of Canada announced an interim plan for the development of television, pending the report and recommendations of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, which was then being established.

Under the interim plan, the CBC was instructed to proceed with the establishment of centres for the production of Canadian television programmes in the country's two largest cities, Toronto and Montreal, with their associated transmitters. CBC was also to provide a service of programmes for broadcasting by other television stations to be established in the future.

To launch Canadian television, Parliament approved three loans to the CBC, totalling \$8,000,000. This money has served to construct the Toronto and Montreal centres, hire and train the staff, buy the necessary technical facilities and pay for test productions, and to provide funds for the first seven months of service. It also provides for a start on a third television station in the capital city of Canada, Ottawa, and for the use of a network link which will connect the first three Canadian television stations together.

Regular programme service was begun from the Toronto and Montreal centres early in September 1952, after several delays caused by steel and equipment shortages. Both stations began with a programme service of about three hours a night, the Toronto station programming in English, and the Montreal station dividing its time about half and half between programmes in English and in French, in order to serve the English-speaking, bilingual, and French-speaking population of Canada's largest city, (the world's second-largest French-speaking city). It is planned to add another television transmitter for Montreal, so that separate English and French programming can be carried on.

CBC television programmes have covered a wide range of interests; popular variety shows and light music and comedy programmes interspersed with panel discussions, news magazines, a variety of film programmes, special features for children, and noteworthy drama periods including a 90-minute play once a week. Both production centres now in operation are equipped with two studios, scenery shops, film equipment, and all the associated technical gear for the production of Canadian television programmes. Each centre is equipped also with a mobile unit; a specially-equipped van staffed by a crew of ten and with three television cameras and a transmitter for beaming "outside broadcasts" back to the studios for regular transmission.

RP/A

March 1, 1953.