

# 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 blithely 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, Herschel 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

## A Cinema Canada dossier



photo: James Whale, Frankenstein, U.S.A., 1931

*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 •

CANADA

# Losing it on TV

by Joyce Nelson

Like the snow, Canada produces a perennial flurry of paper and words that attempt to deal with 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 is easy to lose sight of the structural 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 frequency, 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 kilowatts 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 serve 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 (CRL). The CAB, a group of private station owners, supported the status quo, and especially their "right" to affiliate with American networks. The CRL, a group of Canadian businessmen, offered its own proposal which envisaged a network of high-power, publicly owned stations and affiliated privately owned community stations. The latter, as the CRL saw it, were to be subsidized by receiving the public stations' programming free of charge.

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 Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC, which would become the CBC), and gave it two major functions: to regulate all broadcasting in Canada

and to itself engage in broadcasting. The CRBC was to be funded entirely by Parliamentary appropriations, and it could purchase existing private stations as well as construct new public ones.

Superficially, the broadcasting system established in 1932 seems like the "mixed system" called for by the Canadian Radio League. In fact, by giving the CBC the powers to both broadcast and regulate all broadcasting in Canada, Parliament made the public network the controlling frame 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-boundaried 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 itself a tiny circle (the private broadcasters). The CBC, as both broadcaster and regulator, would ensure that any broadcasting element contained within its boundaries contributed to the national goals outlined in the Broadcasting Act. By granting the CBC these dual powers, the Act created what was quite clearly a single system for broadcasting in that the structure was non-contradictory to its goals. Both 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 CRBC was not adequately funded to exercise the structural powers it had been granted. For example, when the CRBC set up its nation-wide radio network in June 1933, there were six publicly owned and operated stations, and 32 private stations, in the network. By 1936, when the CRBC 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 it had created, funding 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 distribution of 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 way of expanding the single system. Moreover, as the regulator of the system, the CBC would see to it that the private stations continued to exist only as circumscribed adjuncts.

Yet while it empowered the CBC to regulate and control the national broadcasting system, Parliament simultaneously refused to grant enough funding for the CBC to actually exercise those powers. This may explain why 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 distribution 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 38 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 air-time. Although only the stations in the basic network were required to air the programming, most of the supplementary network private broadcasters usually did too. Apparently, 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, but especially so in terms of the broadcasting structure. As regulator of a single system designed to meet national goals, the CBC could quite simply have required that all stations in its basic network (or even in its supplementary network as well) broadcast the programming. Instead, by paying the private stations to do so, the CBC implied that it didn't have the power to regulate, and that the private stations were somehow outside the single system. In retrospect, we can see that this decision was a disastrous one, both politically and psychologically. It also ensured that the CBC, already under-funded, would continue to be further financially bled by this ridiculous payment to the private stations.

But despite the erosions of CBC's

power, the structure and goals of the single system as constituted were non-contradictory. They did not remain that way for long.

In 1942, another Parliamentary committee reiterated that the CBC was empowered, if necessary, to take over private stations to extend national coverage. It also opposed private-sector plans to expand group ownership of private stations. But by the mid-1940s, private broadcasters were calling for "co-equal status with the CBC." They proposed to establish their own networks, compete with the CBC, and have the "right" to become affiliates of American networks. To accomplish this, the CAB began lobbying for a separate regulatory body, independent of the CBC. They were thus arguing for a fundamental change in the broadcasting structure.

The response came from the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences - the Massey Commission - which was appointed in 1949. The commission defended the single system constituted in 1932, especially its goals and the circumscribed role of the private sector. In no uncertain terms, the Commission stated:

*Broadcasting in Canada, in our view, is a public service directed and controlled in the public interest by a body responsible to Parliament. Private citizens are permitted to engage their capital and energies in this service, subject to the regulation of this body. That these citizens should enjoy adequate security or compensation for the actual monetary investment they are permitted to make, is apparent... But that they enjoy any vested right to engage in 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 civil 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 the private-sector lobby, which conveniently ignored the pronouncements of the 1949 Massey Commission. Reappointed to consider the role for television in Canada, the Massey Commission of 1951 continued to urge that the CBC retain all regulatory and broadcasting powers, that private stations be licensed only after the CBC had established a national TV 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 CBC stations had been opened (in Montreal and Toronto), the government announced: "Now that television has started, it should be extended as widely and quickly as possible to other areas." This urgency, whatever its specific political roots at the time, can partially be accounted for by the technological bandwagon mentality characteristic of modernity. In particular, colonized countries seem to feel that by 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 indigenous 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 licences in all other areas of the country. This was essentially a repetition of the radio situation of the mid-1930s. By ig-

norning 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 circumscribed to 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 CAB 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 Fowler 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 Fowler 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

