The future of public television

The neo-conservative counter-revolution that has swept the technically advanced democracies in the last decade has had some of its most visible effects in the realm of communications. Under the war-cry of (market) freedom, neo-conservatism has begun to overturn the main pillars of the preceding liberalism: deficit spending (in the civil economy but not the military economy); state interventionism (in the civil economy but not the military – hi-tech – economy); and public broadcasting (in the political economy of mass culture).

In the cultural domain, public broadcasting in Western Europe, in Canada, in the U.S. (such as it exists), and in Japan, is now facing the most serious crisis of its approximately 50-year existence.

The rise of public broadcasting in the '20s and '30s came as a result of national cultural policies being grafted onto universalizing communications technologies. The growth and future of national public broadcasting was from the beginning tied to, and inseparable from, the cultural policies of the nation-state. Thus any reduction of the role of the particular state would immediately entail an increase in the universalizing tendencies of communications technologies – as the Americans fully understood in adding U.S. cultural product riders to postwar reparations aid.

Graham Spry's famed slogan of the '30s ("The state or the United States") has, in the intervening years, gone global. Today it's the state or satellitization. Yet long before the current neo-conservative relegation of the state, Canada had already opted for media satellitization (in newspapers and in movies; CBC radio and TV, being publicly owned, managed to lag contentedly behind). It's not the least of the ironies of the present crisis of public broadcasting that the rest of the developed world is discovering how it feels to be Canadianized, as the following Cinema Canada dossier of voices in broadcasting from around the world attests.

Because Canadians experience the constant hammering of American media as a total environment (which is only another way of saying that all Canadian media are marginal in Canada), they are, as economist Abraham Rotstein once wrote, signally ill-equipped to perceive particularity on any other terms than universal ones. As a result, Canadians are basically comfortable as media satellites of the U.S., and Canadian state policy in culture since the early '30s has amounted to little more than sporadic rear-guard actions to preserve the semblance of Canadian particularity. Thus, in the current context where the entire developed world outside the United States is discovering some of the more appalling aspects of Canadianization, CBC president Pierre Juneau birthily celebrates 1986 as the Canadian network's best year ever.

The counterpoint to Juneau is provided by Bernard Ostry, TVOntario's chairman, who, anchored in a Canadian particularity as one of Canada's leading provincial broadcasters, has emerged in recent months as perhaps the last official defender of the idea of public broadcasting in this country. The forthcoming Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force Report, when it finally appears, might, however, provide Ostry with some much-needed support.

But one of Canada's leading broadcasting critics, Hertschel Hardin, author of the path-breaking book A Nation Unaware (1974) and more recently Closed Circuits: The Sellout of Canadian Television (1985), a withering attack on Canada's deregulatory agency, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, is skeptical. For Hardin, who brings to the debate a welcome note of western Canadian populism, only a detailed understanding of the real political economy of communications can save Canada's unique experience with public broadcasting from self-inflicted strangulation.

How that experience was unique and how Canada fumbled its broadcasting sovereignty is recounted by Cinema Canada television columnist Joyce Nelson, author of the forthcoming The Perfect Machine: Essays on Television, Technology and the Patriarchy.

From Great Britain, home of the grand old lady of public broadcasting, the BBC, two articulate spokesmen provide a Thatcherite update on a debate that has raged ever since an earlier Conservative government broke the BBC's monopoly and introduced private commercial television. David Graham, an independent producer, presents the classic neo-conservative arguments for greater market freedom, while Jeremy Isaacs, chief executive of BBC's newest TV network, the acclaimed Channel 4, replies from an elegant neo-liberal stance.

From Japan, NHK's Keiji Shima describes some of the pressures impinging upon the future of that nation's public broadcasting system. Yet

Like maniac surgeons, it's now the turn of you politicians to lean over the body of that unfortunate creature, public service television.

Shima is confident that, because of public support, NHK can weather the current crisis.

Finally, from France, where the recent government decision to privatize TF1, the principal state TV network, has produced a storm of public outrage, comes an anguished warning from the French Directors' Union as to the long-term effects of "cultural crimes."

In the current repatterning of world culture, as satellite-powered media-empires battle for position in the race to flood the globe with American-style product and 42nd Street pornography, the debate over the future of national culture is likely to take on an intensity which hasn't been felt since the '30s. Then Canada became the first modern nation to experience the full force of another nation's media blast. In the field of cultural devastation, Canada offers a privileged, if negative, example to the world. But as other nations too now discover the Canadian fate, Canada's experience becomes a valuable store of knowledge.

Quebec's film technicians' union recently hosted a conference of trade unionists and audiovisual workers from 40 nations around the world, members of the International Federation of Audiovisual Workers' Unions (FISTAV) executive committee. Whether from Japan, Finland, Ghana, Greece, Great Britain, France or Canada, the delegates found that they all shared two words, "national culture." And how to best defend it against Hollywood's Star Wars emerged as the basis for a common strategy.

The current agonizing over public broadcasting is thus far from over. In fact, this shows every indication of becoming the central debate in popular culture for years to come.

Michael Dorland
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ike the snow, Canada produces a perennial flurry of papers and words about all the problems of Canadian broadcasting. Not surprisingly, those problems are often embedded in, and masked by, language itself. In the midst of all the verbiage, it's easy to lose sight of the problem that is absolutely central to the Canadian broadcasting morass. The crucial phrase, enshrined in the 1968 Broadcasting Act, is the statement that Canadian broadcasting consists of a “single system.” Because the confusion surrounding those two words has so confounded Canadian broadcasting sovereignty, it's worth considering their origins.

In the mid-1920s Canadian broadcasting was chaotic: three or four radio stations in any one city shared time, all using the same frequencies and there was bitter in-fighting for the few available frequencies the U.S. had left to Canada. Moreover, most Canadian radio stations had only 500 watts of power or less, while many American stations boasted 50,000 watts and were beginning to gain network affiliates in this country. It was in this context that the first Royal Commission on Broadcasting, the Aird Commission, was appointed in 1927.

The Aird Commission took a strong pro-Canada stance. When its report was released in 1929, the Commission expressed concern that Canadian private commercial broadcasters were not interested in serving underpopulated sections of the country and were broadcasting mainly American programs. It declared that broadcasting should be considered the national interest by reflecting Canadian ideals and culture, by promoting national unity, and by educating in the broadest sense of the word. Finally, the Aird Commission recommended that in order to meet these goals, all broadcasting be nationalized as a publicly owned corporation independent of government.

Despite widespread support for this recommendation, two lobbies argued against nationalization: the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) and the Canadian Radio League. The CAB, a group of private station owners, supported the status quo, and especially their “right” to affiliate with American networks. The NRL, a group of Canadian businessmen, offered its own proposal in which envisaged a network of high-power, publicly owned stations and affiliated privately owned community stationsition. The latter, as the CRL saw it, were to be subsidized by receiving the public stations’ subsidies for the public stations in its service.

In the midst of these varied proposals and interests, Parliament passed the first Broadcasting Act in May of 1932. It established the publicly owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), which would become the CBC, and gave it two major functions: to regulate and control all broadcasting in Canada and to itself engage in broadcasting. The CBC was to be funded entirely by Parliament through licenses and it could purchase existing private stations as well as construct new public ones.

Superficially, the broadcasting system established in 1932 seems like the nation-wide radial network of the Canadian Radio League. In fact, by giving the CBC the powers to both broadcast and regulate all broadcasting in Canada, Parliament made the CBC a public broadcaster controlling for the whole system. The CBC, with its public-service goals, was to set the boundaries within which the private-sector broadcasters would operate. The private stations were permitted to exist only as very small, circumscribed adjuncts within the national system, and their purely financial incentives were to be well-bounded and structurally overridden by the powers and goals of the public-sector CBC.

