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RADIO IN CANADA

The story of radio broadcasting in Canada is one of a unique system designed to overcome the problems posed by vast distances, five of the world's twelve time zones, a scattered population of only twelve and one-half millions, and two languages. In Canada, network announcers can be heard saying "This is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation," or " Ici Radio-Canada;" for broadcasting is carried on every day in English and French, on separate networks.

From time to time, in most democratic countries, radio broadcasting becomes a controversial issue. In Great Britain, the BBC operates under a Royal Charter which comes up for renewal every five years, and which usually sets off lengthy debates on broadcasting operations. In the United States, the Federal Communications Commission has given radio companies strongly-worded reminders that they have responsibilities to the public as well as to the advertising sponsor, and there has been talk of greater government supervision of broadcasting. Radio broadcasting in Canada is studied from time to time by parliamentary committees, which make a careful examination of policies and operations.

Of the three systems mentioned above, Canada's is unique for it is a combination of public ownership and private enterprise. Privately-owned radio stations across the country provide local community service. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, or the CBC, as it is known, provides national service by means of networks made up of its own, and privately-owned stations.

The reason for this system of operation goes back to the early 1920's, when the commercial possibilities of radio had caught on. The first commercial broadcasting licences were issued by the Canadian Government in 1922. Thereafter, like Topsy, Canadian radio "just grew" -- and its growing pains were felt all over the country.

By 1930, Canadian radio stations had a total power of 33,000 watts. But half of this total was concentrated in the districts surrounding the two largest cities -- Toronto and Montreal. Because of the commercial possibilities, there was a tendency for radio stations to be concentrated in the centres of population, with the result that the large and important part of Canada's population on the farms and in the smaller towns and villages was seriously neglected.

In 1932, only about two fifths of the population, outside the Toronto and Montreal districts, could get Canadian

programs regularly. When they did, the fare was chiefly gramophone records. The average broadcasting time of all Canadian stations in 1932 was six hours and 15 minutes daily, of which only two hours and 15 minutes were programs using any Canadian talent whatever.

There was a tendency for the larger stations to become little more than agents for the big radio networks in the United States, Canada's neighbor to the south. Canadian talent and Canadian interests were being largely neglected, and it appeared that on a basis of purely commercial operation, radio would be lost as an effective means of Canadian development.

This state of affairs, developing through the twenties, brought action from the Canadian government in 1928. Three men -- a banker, a newspaper editor and an electrical engineer -- were named to form a Royal Commission, "to examine into the broadcasting situation in the Dominion of Canada and to make recommendations to the government as to the future administration, management, control and financing thereof."

The commission visited the United States, Great Britain, France and several other European countries to see how radio systems were conducted in other lands, and then returned to Canada to obtain a cross-section of Canadian opinion on the subject. The Commission held sittings in twenty-five Canadian cities, and received briefs from farm and labor organizations and other public bodies, as well as from individuals. It turned in its report in 1929.

The Commission based its findings on the submissions it had received, and on a number of facts uniquely Canadian. Canada is a huge country, and many Canadian communities are widely separated. Not only are there two official languages, but the country is divided into nine provinces, most of them having different interests, traditions, and cultural backgrounds.

The conditioning factors of vast distances, scattered population, and regional differences led to the conception of a nationally-owned and controlled broadcasting system, behind which, in the words of the Commission's report, would be the power and prestige of the whole public of Canada.

The individual operation of radio stations, no matter how effective locally, could not meet the handicaps of great distances in providing a program service that would balance fairly the different cultural, racial and regional interests in Canada. Sometimes even now, it is necessary to rent from the wire-line companies more than 25 thousand miles of wire to link the radio stations in Canada. On a commercial basis, this and other heavy operating costs would have required the sale of all Canadian radio time.

The objective was broadcasting in the public interest; the use of radio as a means of Canadian development; and the use of Canadian talent. The Royal Commission recommended that a licence fee paid by the listeners, supplemented by commercial revenue, should be the primary basis of financing broadcasting in Canada; and that a nationally-owned company should be set up to operate a chain of high-power stations from coast to coast. These principles, passed unanimously by the Canadian Parliament, have been endorsed by successive Parliamentary committees on radio broadcasting.