Broadcasting Act of 1958 removed regulatory powers from the CBC and granted them to a separate, independent broadcasting regulatory body — the Board of Broadcast Governors (BBG), which later became the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC).

In his book *The Public Eye: Television 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-*

(Cont. on p. 35)

## As Canadian as possible under the circumstances

by Pierre Juneau

*“The CBC has now reached a point where it is utterly impossible to reduce our budget without reducing program services.”*

Last year was the CBC's most successful year ever by almost every standard of measurement. The quality and quantity of our Canadian programming, whether produced by the CBC or purchased from independent producers, were at an all-time high. So were the audiences for those programs, with record viewing levels for the delightful entertainment of *Anne of Green Gables* and impressive audiences for the demanding content of *Le Défi mondial*. Commercial revenue continued strong, administrative expenses were cut. The CBC's long tradition of service led to its being appointed host broadcaster for Expo 86 in Vancouver.

But we at the CBC also know that the official policy of the government is one of restraint. The Board of the CBC is fully aware of its responsibilities in the present circumstances and together with the management and the staff of

the corporation, it has done its best to manage the CBC as well as possible during this difficult period.

The performance of the corporation, in what has been a testing time for everybody, has been recognized by the Nielsen study group which said in its report:

*“The study team has reviewed the actions taken by CBC's management to cover these various shortfalls and thinks the general direction taken is appropriate. The funds seem to have been found by cutting or consolidating management and by efficiencies in the programming area.”*

The board of the corporation understands that it is the government and Parliament who are responsible for the fiscal policy of the country.

The responsibility of the board and the management of the CBC is to manage a difficult financial situation as well

as possible.

However, it is also the Board's obligation to advise Parliament and government of the impact of budget levels on the fulfilment of the mandate given to the CBC by Parliament — and therefore on the level of services that the Corporation can provide.

This we have done and must continue to do. If we did not we would be failing in our statutory responsibilities towards you and towards the public, our ultimate shareholders.

I should take this opportunity to say that, during this period, the staff of the CBC has continued to perform remarkably well. There are constant remarks in the press about the morale of the CBC staff. Considering the drastic staff reductions and the uncertainty we are going through, this is hardly surprising. However CBC programs on both radio and television, in English, in French, in 12 foreign languages on shortwave, in

11 native dialects for the North, have never been better. The comments we get from everywhere, including the press, support this view. So do our audiences.

I'll give only a few examples: *Anne of Green Gables* reached an audience of more than five million people on our English network; better than any imported American program in last fall's peak season. *Le Temps d'une paix* on our French TV network reached two million every week; for a similar success, an American program in the U.S. would have to reach 80 million people, considering the difference in the size of our French population. On our English radio network, *Morningside* reaches an average of one million people a week. In Montreal, a market where there are 10 AM radio stations, the CBC French AM station comes second, according to the most recent radio survey.

As for our regional stations, in the course of an average week, over five million Canadians watch our English and French regional television news programs and more than two million tune in to our English and French early morning radio programming.

I think that our staff in the region and in the networks should receive recognition for their dedication to their task and their remarkable achievements in the course of the last year.

I would like to return to the obligation of the board and myself to report on the capacity of the corporation to meet the requirements of the Parliamentary mandate and to maintain the expected level of service. Let me say first that the objectives established by

# TV Ontario: 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 the bad news first. Here, then, is the bad news. Throughout the technically advanced democracies of the west, public broadcasting, like most forms of public investment for social goods, is being criticized, more often attacked, starved for funds, threatened with extinction, sold off. This is bad news, as I take it, because public broadcasting in any country takes years to develop and bring to fruition. If it is killed off because of a surge of radicalism in search of freer markets, such as we seem to be undergoing at the moment, it may never recover, it may never be revived. The dis-

appearance of public broadcasting must be bad news, because without it audiences lose freedom of choice. Without it they no longer have any possibility of choosing between broadcasting that threatens them mainly as markets and delivers them in their own homes to advertisers and salesmen, and broadcasting that respects them mainly as viewers.