In order to picture the 1932 broadcasting structure created by the Act, think of a big circle (the CBC) containing within its boundaries all the networks and structures created by the Act, for the National Broadcasting System to have any status except that of the basic network. But by the mid-1940s, it was clear that the CBC was to regulate and control the national broadcasting system, Parliament simultaneously refused to grant enough funding for the CBC to actually exercise those powers. Thus, the CBC itself, almost from its inception, struck a self-destructive note in its relationship with the private-sector stations.

For example, the CBC's nation-wide broadcasting system consisted of a basic network and a supplementary network. In the 1930s, the basic network was composed of six publicly owned stations and 12 privately owned stations. The supplementary network consisted of 20 private stations. All of these stations received free of charge, three hours of CBC-produced non-commercial programming each evening. This was clearly a boon to the private stations because, at no cost to themselves, they were assured of filling a substantial portion of their time. Although only the stations in the basic network were required to air the programming, most of the supplementary network's private broadcasters usually did too. Accordingly, the CBC's programming was consistently good and highly popular.

Nevertheless, the CBC decided to pay the 12 private stations in its basic network for broadcasting this free programming: an absurd decision in any case. The decision was non-contradictory to its goals. Both the theoretically and practically, this single system contained a structure and goals that explicitly coincided.

In practice, however, Parliament did not recognize what it had created. From its inception, the CBC was not adequately funded to exercise the structural powers it had been granted. For example, when the CBC set up its own broadcasting system in June 1933, there were six publicly owned and operated stations, and 32 private stations, in the network. By 1936, when the CBC became the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, only two publicly owned stations had been added, while the private sector had grown to 75 stations. Had Parliament been serious about the structure of the Canadian Broadcasting System, it would have ensured that public station expansion at least kept pace with the private sector. And according to the spirit of the Act, funding should have allowed the CBC to gradually buy up private stations as it expanded.

Instead, Parliament did not honour the spirit of the Act or its stated terms. Rather, the private-sector stations were allowed to blossom across the country as the means for distributing the CBC's network programming. At the time, this was not deemed problematic. Indeed, this form of distribution was probably seen as the most practical and effective means of broadcasting as an industry, or that they have any status except as part of the national broadcasting system, is inadmissible...The only status of private broadcasters is as part of the national broadcasting system. They have no right to broadcast or any property rights in broadcasting.

Shortly thereafter, however, the bright prospects for the new medium of television gave fresh impetus to private broadcasting. In the 1949 Massey Commission, an appointed governmental group, ignored the pronouncements of the 1949 Massey Commission. Reappointed to consider the role for television in Canada, the Massey Commission of 1951 concluded, in part, that the CBC retain all regulatory and broadcasting powers, that private stations be licensed only after the CBC had established a national service, and that all private stations be required to serve as outlets for that programming.

The government of the day seemed to feel a special urgency about television. In December 1952, after only two years of actual television service (Montreal and Toronto), the government announced: “Now that television has started, it should be extended as widely and quickly as possible to other areas. Nevertheless, however, the case for specific political roots at the time, can be partially accounted for by the technologically biased mentality characteristic of modernity. In particular, colonized countries seem to feel that amassing the latest hardware peddled by the United States, they will thereby gain entry to First World status.
The tragic flaw, however, is that there is always a significant lag between hardware implementation and indigenous software production. The rush to get the technology in place creates a vacuum: the technology is there, but there is nothing to put on it. This is the situation that the U.S. entertainment industry depends on, with its glut of software, programming, movies that almost immediately flow into any available space. A country has to protect that interval, that lag between hardware and software, to keep its screens its own. Quite literally, a country has to keep the technology (in this case, TV) turned off until its own software production has geared up fully and can fill the available air-time, which also must be managed according to the availability of indigenous product. These factors are crucial during the start-up period for a new technology, but the overriding impulse is to simply get the technology in place as quickly as possible. This is what happened in the early 1950s as the Canadian government rushed to extend television “as widely and quickly as possible to other areas,” after putting in place only two public CBC stations. The technology-fetish overshadowed other concerns.

Parliament provided funding for only four more publicly owned TV stations, and the government announced that the private sector could apply for licenses in all other areas of the country. This was essentially a repetition of the radio situation of the mid-1940s. By ignoring its broadcasting history, the country was doomed to repeat it. Was the CBC to control the broadcasting structure as created by the Broadcasting Act of 1932? The government seemed to be saying: yes and no.

Were the private stations permitted to exist only as a result of the CBC’s national TV service? Again, the government was ambiguous.

To make matters worse, it was decided in 1953 that TV and radio broadcasting should be financed by advertising revenues and an excise tax of 15 per cent on receiver sets and parts. Given the national public-service goals for broadcasting and the structure of Canada’s single system, this form of financing was the least appropriate that could have been chosen. Moreover, revenues from the excise tax were to quickly dry up once the TV set buying spree was over.

With the government acting in such confusion and ignoring the implications of its own decisions, the CABC lobby began to push more forcefully. Pressures for a separate regulatory body—a change in structure that would benefit the private sector—came to a head with the appointment in 1955 of the Royal Commission on Broadcasting.

Once again a Royal Commission, reporting in 1957, reiterated the position that all Canadian broadcasters constitute a single system in which “the private broadcasters are a complementary but necessary part and over which the Corporation (CBC) through the Board of Governors has full jurisdiction and control.” The Commission concluded that “free enterprise has failed to do as much as it could in original program production and the development of Canadian talent, not because of a lack of freedom, but because of a lack of enterprise.”

Nonetheless, the Commission recommended one important change: the creation of a second public agency responsible to Parliament. This agency would regulate all broadcasting, including the direction of policy and supervision of the CBC’s operations. The recommendation was a significant step toward the creation of a fully separate regulatory body. Under the Diefenbaker government, it became the full structural shift for which the private sector had been pressing.

Early in the 1958 election campaign, private broadcasters found a sympathetic ear in the person of Tory leader John Diefenbaker, who was fully in favour of private-sector gains. In a campaign speech at Kenora, Ontario, Diefenbaker stated (reported by The Globe & Mail, March 19, 1958) that “the time was long overdue to assure private stations competing with the public broadcasting system that they would be judged (for their performance) by an independent body as the need arose. They should not be judged by those who are in competition with them...” The statements reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of the broadcasting structure, and, not surprisingly, under Diefenbaker, the CBC’s long tradition of broadcasting and the Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1952-1968, political scientist Frank Peers described the significance of the new Act. Although nowhere clearly stated, the implication of the new bill in 1958 was that the publicly owned CBC should have considerably reduced stature, and that the private broadcasters should have a status approaching that of the CBC. A new regulatory agency would be set up and, for the purpose of its regulations, the CBC and private stations would be equally subordinate to it... Since the new bill contained more explicit provisions for the authorization and regulation of net-
TVOntario: a counter-strategy

by Bernard Ostry

I have good news and bad news for you. Since most of us seem to like happy endings, I am going to give you the bad news first. Here, then, is the bad news. Throughout the technically advanced democracies of the west, public investment for social goods, is being raised from those levies which are currently being used ... to raise funds from levies which are currently being used for public broadcasting. Like most forms of public broadcasting, it has been attacked for too long, that anyone who watched TV in the U.S. knew how awful it was not to have a single channel uninterrupted by commercials. The British were good, but they could not keep pace with the American 79.8 percent of U.S. households, the average viewer watches public TV in the month of March, 1985. Total income for public TV in California last year was nearly eight hundred million dollars. Despite this wide public support and acceptance, Washington proposes to reduce the cost of doing business as much as possible, rather than reducing services. That is the attitude of the board. It is also management has tried to achieve and which it has in fact achieved with some success.

The CBC has now reached a point where it is utterly impossible to reduce expenditures to balance our budget without reducing services, including program services. It must be conceded that it is only understandable that every group, every area of the country, every constituency of the Corporation should say that they should not be affected. This is particularly understandable on the part of those who may be losing their livelihood. There comes a point, however, where if one group is not affected then another group or area has to endure more pain. On the other hand it is entirely unreasonable to suggest that more than $150 million could be found in the course of 18 months, in a corporation of the size of the CBC, only by reducing overhead expenditures.