The policies of the CBC are based on principles laid down originally by Parliament as being in the best interests of the listening public. The policies themselves, and the way in which they are carried out, are examined critically from time to time by special Parliamentary committees. In this way there is a constant check on CBC operations. The listeners, by paying a licence fee, become shareholders in the national radio system and can control its operations through Parliament.

The CBC is not owned by the government, but by the people. It is not responsible to the government of the day, but to Parliament as whole.

Service to Listeners

The Board of Governors of the CBC has nine members who serve without salary for three years, and a full-time Chairman, A. Davidson Dunton, who is a salaried official. The members of the board are chosen to represent the various geographical divisions of Canada, and various facets of Canadian life. The board serves as the trustee of the national interest in broadcasting, and directs broadcasting policy as it applies to both CBC-owned and privately-owned stations.

The CBC operates all networks in Canada; the Trans-Canada and Dominion networks, serving English-speaking listeners from coast-to-coast, and the French network, serving French-speaking listeners in the province of Quebec.

Operations:

The networks are made up from 13 CBC-owned and 99 privately-owned stations located across Canada. The Trans-Canada has a maximum outlet of 62 stations; the Dominion a maximum of 37; and the French network a maximum of 13. For occasional broadcasts of national interest the three networks are joined to form the National network. In addition to these outlets, the CBC has pioneered in the development of low-powered repeater stations, which operate automatically with the network, in remote areas of Canada. French-speaking listeners in northern Quebec and on the western Prairies are served by shortwave stations, and another is used to reach listeners in the northern coastal regions and interior of British Columbia. A shortwave receiving station is maintained in Ottawa. It will soon be expanded to enable it to take over operations formerly handled by receiving stations no longer in operation at Dartmouth, N.S. and Toronto, Ontario. A shortwave receiving station at Point Grey near Vancouver, B.C., is operated about two days a week to monitor certain shortwave channels for the CBC International Service.

As of September 1948 seven of the CBC's 13 stations are of the 50,000 watt variety. The Corporation has recently built two 50,000 watt stations in Alberta and Manitoba to improve service in the prairies, and one in Toronto to operate as the Dominion network's key station.

Frequency Modulation

The CBC has two FM stations in Montreal, and one in Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa. It expects to have another FM station in Winnipeg shortly. The aim is to get FM programs on the air, and thus encourage the manufacture and sale of FM receiving sets.

The CBC has recommended to the Department of Transport that operators of present AM stations should be invited to start

FM transmissions of the programs now carried on their AM transmitters, if they want to try the new system with a low-power transmitter. As yet, frequencies for high-power FM transmissions have not been assigned in Canada. The Corporation holds in principle that a present AM station operator obtaining an FM licence should broadcast the same programs over the two transmitters. In other words, the granting of an FM licence to a present AM operator would not give him another station, but a second form of transmission of his broadcasts.

Television

The CBC has devoted much study in recent months to television. Its Board of Governors has carefully considered questions of television in relation to Canadian needs and conditions, and has stated that it will strive for the maximum provision of Canadian television for Canadians, with the overall aim of stimulating Canadian national life and not merely of providing a means of broadcasting non-Canadian visual material in this country. The Board has stated its belief that over a limited period of years television can be developed by the national system to reach the public in many parts of Canada to operate on the financial basis of revenues from television receiving set licence fee and from some commercial income. The CBC plans to proceed with the development of television in Canada just as soon as necessary financing can be arranged.

In view of the limited number of frequencies likely to be available for television, the Board has stated that it will exercise great care in recommendations regarding applications from individuals or private companies for licences. It will also make recommendations that the channels necessary be reserved for the national system.

Facsimile

Nothing has been done toward the introduction of facsimile in Canada, although CBC engineers are keeping in touch with developments in this field also. The policy of the CBC has been left in abeyance until the situation with regard to facsimile is clarified.