Do I have a bias in favor of public broadcasting? You'd better believe I do. When I was younger I spent a number of years with the CBC before moving to the CRTC and later on to the Department of Communications and recently I have returned to broadcasting with responsibility for TV Ontario. But this

Parliament in the Broadcasting Act are very noble and very demanding. Moreover, the demands made upon the CBC by political authorities at all levels of government and by the public are constant and very high. And they are all consistent with the Act.

My experience over 35 years of crisscrossing this country is that Canadians want the CBC. This becomes most obvious when they think that they may lose a few minutes of CBC radio or television programming on the networks or in Thunder Bay or Rimouski or Calgary. The reaction is even stronger when there is any possibility of losing a station, as we found out when we proposed to close our station in Gander.

Two weeks ago the corporation appeared before the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to argue for the retention of its AM radio service in Halifax. The Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly passed a unanimous resolution supporting the CBC's application, as did the Halifax City Council.

The Nielsen study group had this to say on the subject of the CBC's mandate and on the related issue of funding:

*"The complexity of the operation and the uncertainties of the future role of the CBC lead the study team to conclude, however, that the Government may be well advised to refrain from levying any more cuts against the operational budget of the CBC until it has had an opportunity to review and, perhaps, revise the CBC's mandate."*

I'm afraid I have to report to you that maintaining CBC services at the level prior to the budget reductions is not possible.

Obviously, the duty of management was, and still is, to try hard 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 what management has tried to achieve and what 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. I must concede 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 so-called 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 5.1 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 idea that the CBC must indeed be a service to the public, not a self-serving institution.

## THE ATTACK ON PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Let us take a look at the scene today in broadcasting. And since I have admitted bias, I invite each of you to go to the public library and check the facts for yourselves. Let us begin with the United States, our neighbor, trading partner and chief supplier of television programming. A British commentator recently remarked 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 visitor had not noticed PBS, the one channel which, until recently, was free of commercials. I shall be discussing PBS in a moment. But first we may well ask whether commercials are really such a nuisance. It's proverbial that there's no such thing as a free lunch. Well, if commercials are not a nuisance, we have to wonder how it happens that

there is a brisk, continuing market for devices that silence them. And by the way, this particular lunch is certainly not free. It may be interesting to quote George Gerbner on this question, dean of the Annenberg School of Communication. He said in a speech in New York in 1982: "Television is the new state religion run by a private Ministry of Culture (the three U.S. networks) ... financed by a form of hidden taxation without representation. You pay when you wash, not when you watch, and whether or not you care to watch..." The point is well taken. Soap springs eternal...

But to return to PBS. Anyone who has watched it recently must have noticed the amount of time spent begging - "shaking the tambourine", as Fred Friendly called it - to raise funds from its own audiences. In addition, it becomes obvious that what were once plain announcements of support from corporate contributors are edging ever closer to plugs for products. With 309 stations, PBS is the largest TV system in the world. Nearly everyone in the U.S. watches public TV. The average viewing household in the U.S. watches public television for more than ten hours a month; 78.9 per cent of U.S. households viewed public TV in the month of March, 1985. Total income for public TV in 1984 was nearly eight hundred million dollars.

Despite this wide public support and acceptance, Washington proposes to

*our country and the proportion of available Canadian programming is constantly decreasing. We do have an honorable tradition of hospitality on Canadian airwaves towards voices and views other than our own. In fact, if there are any cultural barriers in Canada, they bar Canadians more than they bar Americans. Indeed, we have more American cultural voices in Canadian broadcasting than we have Canadian voices.*

In such a context, I suggest, the importance of the role of the CBC is greater and greater. All the facts show that an overwhelming proportion of contributions to Canadian broadcasting by Canadian authors, composers, performers and artists of all kinds, is through the CBC.

Those of us who have some responsibility for Canadian broadcasting, whether in Parliament, in the CRTC, in the CBC or in private broadcasting, will be judged according to the high standards established by R.B. Bennett in 1932 or by the parliamentarians of 1968 who united to pass the Broadcasting Act or by people such as Graham Spry.