But, in fact, CBC management ranks were cut disproportionately, 50 per cent more deeply, on a per capita basis, than other categories.

In spite of recent reductions, the CBC has made remarkable progress in the employment of women. In the senior management category, the participation doubled from the year 1980 to 1985 (from 3.1 per cent to 10.2 per cent). In the executive group, there was a fivefold increase during the same period. Five of 15 positions at the vice-president level are now filled by women.

We are also pleased by the fact that the government has appointed more women to our board. We now have five women and seven men.

To conclude, I would like to assure you that the board and the staff of the CBC remain totally dedicated to the task given to them by Parliament of providing a public broadcasting service to Canadians. They are very conscious of the fact that the CBC must indeed be a service to the public, not a self-serving institution.

In the course of the year we have been asked by the Minister of Communications to consider broadcasting legislation with only one dissenting vote in 1968. It is also an honourable tradition of hospitality on the part of our colleagues in the U.S. to welcome the private sector, but the proportion of foreign programming on the networks or in the course of 18 months, in a corporation of the size of the CBC, only by reducing overhead expenditures.

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Television is the new state religion run by a private Ministry of Culture... financed by a hidden form of taxation without representation.

(Keith Gernher)

Phase out federal funding for PBS. Of the $214 million authorized for the Corporation of Public Broadcasting in 1988, U.S. President Ronald Reagan has called for a $44 million cut. Again, the $238 million authorized for 1989 is to be slashed to $130 million. At first glance this desertion of public broadcasting by the federal government might not seem vitally important. But the federal money is catalytic to the enterprise. It is primarily money that lev­ers down the cost of programming and education. It stimulates matching grants from state governments. True, the largest contrib­utors are state governments, with 21.7 per cent of the budget. But federal parsimony must be seen as one more whiff of the wind. The doctrine that the busi­ness of America is business has never been stronger: to the indoc­trinated eye, public broadcasting looks like an ano­mal­y, a symptom of creeping socialism.

In Britain, where for years socialism has been under no constraint to cre­ep, since it is able to sit on the front benches of government, public broad­casting is sharing in the general opprob­rium of all government enterprise except military ones. The Peacock Com­mittee was established in March 1985 by the Conservative Home Secretary to predict the effects of introducing adver­tising or sponsorship in BBC program­ming. It is to report by the end of this year. As you know, British public broad­casting is funded by the sale of licences. There have been six increases in licence fees over the past ten years; given the rate of inflation the current licence fee is no higher than it was in 1968 and the British Government re­fuses to permit the higher fee level re­commended by the BBC. According to one commentator, “The advent of new technology has further complicated matters because it has intoxicated some political imaginations into believing that some of the terrestrial industrial problems can be resolved in the sky.”

It is not my function to discuss the merits of Thatcherite economics, except to notice that like all doctrinaire positions it abhors anomalies and exceptions. The arrival of new communications technolo­gy coincides with a decline in the BBC’s share of audiences from 51 per cent in 1980 to 48 per cent in 1985.

It can hardly be denied that competi­tion between the BBC and ITA, Britain’s commercial network, has resulted in an uncom­monly high standard of program­ming, admired by other English-speaking countries. Because of standards set by the BBC, private or commercial broad­casting in Britain often reaches levels of excellence that are unmatched in U.S. broadcasting. And since viewers have always had a choice be­tween a channel with commercials and a channel without them, advertisers have had to mind their manners in a way that has no parallel on our side of the Atlantic. I find myself in agreement with the British TV commen­ter, Christopher Dunkley, who has said, “The idea of going a little bit commer­cial is rather like the idea of getting a lit­tle bit pregnant. Once the principle of a non-commercial public service broad­casting system has been breached, no later government would be able to re­sist extending the process.” Dunkley goes on to quote the media director of a lead­ing advertising agency to the ef­fect that there is simply not enough ad­vertising money to fund all U.K. broad­casting. Dunkley’s conclusion is that the introduction of commercials in BBC program­ming carries a real danger of wrecking the whole broad­casting sys­tem of Britain.

Similar trends away from public broad­casting may be seen in continen­tal Europe as cables are installed and satellite technology, distributing com­mercially sponsored television of U.S. ob­sessions.

THE CASE OF CANADA

When we turn our scrutiny on public broad­casting in our own country, we find our national institu­tion, the long-established CBC, in danger of deterioration and possible col­lapse. CBC is unable to carry out its man­date. Whether this is because the man­date is unrealistic or because govern­ments have sabotaged it is at issue. The study teams that have reported to former deputy prime minis­ter Erik Neilsen have recom­mended that the CBC be given a new mandate to do, by and large, what the private sector cannot do. Neilsen’s recommend­ation is toward putting public broadcasting in the back­ground, reserving the main action for the private sector. Under this arrange­ment the commercial broadcasters would compete with each other. Public broadcasting could present no effective competi­tion. Even the private broadcasts­ers in Canada do not go that far.

Make no mistake, if the CBC is al­lowed to die, the whole system of pub­lic broadcasting, the principle itself, is fatally compromised. Already a number of talented broadcasts­ers and performers have been turned away, have lost the Muse in silence, as the poet once sang, and for want of speaking have lost the power of speech. Once overthrown, the principle of pub­lic broadcasting will be hard to restore.

The notion that there can be programs designed for viewers and learners, that there can be broadcasting without commercial distortions, programs without sales pitches and propaganda, will be lost.

And now let me tell you the good news. After all that bad news and I have hardly begun to speak of it — after the bad news comes the good. I drop the mask of Cassandra and become the messenger of spring, of life. I am not the Alvin Toffler at TVOntario, the principle of broadcasting for viewers and learners is alive and well.

What are we doing at TVOntario and why are we doing it? Where do we find our place in the contexts of education and broadcasting? I shall say something about the thinking behind what we do; and I shall tell you a little about our serv­ices to learners both in the formal school system and out of it. I hope to convince you that this enterprise in public broadcasting must be allowed to survive and develop.

A word about our place in the general picture of public education. As Ran Ide said on retiring as chairman and chief executive officer of TVO, “Learning is a holistic process and I am both a public right and a public good.” Few of us can have any quarrel with that. Education, however, is said to be a point of contention between those who believe that education should be subject-centred and those who believe it should be student-centred. These two points of view have been categorized respectively as tradi­tional and progressive. I am not sure that such labels are appropriate or that there is a necessary contradiction be­tween the extremes.

As an educational medium, television is specially useful in demonstration. It is better at showing than telling. I think of Lord Clark’s Civilization, essentially a series of lectures in which the teacher could point to the things he is talking about; or Yehudi Menuhin’s series Music of Man on music, which was one of our coproductions, where all the arts are fused in the demonstration. It is not to speak of social sciences such as an­thropology, history, even acoustics.

There is nothing outrageously new, either, in exploiting the power of fic­tion called drama in television, to prop­agate values by bringing them forth in stories and entertainment. Nor in rec­ognizing that knowledge may also be imparted in this way. The fact that lies imparted in this way might not seem vitally important. But television and broadcasting looks very much like a state religion run by a private Ministry of Culture... financed by a hidden form of taxation without representation.

BROADCASTING AND EDUCATION

This is the point where we find our­selves. Television, this powerful medium which has become a cen­tral influence in our children’s lives, is being enhanced and enriched in classroom and home materials. Over the past four years TVOntario has become an important facility in educational research through careful investigation of the methods of teaching. Reliance on research and test­ing while planning programs is what makes our product uniquely useful to learners. TVOntario’s programs and accompanying learning materials are used in more than 90 per cent of our schools, elementary and secondary. We have become the second or third largest net­work in world, depending on how you calculate size! Our products are purchased and used throughout the nation.

Around the world, our programs are viewed in the U.S. and in more than 40 other countries and six other languages. TVOntario is the largest producer/distrib­utor in the U.S. instructional television market. It dominates that particular market.