Shortwave

Since its inception in February, 1945, the CBC International Service (shortwave) has expanded until now the Voice of Canada is heard abroad in ten languages. Built and operated by the CBC on behalf of the Canadian Government, the transmitters of the International Service, located near Sackville, N.B., send out the strongest signal heard in Europe from North America. During the meetings of the General Assembly in New York, the United Nations used the CBC transmitters for 90 minutes daily, directing reports to Czechoslovakia, Russia, Turkey, Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Poland, France, Greece and Egypt.

In addition to areas already served, it is planned to begin regular transmissions to South Africa in the near future.

Programming

The general aim in making up CBC domestic program schedules is to arrive at a satisfactory balance of entertainment on the one hand, and education and information on the other. Wherever possible, these factors are combined, and presented at suitable listening hours.

All listeners do not like the same things, and there are minority groups whose tastes must be taken into account. In commercial broadcasting, it is usually the custom to place programs of mass appeal in the peak listening hours, so a sponsor may reach the widest possible audience. The CBC has never followed this policy, and programs usually considered as suited to a limited audience -- discussion groups, symphonic concerts, recital periods, or informative talks -- will be found on CBC networks in some of the best and commercially profitable listening periods. But whether a listener likes Bach or "boogie", light opera or symphony, discussion programs or soap serials, jazz or book reviews, he'll find it in the CBC program schedules.

The greatest amount of broadcast time is devoted to light music, including dance music, light classics, band music, and old-time programs. This is followed, in order, by news, drama, variety programs, classical and sacred music, talks, agricultural, educational and religious programs, and programs devoted to the interests of women, sport fans, and children.

Since it was first organized in 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has paid well over \$10 million to Canadian musicians, singers, and radio writers, (not including members of CBC staff). It is a fair statement to say that the CBC does more than almost all other bodies put together to encourage music in Canada, and to enable musicians of all kinds to make a living from their art. For example, the CBC is the most important support of Canadian symphony orchestras, paying orchestras in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver a total of more than \$50,000 annually. The money these orchestras receive for broadcasting is an important factor in their budgets. In return for this money, the CBC is able to provide Canadian listeners with a symphony concert by a Canadian orchestra every week in the year, and sometimes more than one a week.

In addition to presenting established orchestras and artists, the CBC does a great deal for the encouragement of new talent of all kinds. Throughout the week, various recital periods are scheduled on national or regional networks to give younger artists a chance to be heard and to make themselves known. A large number of new actors and actresses are tried out in the course of a year on the numerous drama and feature programs, and those with talent and capacity for hard work often get into the circle of regular professional performers quite quickly.

The encouragement of Canadian talent has been especially effective in the case of writers. During the season 1947-48 for example, the CBC produced 320 radio dramas in English, broadcast from Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. Of these, 90 per cent were written by Canadians. Most were original plays; some were adaptations. The French network also carried an extensive series of drama broadcasts and experimental radio drama was carried on for some weeks in two series during a nine month period to provide a vehicle for the works of young authors.

The works of Canadian composers are heard frequently on CBC networks, often featured by themselves in special programs.

The first full-length Canadian opera -- "Deirdre of the Sorrows" -- was commissioned by the CBC and presented to listeners coast to coast during the 1945-46 season. A shorter ballad opera, "Transit Through Fire", was commissioned and produced in the 1941-42 season. Both were the work of composer Healey Willan and author John Coulter.

In the following year, 29 newly-composed musical scores were presented on the French network. The world famous harpsichordist, Mme. Wanda Landowska, was invited to Canada by the CBC, for the presentation of newly-discovered concertos by Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach, many of them being heard for the first time on the air.

The 1943-44 season saw the complete piano works of Chopin performed by Canadian pianists in 25 weekly recitals. The narrative poem "Brebeuf and his Brethren" by E.J. Pratt, with special music by Healey Willan, was commissioned and produced by the CBC.