They were concerned with the "complete control of broadcasting from Canadian sources," with the "cultural, economic and political fabric of Canada," and with our own understanding of ourselves and the world.

Therefore in remembering the best moments of this last year on the CBC - and since this is the 50th anniversary of the CBC, of the last 50 years - we can be confident that the Canadian creative community can provide us with a lot more excitement, and a lot more understanding of ourselves - if we ask them.

*(Speech before the House of Commons Committee on Communications and Culture, Ottawa, May, 1986).*



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

— (George Gerbner)

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 U.S. federal government might not seem vitally important. But the federal money is catalytic to the enterprise. It is primarily money that levers deals to make major series and often 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 a straw in 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 summer 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 1983.

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 in Britain always have 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 commentator, 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 commercials and mostly U.S. products, obliterates frontiers.

#### 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, 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) Nielsen have recommended that the CBC should be given a new mandate to do, by and large, what the private sector can't or won't do. The trend 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 broadcasters 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 broadcasters and performers have been turned away, have fallen silent, 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 new life. I am here to tell you that 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 lifelong process and is 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 it 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 included in the demonstration, 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 and ignorance may also be given powerful expression through the media should keep us vigilant.

Special vigilance is needed to restrain ourselves from allowing teaching to become propaganda. It is not just the nasty doctrines of dictators and bigots that can inhibit thought and stifle curiosity but the most dearly cherished pieties of our age.

I hope I have said enough to suggest that educational broadcasting is by nature both traditional and progressive. Our place in the educational spectrum places us between the extremes.

But where is our place in the world of broadcasting? We are public broadcasters and we are part of the public education system, serving Ontario. This perspective distinguishes us from most other broadcasting enterprises, which

are networks for consumers, providing markets for advertisers.

This network of ours for viewers is broadcasting at a time when communications technology is in a state of flux and change. The arrival of new delivery systems, such as pay-TV and specialty services, is changing the broadcasting scene. We are exploiting the new technologies of satellites, computers and VCRs. We are making increasing use of private film producers. In this period of change and innovation, TVOntario is emerging as a leading broadcaster, producer and marketer of high-quality learning systems.

#### 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, now routinely enhances and enriches in classroom and home learning. Over the years TVOntario has become an important facility in educational research through careful investigation of the needs of learners and of 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 Canada 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 also been 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 drama 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 for it 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 full-bodied. We don't have a federated 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, dynamic, reflecting the community and allowing Canadians to express themselves as individuals, as artists, or citizens who are involved in citizens' affairs, that dimension – relating Canadians to each other and the community – just isn't there. The ideas that developed in the late '20s and the early '30s, the Aird Commission, the original legislation, that's all gone down the chute. When I originally got involved in the early 1970s, one still had a belief in those possibilities; they were still part of certain common assumptions that people made, and that's all changed in the last 10 years or so.

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 traditionalist 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 backdrop 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 Pierre Juneau, 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 private 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. One of the great 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 shunted aside by a much larger debate.

## Understanding the CRTC

The CRTC accommodated itself to those who represented a certain stability, a certain solidity, 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 organiza-

tions, particularly the Saskatoon Cable Cooperative which had the support of most of their community, but also consisted of a very, very practical, stable, wealthy infrastructure: 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. If you are an interested citizen and you see all that togetherness, all that organization, all one's homework done well-prepared – what the CRTC always said you should do: 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?"

An academic 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 with the fact 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 into decline. Bernstein's book was written in the '50s about the American scene, yet it was, detail for detail, a description of the CRTC and how, almost from the first, it was captive to the industry it was suppose 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 intellectually alert, knowledgeable and artistic: there was Harry Boyle, Jacques Hébert, and Northrop Frye, distinguished people. This was a different beast from the Broadcast governors.

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 energy and a great deal of idealism. 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 80 per cent Canadian ownership, which wasn't the CRTC's doing but was just the administrative carrying-out of an Order in Council. Then the CRTC developed a greater information base and straightened other things out: took control of cable and dealt with the question of the relay of cable signals by microwave to distant head-ends, a question on which it surrendered.