TVO’s involvement in international co-productions such as The Final Chapter, Alvin Toffler’s 3rd Wave, The Miracle Planet, The Leading Edge and the new science consortium called Science View — which includes West Germany, NHK, Sweden, France, Italy, Britain and the U.S. — has given TVO the reputation of being a signifi­cant broadcaster respected beyond our borders. It is fair to say that TVO has be­come a cultural symbol, standing for what is excellent and distinctive in our country.

Our success in finding and serving audiences has brought with it the danger of expanding expectations. We do not have the funds to do everything that is expected of us.

Business and the public at large have responded generously to our appeals for funds; governments have been sup­portive. Our efforts to earn revenue by selling our productions have been also encouraging.

(Cont. on p. 36)
Regulating the sellout of Canadian TV

by Herschel Hardin

Canadian TV has sold out in that the old ideas of an independent Canadian television culture have been sold down the drain. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) may be doing damage that catches the eye these days, but over the years it always has – except in those periods when, for some reason or another, it decided that Canadians couldn’t do drama, or others decided that it couldn’t. But the sense of Canadian television one gets from CBC is that it’s so commercialized now – the schedule doesn’t have that feeling of a difference, an integrity it used to have. The proliferation of new channels are largely American and that’s really what, in my own activism, I was always concerned with.

It’s ridiculous in this day and age that our national broadcasting organization has only one channel in each language, except for the parliamentary channel. It’s ridiculous that provincial broadcasting only exists on any scale in three of four provinces, and a lot of it is instructional programming. That’s all right, but the fact is a whole dimension of Canadian television isn’t fully-bodied. We don’t have a federal network that has maybe two or three channels and the provincial broadcasting organizations. So relative to what could be, relative to the idea of Canadian broadcasting as something separate, part of a whole, reflecting the community and allowing Canadians to express themselves as individuals, as artists, or citizens who are involved in citizens’ affairs, that when Canada was weaned itself from the British Empire, it was supposed to do and an outcry on the part of interested citizenry – then in adulthood and maturity and finally in the ’30s and ’40s – the concept that had been written in the ’50s about the American scene, yet it was, detail for detail, a description of the CRTC and how, almost without doing anything to the industry it was supposed to regulate. The frustrating part was that some of us who were fighting specific issues and taking on the CRTC realised this a long time ago but nobody else seemed to be paying attention. A regulatory agency is created by a sense of reform. After the Board of Broadcast Governors, we were going to have the CRTC. And it was intellectual and jargonistic, incoherent and artistic: there was Harry Boyle, Jacques Hebert, and Northrop Frye, distinguished people. This was a different kind of an achievement.

The stage after that was really a housekeeping stage, where they put the administrative house in order. There was a tremendous flurry of activity, lots of problems of ideology, of power and money. But where real changes are not made, the appearance of energy may give the impression that changes are being made. We had the implementation of the 1971 Communications Act, which was an important step, but it wasn’t the CRTC’s doing but was just the administrative carrying-out of an Order in Council. Then the CRTC developed its own incoherence and disguise, and through the appearance of energy, real changes were being made.

One really can’t look at the Canadian television scene without looking at the historical and political scene for the country as a whole. I think that’s one of the mistakes people make who are concerned with television questions and film industry questions. They look at their industry alone, instead of looking at the whole political economy and the ideological backdrop. The difference between the days of the Aird Commission and our situation now is that Aird occurred at a time when Canada was going through a very independent phase. It wasn’t part of the American Empire yet, and it had more or less weaned itself from the British Empire, although R.B. Bennett and others still had traditional, British Empire conservative ideas. In terms of real power in society, economic power and so on, Canada was between two empires. Also because of the circumstances of the Depression, there was a very progressive mood in Western Canada, and that mood met with a Red Tory mood in Ontario and a traditional mood in Quebec. The notion of Canadians not just needing, but being capable of having a broadcast system truly of their own was very much a whole.

In the postwar period that kind of backpedal has been coming apart. I think we’ve arrived now, with the free-trade discussions and the intensification of non-national materialism, at a point where the assumptions, the language and the rhetoric which existed in the ’30s and continued to carry on through the Massey Commission and beyond to the CRTC, the first chairman of the CRTC, and Harry Boyle, the vice-chairman, have really begun to fade. It’s almost a whimper now – so much so that we’re only going to really develop an independent broadcasting system if we look at who controls our economy, what the objectives of the economy are, what the objectives of society are and how, more and more, our social objectives and cultural objectives are being amputated by a very crude materialism based on dogmatic notions of trade and production.

Ironically people are now talking about the value of culture who never mentioned the word “culture” before. Even those who dismissed it before, or like Simon Reisman appear to have dismissed it, are being forced to acknowledge that at least there’s a feeling for our cultural objectives and the need to keep an eye on them, or at least to pay lip service to protect them. But I don’t think that that’s going to go very far unless there is a much wider sense of what needs to be protected overall.

The structures of power

What I and others discovered in the 1970s was that other structures – private financing structures – just weren’t appropriate and this conflicted with certain ideological assumptions about the need for a private sector and doing things through the private sector of the economy. We already had a private sector in television – American broadcasting – which came over into Canada and was part of our own television system. If there was to be any, even remote, balance, then we had to focus on ways and means of increasing publicly-underwritten channels and that’s still the case today. In fact, the supposed rise of private-sector film activity and production of films for television is really publicly underwritten except that the final decisions are in the hands of very few companies.

What became clear was that while people like Juneau, Boyle and the Ministers of Communication used the official language and private operators in broadcasting and cable also used the official language, they refused to deal with the real structural change that was needed and how television should be financed. And for obvious reasons – they didn’t feel the ideological freedom to do so. The result was that all the Canadian content debates were phony debates, all these official debates that one heard at CRTC hearings and at conferences were phony. They didn’t deal with what really counted and that’s still something particular today: that there’s still the assumption that things should be done through private-sector devices.

Understanding the CRTC

The CRTC accommodated itself to those who represented a certain stability, a certain solidarity, a certain financial permanence because those kinds of organizations seem to be safer to give assistance to. There were exceptions: they gave a license to CITY-TV in Toronto, for example, but ultimately even Moses Znaimer and CITY-TV had to sell out to CHUM, a larger organization. The CRTC didn’t grapple with the real questions. One of the most interesting episodes, and one of the most telling ones, was the case of the cooperative cable movement in Saskatchewan which not only consisted of very well-organized local cooperative organizations, particularly the Saskatoon Cable Cooperative which had the support of most of their community, but also consisted of a very, very practical, stable, working group that the Credit Union Movement in Saskatchewan, which was underwriting the cooperative plans, plus the Cooperative Guarantee Act of the Saskatchewan government, which gave a government guarantee for the financing and, on top of that, had active political support. Well, you put all those together and still the CRTC and the federal government shot it down, and you see all that togetherness, all that organization, all one’s homework done well-prepared – what the CRTC always said you have to have the support of your community, the proper financial backing – when you see that shot down, you say to yourself: ‘What’s the use of doing it again?’

And at Princeton, Marver Bernstein has studied the evolution of regulatory agencies, and elaborated the life-process of a regulatory agency: its gestation in a period of reform – disenchantment that the previous arrangement was not doing what it was supposed to do and an outcry on the part of interested citizenry— then into adulthood and maturity and finally in the 1970s where the assumptions, the language and private operators in broadcasting and cable also used the official language, they refused to deal with the real structural change that was needed and how television should be financed. And for obvious reasons, they didn’t feel the ideological freedom to do so. The result was that all the Canadian content debates were phony debates, all these official debates that one heard at CRTC hearings and at conferences were phony. They didn’t deal with what really counted and that’s still something particular today: that there’s still the assumption that things should be done through private-sector devices.

One of the most important ironies is that the CBC, for all its faults, has more or less tried to do what its mandate called for, yet instead of elaborating a model, both in terms of a more diverse CBC, extra channels and new kinds of publicly-owned television at the provincial level, it’s been frozen. That’s just part of a general ideological curve in the country. So, again, the real possibilities for Canadian television are being shut down by a much larger debate.