Another commissioned work to be given its first performance is "From Sea to Sea," a suite in five movements by the young Canadian composer Alexander Brott, written for the CBC International Service. Distinctively Canadian in character, the Brott suite is music descriptive of the ethnic and cultural make-up of Canada's population, and of the sweeping breadths of the Dominion. First performed in November 1947 by a CBC symphony orchestra conducted by the composer, the suite was heard on the CBC Trans-Canada and French networks, broadcast by the International Service, and carried simultaneously on the domestic networks in Mexico as a tribute to UNESCO, which was then in session in Mexico City.

World premiere performances arranged by the CBC International Service have included the "Alberto Concerto," a new work by the Canadian composer Minuetta Borek, and the First Symphony by the French-Canadian composer Claude Champagne.

In order to foster an appreciation of Canadian music outside, as well as in Canada, the CBC International Service has recorded five albums of Canadian music. The first album, containing "Suite Canadienne," by Claude Champagne and Dr. Healey Willan's "Concerto in C Minor," has already been distributed (free) to Canadian embassies and legations abroad for foreign radio stations, conservatories etc., and to a limited list in Canada, including all CBC stations. The International Service has also recorded and partly distributed a series of eighteen recordings of Canadian folk music by the La Cantoria choir of Montreal, directed by Victor Brault.

Both the International Service and the domestic service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation have consistently followed a policy of encouraging Canadian musicians. In any large production centre across Canada there are, of course, numbers of established, experienced and professional musicians; and if they are to remain in their own region, or in Canada for that matter, they must have opportunities to make a living. Therefore, newcomers in the radio field may find the going slow -- but the Corporation provides as many opportunities as it can for them to be heard. In addition to recital periods, the CBC began in 1947 another series of talent-finding programs titled "Opportunity Knocks," in which promising singers, musicians and actors competed for the votes of studio and listening audiences. Winners of the various series were given network programs of their own.

While the bulk of commercially-sponsored programs carried on CBC networks are devoted to light music, notable exceptions are broadcasts of the "Pop" concerts of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and "Singing Stars of Tomorrow". Following coast-to-coast auditions this series again presented some forty Canadian vocalists and awarded scholarships. Through the co-operation of the Columbia Broadcasting System, the New York Philharmonic concerts are carried on a non-commercial basis on Sunday afternoons, on the Trans-Canada

and French networks. Both networks also carry the Saturday afternoon opera broadcasts from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

One of the strongest arguments advanced for the creation of a nationally-owned broadcasting system was that it would be a powerful means of education. This is kept constantly in mind by officials of the Corporation, and many programs are planned in cooperation with public bodies with this end in view.

The CBC has endeavored to provide a constant flow of informative talks on a very wide range of subjects home economics, Canadian art, the pros and cons of world government, child care, special series for women on building a happy home life, Canadian literature, popular science . . . all these and many more. The CBC Talks and Public Affairs department regularly plans and supervises from 30 to 40 quarter and half-hour broadcasts weekly on national and regional networks, not including daily commentaries on purely local topics.

Important questions of the day are presented to listeners in the form of commentaries, discussions, quiz shows, interviews, and documentary or semi-dramatized programs. It has been found that many programs in the field of public affairs have audience ratings on a par with many commercial programs designed only as entertainment.

One of these is "Citizens' Forum", listened to each week during the fall and winter season by organized groups all across the country. The program is presented in cooperation with the Canadian Association for Adult Education, and consists of study bulletins to provide information, and broadcasts to stimulate discussion. Each week, listening groups report their opinions, which are summarized on the air the following week. Several times a year, a national report of forum opinion is broadcast, presenting a valid summary of Canadian opinion on important subjects.

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.

School Broadcasts

School broadcasts make up one of the most important parts of public service broadcasting in Canada. Reading, writing, and arithmetic have been joined by a fourth "R" --- radio, which is playing an ever increasing part in education.