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The idea of Canadian broadcasting as something separate, dynamic, reflecting the community and allowing Canadians to express themselves as individuals, as artists or citizens, just isn’t there.

powerful), and the companies that are being regulated. There comes to be an identification of interest.

This was actually apparent from the CRTC’s very early days. They took the position that to have Canadian broadcasting, you’ve got to make sure that Canadian television operators continue to exist. You can’t destroy them because that would be destroying our own objectives. The trouble with that was that it meant maintaining in place inappropriate kinds of licensees, particularly for English-speaking Canada. But you had another kind of objective: The more we identified and focused on those issues and began to raise them directly with the CRTC, the more evasive the answers were. The question of media concentration, that was one thing. But if a clear issue was put to the commissioners, like the question of media concentration, and they evaded it, then they just were not doing what they should be doing as a public agency. And, of course, the big question was the fact that they did not allow for competitive applications from licensees. Not only would they not do that, they wouldn’t even deal with the issue nor give reasons why they were not allowing competitive hearings. So, at that stage, the question of television became secondary. What became primary were questions of public administration, democracy and agency integrity.

What was happening in television was simply an expression of what’s happening in the government as a whole. The idea of an intelligent and wise public service grew up with the federal public service in the 1930s and the creation of a Canadian Department of External Affairs. Now it may be a myth that that civil service was noble, bright and innovative and that they took unto themselves the best principles of public administration. Nevertheless it was a myth that I, as a student of political science, grew up with that Canadian federal civil service at the policy-making level was something to be admired. What happened to the CRTC, I think, is a reflection of what’s happening. There is the realisation that the nationalist political stream in western Canada, and western Canada has many political streams, the nationalist political stream in Saskatchewan and B.C. has been very strong, much more nationalist than in Ontario. One immediately began to think of more decentralized ways of doing things, because there was absolutely no way you were going to get any honest decisions from the central administration. So while still fighting these battles with the CRTC, we took an interest in more decentralized structures – one of them was subscriber ownership of cable. There are at least a few subscriber-owned cable systems in the west of a fair size – Regina, West Alford, the original one at Campbell River on Vancouver Island. And then there’s also provincial television. The more diverse structures you have, the freer the system is as a whole. But in the ’70s, there was a tremendous paranoia about provincially underwritten television.

Here things have changed and that’s one of the good things that has been happening. There is the realisation that decentralized activity is a good thing and isn’t a threat to Canadian television. On the contrary, it opens the door to more energy, more diversity and more substance for Canadian television. The problem has been that particularly in

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TELEVISION: The Conservative Wave
by David Graham

I'll kick off on the right foot by quoting Spiro Agnew. Agnew, at a famous speech in Des Moines, Iowa, spoke of a tiny elite of privileged men elected by no one, enjoying a monopoly licensed by government. Agnew got massive support from public correspondents, the letters in his mailbox running four to one. And in spite of a survey to the contrary by Columbia Law School, it is pretty obvious that the American public supported him. The fact that they did is rather important and we shouldn't allow his reputation or the subsequent argument to deflect us from an important truth.

Broadcasting now believes this to be the case.

Controversial or seamy broadcasting in highly centralized systems is an embarrassment. It forces upon those systems degrees of political supervision and the necessity of cultural conformity which are not desirable. It prevents those systems from achieving the freedoms appropriate to communications in an advanced liberal society.

Now it may surprise Canadian audiences that the BBC is not supervised. In fact, broadcasting is not free or that it falls under state supervision. You won't have heard that very often before because not very many people have been willing to say it.

Our television system is heavily supervised. It is supervised directly from a law that says, for instance, political television must impart due impartiality in matters of public policy. And the supervision of that law is handed over to a public authority — in the case of the independent sector called the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), and it is managed inside the house by the BBC. But the two systems are closely similar as any observer knows. Now this law is meaningless in the sense that it may have been drafted at a time when people thought opinion or the handling of opinion could be done in an unbiased or objective way.

No intelligent competitor in broadcasting now believes this to be the case.

What is the BBC's real achievement from the perspective of a North American audience? I wonder whether it adds up to much more than, for instance, the BBC as the main exporter of costume drama to the Western continent. The BBC has a reputation that is culturally impeccable but in many respects the culture that it advances is the product of a rearguard because the BBC has its origins deep in a fear of the popular franchise. Its cultural history begins with Matthew Arnold and Walter Bagehot and their anxieties about what democracy would do to the culture of the British nation and its politics. They advanced the theory that if you gave the masses the benefit of the best of human thought, you would actually get over the divisive between government by an intelligentsia representing a minority, and government by bodies representing a mass electorate.

This fear and anxiety was still very much there when the BBC was founded, and it is written into its constitution, and it's stayed there. So today what the BBC represents culturally is the cultural priorities of a middle class, a middle class for whom the parameters of the bourgeoisie of the nineteenth-century have been turned into a kind of official art. It hasn't been nearly so good at developing forms of popular culture or developing itself as a democratic medium. Now one would have thought, and I think it's a reasonable supposition, that if the major political development of the twentieth century is the extension of the franchise to the massive population in western democracies, then the cultural development should be the development of important cultural explorations of issues that ordinary people are keen on. I don't think the BBC has done this.

When I was sitting at home on Friday night writing notes for this talk and watching Channel 4, I knew that I was going to keep going on but I knew that I was going to have to stop for Cheers. And I asked myself why is it that those programs have a kind of resilient joyfulness that you don't get much of in British television? All I can say is that it reminds me of the time when I went to graduate school in Bloomington, Indiana, and sat across the table in graduate residence center from people whom I could not identify. I just couldn't tell whether they were the sons and daughters of taxi drivers from New York or bankers from Minnesota. There is a democratic quality and an enjoyment of the egalitarian opportunities of American life that is actually within British popular culture.

Now I would ask you to accept two qualifications — I and it's a theory that at the best culture of all times has only been identified by a minority and has never been enjoyed by a mass population and has always needed subsidy - this theory is absolute rubbish. If you look carefully back, you will find that most of the great works have been enjoyed by the population and most of them got away without public subsidy. Guiseppe Verdi had as many people at his funeral as Elvis Presley did.

But there are two qualifications; one, not everything that is good is recognized. So your Hawthornes and your Emily Dickinsons achieve posthumous greatness and thank goodness they went on and did their work without an audience. And also a lot of what is enjoyed is not very good either, there's a lot of rubbish about.

Now I think one of the good things public service broadcasting does is ensure a stream of adequate quality. It doesn't take risks with the good and the bad on the scale that a less regulated system would. Now I think these are important points and I think they are points that we should bear in mind as we try and work out where the future might go for Britain. There is a sense that we have reached the moment in Britain where we can actually think radically about broadcasting. This moment may not have been arrived at in other countries. But it does seem to have been reached where I come from. We are attempting to reach a policy for the future.

Now there is a lot wrong with the American system — it is pretty obvious that the First Amendment rights claimed by American broadcasters as a carte blanche to publish what they want should have been modified by some common carrier obligations. It is pretty clear that the drive by American public broadcasters in the early days of the medium to aggregate a mass audience has homogenized the output in ways that has found difficult to leave behind. It's also pretty clear that there is a massive concentration of power at the sources of program production and that is undesirable to all recognize systems. We should therefore try and achieve the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of the best systems around.

So what my policy for broadcasting will be — I say is, first of all, that we are in an age when we no longer face the scarcity of resources in the airwaves and we do not face a scarcity in the ability to achieve in terms of production, means of communication are there and the tools are within reach of many more people than when broadcasting was first designed. So the appropriate policy in the face of this reality seems first of all to accept what our economies have proved; that we are in an age someone from the BBC has called the third age of broadcasting, where innovation is important, where that demonstrated that the best way to achieve innovation is to give lots of individuals the chance to experiment with the future.

The U.S. is not supervised and I think that creates new jobs in a period of recession. That is an illustration of this. But the vast majority of them came from new companies and the one that is created in the microcomputer sector illustrates the advantages of that approach. There is no known reason why we shouldn't adopt that approach to communications policy. It has the further advantage that it removes the embarrassment of excessive power by structuring diversity into the system and therefore removes the case for political supervision and control.

I think, therefore, our policy should take advantage of this reality, should stimulate competition because competition provides choice; by reducing the cost of production and achieving efficiencies at the point of production. Now whenever you say that to the large public sector companies in Britain or to the ITV companies, they fall back in dismay and say they will all go bankrupt. There is an argument to be had about the prospect of raising money by advertising channels; I think policy ought to concentrate on that point.

Now what would you do to implement that policy? How would you implement a policy that actually stimulates the maximum diversity of production? I think involves time where we have seen weakness of the best systems around. And you cannot possibly pretend that a public airwave that can only be used by some people, not everybody who talks about deregulation does not have to be apportioned therefore a degree of regulation is necessary.

It is nonsense to pretend that everyone who talks about deregulation is in favour of a system of bazaar where everyone tries to use the airwaves in their own way. That is not the case and it falsifies the argument if it is advanced in that way.
It is equally a fallacy to pretend that everyone who is in favour of markets is in favour of absolutely free markets; there is no such thing as a free market, every market exists within a situation that is a product of previous political decisions and every market exists within political priorities, attitudes and imperatives defined by the society within which it functions. The market is therefore an environment in which people try and satisfy demand and change what they have got to offer with other people.

So what would I do with British television? Here are some suggestions and probably quite naive and I expect they can be quite facile and they're probably quite facile and probably quite naive and I expect they can be shot to ribbons. But what you might do is that program or vision? Here are some suggestions and probably quite naive and I expect they can be quite facile and they're probably quite facile and probably quite naive and I expect they can be shot to ribbons. But what you might do is to stop anyone program going to operate unfettered because in some areas of innovation it is natural that economies of scale are quickly taken advantage of. Now that might be appropriate in the making of cars or the making of garden tools; it's not appropriate in the business of television. So you would take fairly tough, fairly stringent measures to stop that happening.

We also have to accept that the market is deficient, there's still no way you can exchange your material with somebody else. Going the route of the mass audience channel is at the moment. It's a splendid notion and it serves the purposes of setting the standard if those who make decisions about the system think that it is at all necessary.

If there is room for a fifth channel in Britain, and I think there probably is, I would give that to Thames or City Television because our regional companies really don't do a local job.

Furthermore we wouldn't feel it was possible to go ahead properly in this way unless the rules that apply to the broadcaster are firmly written into legislation. And that means the job of the regulatory authorities is largely removed, because if you are written into legislation, if rules are written into legislation, you know they've got to be legislated. So I would be in favour of a policy approach along those lines and I think that would have the advantage of ending elite regulation. It would democratise the system; it would promote more freedom of speech and I think it could be done now and I think it should be done soon.

(Speech given at the 1985 Banff Television Festival panel. "Public Television Around The World: Facing the Conservative Wave.")
The Conservative delusion

by Jeremy Isaacs

I can't match David's elegant and elaborate argument and I begin therefore with the poet Dryden: "O All, all of a piece throughout, thy chase had a beast in view, thy worlds brought nothing but lovers all untrue, 'tis well an old age is out and time to begin anew."

David Graham clad in white samite, mystic, wonderful, proclaiming the end of an era in broadcasting. Heralding a new dawn, raising a banner elegantly marked 'Freedom' and summoning us to follow. I look at him and I listen to the moderation of his counsel and the elegance of his choice of phraseology. I look at the band that he has gathered around him, individual producers who also believe in freedom who wish to contribute to the diversity of broadcasting in Britain and other societies in the world. Who want to provide varied fare, who want to encourage diversity of opinion, who want to experiment with a multiplicity of new styles and I'm terribly tempted to follow: Anybody up in broadcasting who isn't tempted to go back to the coal face and start making programs again, hadn't really ought to be in broadcasting. I look at him and his supporters, and I'm tempted but I have to decline.

When I look at the massed ranks of those in the big battalion that attend behind this knight errant on horseback and his companions, when I look at the people who really believe in this and want to introduce total deregulation in broadcasting, as ambitious a troop of mercenaries that ever held up a gravy train, I turn around and I want to go in the opposite direction.

All of us who practise broadcasting or care about it in a free society must applaud the aims that David set out. We also want the maximum choice, and satisfactions. I personally find, living in a free society, the endless appeals for funds for public broadcasting in the United States de-meaning and distressing. It ought to be possible for the richest society in the world to find a better way of strengthening the range of its television than that one.

Does the evidence exist in Australia, where a national broadcasting system fallen on hard times is struggling to sustain itself against a market that contains three powerful competitors? The situation is very similar in some ways to what's available in the United States except that they play British programs as well as American programs.

Does it exist in Italy? An interesting example where there was a dawn of freedom and everybody thought they could run their own television station in city after city. And everything went. Where we have now in Italy is a very powerful, private force which has made Italian broadcasting, in less than a decade, as opposed to the monopoly that would rise, we now have the duopoly that is RAI and Signor Berlusconi.

We have a public broadcasting system which finds it difficult enough under a compliant presidency to survive and extremely difficult under one which for ideological reasons has it in for the public broadcast ethic. And I personally find, living in a free society, the endless appeals for funds for public broadcasting in the United States de-meaning and distressing. It ought to be possible for the richest society in the world to find a better way of strengthening the range of its television than that one.

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So in the marketplace it is terribly difficult without some degree of protection, without some degree of regulation, without some degree of public intervention in the cause of publicly defended interests, to provide room for the sort of diversity that David Graham is advocating. And indeed had I been a believing member of the Adam Smith Institute, pledged to support its aims, sitting listening to David when he put his argument to them some weeks ago in London, I might have expected to find myself on my feet cheering him for 19-20ths of his speech, when all of a sudden I would have looked very hard at the platform to make sure that the speaker wasn't standing on his head, because of all of a sudden he was advocating a protected, regulated, subsidized channel in order to ensure that some variety of political opinion, some utterance that had some respect for contending opinions in a society was actually allowed to continue to exist. And having talked about total deregulation, David towards the end of his argument and indeed towards the end of his argument today, comes clean and admits he knows that the sort of programs that he makes for British television could not possibly succeed in any market-determined, publishing environment known to man.

You will find the arts on cable, you will find gardening on cable, you will find a range of consumer satisfactions on cable, you will find dirty movies on cable. What you will not find, in answer to market prerogatives, is the free discussion of issues and themes and ideas in a way in which it is possible in British broadcasting to be regulated as it is.

On Channel 4, at the end of the news every night, a citizen, whoever he or she may be, can come forward...Some-
We have tried and again - Parliament explicitly enjoined us to do this - to take our programs from a multiplicity of sources, including the excellent work which David and his company does for us. And we try, and I very much agree with a lot of what David said, we try to give voice on Channel 4 not just to professional makers of television programs but to people representing different interests in society, who work outside the conventions of the broadcasting systems. We fund such people who are basically radical dissenters and we encourage them to make their work available to us for use on Channel 4. And it causes an eruption here and there and people ask me all sorts of awkward questions about balance and impartiality, but I believe it to be a vitally important role in a democratic society which recognises the pluralism of opinion which David and his company does for people. We have tried and again - Parliament said.

What are the conditions for survival of broadcasting institutions in what is very certainly a changing environment to which we must respond if we are to survive? I think that they are three; an institution has to manage itself efficiently, manage its resources efficiently and be seen to be doing so. Such achievements are called increasingly into question and there is a public audit of how our broadcasters manage their affairs.

Secondly, any public broadcasting system that wants to survive has to be able to clearly define its aims, to say what it is doing that other broadcasters cannot or will not do. And thirdly it has - and absolutely has to have - the public support in holding its own, in fighting its own corner. It needs the support of an establishment. This is a matter of quite explicit need and the best way of achieving that is to provide in my judgement a news and current affairs service of some excellence and that isn't easy, particularly if what the news and current affairs people are trying to do runs totally counter to what any one part of the establishment wants to be said.