Throughout the school year, the CBC, in cooperation with provincial departments of education, presents special programs to schools, related to the courses of study. Characters in history are brought alive: changed from names in a book, to living characters; advances in science are graphically described for the younger listeners; music by distinguished artists becomes an accepted part of school life. In addition to provincial broadcasts, the CBC itself prepares and pays for a series of 25 or more National School Broadcasts, designed to strengthen the sense of Canadian citizenship in the younger generation. School children hear the stories of Canadian artists, in dramatized form; learn as though at first hand the stories of the men who founded this nation; and through the miracle of radio, are carried into a history as alive as though it were the present. The national school broadcasts are thoughtful and expensive productions, including, as an example, a complete dramatization of Shakespeare's "Macbeth," "Julius Caesar" and "Hamlet". Shakespeare's characters come to life through the interpretations of professional radio actors, against a backdrop of special music written and conducted by a famous Canadian conductor. In 1945, the CBC won four first awards for dramatic productions, in the annual competition sponsored by the Institute for Education by Radio at Ohio State University, in the United States. In the 1946 competitions, the CBC carried off five awards, and in 1947, won three top awards, three honorable mentions and a special citation for a series of nature study broadcasts for junior students. In 1948 the CBC won four first awards and two honorable mentions at Ohio.

Educational broadcasts as a supplement to classroom teaching are also carried on the French network, under the title "Radio-College." Broadcasts from this series were translated into several languages and broadcast to Europe through the CEC International Service, at the request of the United Nations, to meet the need for new educational material in the devastated countries.

Service to Farm Listeners

Similar to "Citizens' Forum", but of a more specialized nature, is "National Farm Radio Forum," which has developed into the greatest listening group activity in the world. Last year more than 1300 organized groups of farm people all across Canada listened to broadcasts in this series, and carried on their own discussions afterward. "Farm Forum" is produced by the CBC in cooperation with the Canadian Association for Adult Education and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. It serves as a common meeting hall for Canadian farmers in all parts of Canada who exchange views and get to know each other better by means of radio. Another aspect of public service broadcasting as it affects farm families directly is the daily noon hour broadcast provided for farmers in each region, giving them up-to-the-minute market reports and agricultural news.

Fishermen in the Maritime Provinces bordering the Atlantic Ocean, are provided with special broadcasts as well, giving them detailed weather reports and other news which assures them of greater safety and a better chance of a good catch.

The CBC News Service

In order to provide Canadians with a distinctly Canadian radio news service the CBC organized a national news service of its own in 1941. Then, as now, it is based on the full wire service of the Canadian Press and British United Press, supplemented by reports from CBC correspondents abroad.

CBC commentators and engineers accompanied the first Canadian division when it sailed for England in December, 1939. Throughout the war years, CBC men were on hand to bridge the gap between Canadians at the front and their folks at home. Equipped with armored mobile recording vans, CBC commentators and engineers pioneered new techniques in battle-front operations, using methods of securing actuality reports which were soon adopted by American networks. On many occasions, Canadians at home were able to hear the actual sound of a battle only a few hours after it was fought. CBC men reported the behind-the-lines side of the war as well, interviewing Canadian sailors, soldiers and airmen on leave or in reserve, and bringing the sound of their voices thousands of miles to the firesides they had so recently left.

With the end of the war, the main job was finished. But CBC commentators are still overseas, reporting the postwar scene in Europe, and the deliberations of the United Nations on the road to peace.

At home, the CBC News Service, with five newsrooms across Canada in order to give regional service to listeners, is maintaining its original standards of impartiality, honesty, and news without distortion.

National Aims

The national radio system has given Canadians an unequalled opportunity to get to know each other. Through discussion programs and talks Canadians living thousands of miles apart have been able to "rub shoulders" on common ground. Through other programs Canadians living in some of the remotest hamlets have been privileged to hear the same fine music, the same stirring-dramas, the same march of ideas which used to be reserved for the city dweller. National radio has spread out to reach more than 96 per cent of the radio homes in Canada, tying them together in a broader love of country, a neighborly interest in the traditions, the aspirations and the problems of their fellow-Canadians.

National Radio is contributing more than other media to the development of a truly Canadian outlook. The important thing is unity, not uniformity. And while the music and songs of Quebec are kept alive, and the Gaelic tradition of Cape Breton or the Fraser valley, the Ukrainian songs and dances of the prairies, and the sea-faring traditions of the maritimes, Canadians have the common privilege of sharing these local cultures for the enjoyment of all.