But basically good public information services commend themselves to people who matter. Broadcasters need, and indeed it's part of my notion of the role of public broadcasting, to satisfy particular interest groups. They can hang on to the idea that viewers are individuals with individual tastes and not just a mass audience of millions that are going to be satisfied, want to be satisfied and must be satisfied for some of the time with the sort of entertainment which American popular television and British popular television at its best has been able to provide and continues able to provide. But viewers need also to be recognised as people who are interested in computers, people who are interested in and care about music, people who care about consumer protection, people who care about all sorts of tastes that they share not necessarily with the millions that will get into Nielsen ratings, but with hundreds of thousands of other citizens who are contributing to the cost of this service. And then, lastly, if such a public broadcasting service wishes to have a large and substantial part to play in broadcasting as the BBC does and still does in the U.K., then it also has to have a mass appeal. If it only satisfies particular interest groups it will be a minority service, because that is all the public will fund it to be.

I believe that public broadcasting services which show they can satisfy those tests, can survive even in this world of proliferation which is now upon us. And I believe that the BBC, and I think that any British government will think several times, out of political necessity, (and I say any British government) before it seeks drastically to alter or to diminish a corporation which, whatever its failings, can be seen to be serving the British public as well as the BBC is today. Ninety per cent of British viewers, and that is to say 90 per cent of British voters, use the BBC services every single week.

My basic point - and here to my amusement I find myself agreeing to-
I would like to take this opportunity to explain a little about some of the basic problems now faced by NHK, Japan Broadcasting Corporation, and tell you how we are trying to cope with them. Let me tell you first of all what sort of organization NHK is.

As a general rule, state-run broadcasting organizations exist in socialist countries. At the same time, there are various types of public broadcasting organizations in democratic countries, such as those operated primarily on fees paid by the public, those run by the government and those such as the PBS in the United States, consisting of a number of local stations which conduct public broadcasting in their respective regions.

The nature of NHK differs from these public broadcasting organizations overseas, but I would say the BBC in London is the closest to us in terms of organizational structure.

NHK was established in 1925 as Asia’s first broadcasting station. In 1950, after the end of World War II, the Broadcasting Law was enacted in Japan. It was founded on three principles: maximum popularization and utilization of broadcasting, establishment of editorial neutrality and contributing to the wholesome development of democracy. Based on these, NHK as it is today, was formally inaugurated as the nation’s sole public broadcasting organization. TV broadcasting started in 1953. At present, NHK operates two TV channels, one general and the other educational, two medium-wave radio channels and one FM channel. So, altogether, we have five channels for our audience all over Japan. In addition, we have an overseas shortwave service known as “Radio Japan” which is broadcast worldwide in 21 languages.

We have about 70 stations in all parts of the country, staffed by about 16,000 personnel. Our annual budget reaches about $224 million (U.S.).

Since its establishment, NHK has always attached its greatest importance to maintaining its neutrality and securing the maximum availability and benefits of broadcasting for the public. We have always done our best to remain free from any government intervention or from influence of commercialism.

As a news-reporting organization, we maintain complete editorial independence and provide our audience with the most accurate and reliable news services at all times. In fact, our news and commentary programs, broadcast for about six hours daily, are regarded by many as the most reliable among the Japanese audience. NHK is also internationally known for its high-quality educational and entertainment programs.

It is NHK’s unique financing system which gives us a license fee collection system that has enabled us to operate this way. Our monthly license fee is about $6.10 (U.S.), which gives us an annual revenue of about 217 million dollars (U.S.). This is equivalent to 97 per cent of NHK’s total annual budget. There have recently been some households who have failed to renew or pay this fee. Still, we now have an extremely high license-fee collection rate of more than 98 per cent. We have no intention of revising the present system. As it is evident in people’s attitude toward the license-fee collection system, we note certain changes taking place in people’s view of NHK. People's sense of value has become diversified in keeping with the drastic social changes. Their demands are becoming more and more diversified and complex in this age of rapid technological advancement in the field of television broadcasting.

There is constant demand for satellite-related international news coverage as well as a need for information about foreign exchanges among the Asian Broadcasting Union (ABU) members. With these demands a great many programs have been produced. NHK now annually conducts more than 3,000 satellite relays of international news. Moreover, we plan to obtain our exclusive transponders over the Pacific and Atlantic before the end of this year. Internationalization of TV programs has also steadily progressed, with a sharper increase in demands for high quality programs produced overseas. In particular, the public now show a greater interest in sports broadcasts. Programs featuring the Olympic Games and other major international events are increasingly popular among the Japanese audience. NHK’s energetic activities in these fields have inevitably caused apprehensions among some quarters. This NHK has already experienced a tremendous growth which seems almost boundless. In fact, some have presented plans calling for the “division and privatization” of NHK as it is today is ideally functioning as a public organization with the full support of the general public. It is of vital importance that we should be able to maintain strict neutrality and continue to work for the benefit of the public, free from political influence and commercialism.

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FRANCE

Like maniac surgeons, it's now the turn of you politicians to lean over the body of that unfortunate creature, public service television.

Like the others who have preceded you into the operating theatre, you have now decided to give her a new face and, at the same time, you want to despoil her. Like your predecessors, you have gone for improvement with specialists before the operation but, in reality, their advice means nothing to you. Because the time has come for specialists - or professionals, as you like to say, everywhere. And it's enough because inventive, original television won't survive another operation.

Enough is enough because you are attempting to dispose of resources and people which are not yours to dispose of.

Enough is enough because television is not the property of politicians, it's everyone's. It belongs to everyone: to the public organizations such as NHK to undertake. At any rate, there is no doubt that NHK will continue to lead the present age of new media. There is still great potential in television broadcasting. Ambitious new projects call for huge funds. Naturally, maximum consideration must be given in executing any new undertaking. One problem that may be pointed out with regard to the management of NHK is that there is still room for improvement in efficiency and productivity. NHK is an enormous organization on a nationwide scale capable of producing almost all of its programs by itself which is a great asset. It is underused, however, that there are problems, arising from changes of the times that we now have to tackle and solve. NHK is making a complete review of its organizational structure, so it can be more effectively operated by a "smaller staff of competent personnel."

Last year, we carried out a major reorganization of our news department, consolidating our six branches into four. This year, we will abolish the present division system in program production and instead introduce a "unit system" for individual productions. Compared to private enterprises, productivity per staff member tends to be lower in public enterprises. We'll do our best to raise the productivity of our staff to the level of private enterprises without affecting their creativity. (Specifically speaking, NHK plans to reduce its personnel by over 20% in the next 5 years.)

It is essential in improving efficiency that subsidiary organizations be established and that they work in conjunction with their parent body, NHK. At NHK, we call these enterprises for joining operations "United Stations of NHK." We are planning to transfer as many talented members as possible to our subsidiary organizations in the future.

At the same time we can not rely on receiving fees alone in coping with the overwhelming number of public service functions. For its part, the CBC had acknowledged, structure frees them to work more closely with them for further development of broadcasting in Japan. It is of vital importance in this respect that we should be able to maintain strict neutrality and continue to function as an independent broadcasting organization, not as a commercial enterprise.

We should work more closely with them for further development of broadcasting in Japan. It is of vital importance in this respect that we should be able to maintain strict neutrality and continue to function as an independent broadcasting organization, not as a "single system." We must always have people's strong backings behind us.

In conclusion I would like to repeat that broadcasting should not be used as propaganda or money-making. If there is anyone in the audience who may have influence upon President Reagan, General Secretary Gorbachev or Prime Minister Thatcher, I would appreciate if you would convey this message to them.

(Speech given at the 1986 Banff Tele­ vision Festival panel, "Public Broad­ casting: Who Cares?", May 26.)

What's most important about this 1958 Act was that it tried to pretend as though nothing significant had happened to the broadcasting structure. The Broadcasting Act of 1958 bilately refers to "the continued existence and efficient operation of a national broadcasting system" - implying there was still a "single system" like the one constituted in 1932. But the new structure was more like two systems - one public and one private - with a referee for both.

Using the image of a big circle (the CBC) containing within itself a small circle (the private broadcasters), we can see how by removing some of the broadcasting powers from the CBC, the Act effectively took the small circle out of the confines of the big one, made them about equal in size, and set them both performing off from each other but a third entity as well - an independent regulatory agency. This radical change in the Canadian broadcasting structure was expected but not acknowledged by the Broadcasting Act of 1958, which continued to speak of a "single system" upholding the old national public-service goals, though the private sector might have been made fully competitive with the CBC and able to operate within the financial incentives of the marketplace. For its part, the CBC had been demoted to the status of competitor with the private sector. Nevertheless, it was still obliged to carry the lion's share of public-service responsibilities.

The demotion of the CBC was accomplished by full Parliamentary funding for all its operations. CBC carriage of public-service responsibilities might have made sense. Instead, by having to rely on advertising revenues and private affiliates, the CBC was constrained by the same financial incentives that rule the marketplace shared with the private sector, while having to perform the overwhelming number of public service functions assigned to it.

The Broadcasting Act of 1968 perpetuated the illusion by continuing to refer to a "single system" of broadcasting dedicated "to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, social and economic fabric of Canada."

Since 1958, private broadcasters (in order to get and maintain their licenses) have always made glittering promises about how they will contribute to Canadian broadcasting sovereignty. But because their real goal is financial - and since the revised, but unknown, structure frees them to...
follow this incentive — they simply import U.S. programs because that is cheaper than producing their own. For its part, the CRTC has seemed to think that by assisting and fostering the private broadcasting sector, somehow — perhaps cumulatively — that sector’s consumer appeal will increase. The Globe and Mail even got up the courage to point out that this might add up to something significant enough to prove that there is indeed a “single system.”

In fact, there is no “single system” for broadcasting in Canada, because of the dangers of maintaining an old-fashioned concept like this. There was, at least in structure and in theory, the but the 1958 Act effectively abolished it, while pretending nothing had been changed. This pretense — maintained by valiantly reiterating the old broadcasting goals (which actually did fit the old structure), while insisting on the existence of a “single system” — progressively eroded Canadian broadcasting sovereignty.

To use an analogy: the human body is a single system. Its various parts cooperate and coordinate to maintain life. Though we may speak of the nervous system, or the digestive system, or perhaps an individual function, these various functions do not compete with one another. If they do, the body dies. In broadcasting, the private sector does compete with the CBC. In the original structure of the Two World Wars, the CBC was contained, bounded, and kept in place so that its energies might contribute to the health of the whole. But the 1958 Act changed the structure and freed the private sector to be independent. Unfortunately to have acknowledged the 1958 structural change would have clearly opened up a huge can of worms. No wonder our broadcasting system is considered to be weak and ineffective (and since) have preferred to pretend nothing had changed.

The myth of the “single system” worked extremely well for the private sector — in itself, may account for the refusal to acknowledge the structural change. The private broadcasters have been fostered and pampered over the years by a regulatory agency bent on protecting and fostering the private sector. The CBC, on the other hand, has been circumscribed, well-bounded, and effectively curtailed.

The numbers alone of our public membership show the high level of acceptance and support we have earned in the provincial community: about 40,000 members in 1985-6. Our most recent BBM ratings give us 2,750,000 viewers in Ontario and Quebec — a 9 per cent increase over the period, period.

Yet there is no doubt in my mind that expectations will grow more rapidly than funding. To meet the demands on us we have already become more frugal and inventive. We shall have to become more so.

**The Best Defence**

I believe that the best protection a public educational broadcasting system can have is stout financial support by the province, together with excellence on our part in providing the services expected of us. Perhaps the most important is that we must also follow the policy of broadcasting for viewers and learners. I have no doubt at all that it is this simple but humane idea that makes it easy for audiences to distinguish what we are doing from what the others are doing.

It is an idea that will be just as valid in an era of narrowcasting and talk-back television as it is in the present time of broadcasting, when some signals fall on barren ground, others among weeds and thorns, and only a few reach alert human minds. That is why, now, we shall be programing not just for formal classes and for groups of more or less educationally-minded men and women, but for shut-ins and hard of hearing; for views and learners in far-flung places, for the lonely and the estranged as well as for the successful, and busy urbanites.

It is the aspiration of TVOntario to offer all our citizens access to knowledge and services that are otherwise available only to those who can afford the television sets. And to bring to the remotest places the friendly presence of a TV channel which has no designs on viewers but to serve them both as individual persons and as members of the Canadian nation.

To adopt every advance in technology and — in the broadest sense — in education in the service of this humane enterprise requires the continued support of a public system of broadcasting. Public broadcasting is necessary if we are to serve the educational needs of an alert, energetic and adaptable citizenry.

The good news is that, given the will, the CBC is capable of bringing public television to its full potential. We also have a new government which, with a little encouragement, could stand alone in the free world to commend public broadcasting. In no other country or jurisdiction within our group of nations can that be said. We may say that, in our province, at all events, we have shown the way.

Paradoxically the discovery that we also have the financial resources, without which the best will in the world is powerless, the talent idle and the potential of our enterprise unrealized.

(A Speech to the Association of Cultural Executives, Toronto, April, 1986.)

**Hardin (Cont. p. 29)**

In 1980, for instance, the CRTC allowed the merger of Canadian Cablevision Ltd. of Toronto and Premier Communications Ltd. of Vancouver, creating a corporate cable-TV entity three times larger than any other cable firm in Canada. To those who opposed the merger, legislation that limited the size of such a company did not exist, and works — if only the private sector can become strong enough.

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The illusionary notion of a “single system” has been continually used to justify the CRTC decisions that cater to private-sector expansion.
corporate committees being able to decide how much of $80 million should be spent on Canadian television. That's the kind of power nobody else has, not even CBC headquarters. Again, I don't like to come back to it all the time but that's a reflection of where economic, and hence political and cultural, power is. The only really offensive to a viewer trying to watch a hockey game, then they're getting to the root of the matter. And there's absolutely no reason why the breweries, to stick to that example, or why advertisers and their agencies in general, should have that power and the rest of us shouldn't have.

In some cases, legislation can be very effective. The Broadcasting Act is a positive case, but in practical terms the Act was very weak in its implementation through an agency and that's one of the great ironies. The virtue of the CRTC was it was supposed to be independent of politics. But there is very little that is specific in the Broadcasting Act -- it doesn't say anything about the percentage of Canadian content, but it does say there's never going to be a viewer trying to watch a hockey game, then they're getting to the root of the matter. And there's absolutely no reason why the breweries, to stick to that example, or why advertisers and their agencies in general, should have that power and the rest of us shouldn't have.

Another sad thing in this whole skein of events is that because of the extraordinary power given to the CRTC, new s and ideas are not required parliamentary debate and public debate. New laws of television licenses have been added without legislation, hence without affording well-reasoned and well-reasoned criticism, in the House of Commons or the critics of the opposition public party that might be interested, or even the awareness of the government of the day or the Minister of Communications, in running a broadcaster very good and that was supposed to be its virtue. It is actually its weakness.

And the power of the public over the broadcasting contract, which satisfy the notions of our, is broadcasting that the third channel of Britain should go to the CBC and it did. So in many ways this challenge could invigorate western European television, public television, in ways that hasn't been the case today. So we may see. I certainly don't see a deflection, but a determination to fight back and this time with heavy armament, with the whole panoply of ammunition, and let the other side have it -- they've had their way in the last times. And they did succeed in recouping their position so well that they were able to make the argument that the third channel of Britain should go to the CBC. They fought back, they fought back very hard with great skill and determination with a very clear idea of what they wanted. And we are going to have any defence. Now at the same time, when these kinds of challenges do happen, broadcasters get their position so well that they...
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