After that, one enters the mature stage of an agency where the language becomes more complicated, the agency itself realises that issues are far more complicated than it had originally imagined and effectively it begins to exchange ideas with the people it regulates. At the same time the people that are being regulated do not aggressively and crudely attack the agency, as they might have done in the early days when there was a lot of insecurity. An interchange of communications takes place between the agency, its administrative staff (which becomes more and more

‘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 perspective, the one we shared in the Association for Public Broadcasting in B.C., that looked to the history, the economic history of broadcasting in Canada and the structural problems of television production and distribution in Canada vis-a-vis American stuff. That organization focussed on those issues and began to raise them directly with the CRTC, and it was because the responses were so evasive that we began to realise how much of an illusion the idea of a national CRTC was, and how much of an illusion the idea that the CRTC was a defender of Canadian broadcasting (which is in many ways synonymous

with traditional public broadcasting objectives). The more we identified and fought on specific issues which challenged the CRTC, the more evasive the stonewalling became and the more evident it became how useless the CRTC was. One of the things that disturbed us most was not CRTC policy decisions on large matters but, more, how on very clear matters of specific public administration it did not deal openly and fairly with the issues in a responsible public administration way. If it disagreed with us on a major structural question like public financing versus private financing, 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 integ-

rity.

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 in the 1950s, grew up with: that the 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 happened to the government process as a whole. We can no longer afford to have illusions about how the government administration in the country works.

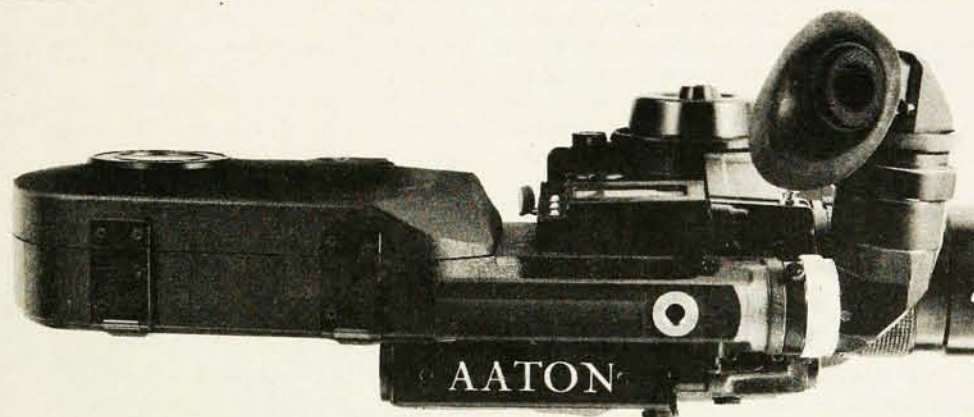
**Local power**

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

(Cont. on p. 36)



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BRITAIN

# 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 favour were 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.

The power exercised by broadcasting in highly centralised systems is an embarrassment. It forces upon those systems degrees of political supervision and the necessity of cultural conformity which are not desirable things. It prevents those systems from achieving the freedoms appropriate to communications in an advanced liberal society.

Now it may surprise Canadian audiences that a public service broadcaster from Britain should say public service 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 commentator in broadcasting now believes this to be the case.

So what the regulator does in effect is worry about anything that upsets the government or upsets politicians or is controversial or seems to advance a point of view. And this results in endless interference of programs and the banning of some.

The point is that this supervision effectively confines opinion to a sphere associated with and developed within the environs of Westminster. It's a politician's privilege. Broadcasting thus becomes one of the salons of the twentieth century where training a cadre of people is important first in the arts of appeasing the politician. Now that is something from which we should advance and move on.

The second thing that bothers me about public service broadcasting is that it effectively turned the articulate, the intelligent and the artistic into pensioners of one system. And public ser-

vice broadcasting of the BBC imposes a massive cultural conformity on the output of the media in Britain. It has therefore managed to establish a reputation that in some respects the future will decide is out of proportion to its real achievement.

What is the BBC's real achievement from the perspective of a North American audience? I wonder really whether it adds up to much more than, for instance, the BBC as the main exporter of costume drama to the North American 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 drastic divide 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 pastimes 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 presumption, 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 main cultural development should be the development of important popular cultures exploring the 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 **Bill Cosby** and 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 radiant within American popular culture.

Now I would ask you to accept two qualifications – there is a theory that 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 generality of the population and most of them got away without public subsidy. Giuseppe Verdi had as many people at his funeral as Elvis Presley did.

But there are two qualifications; one, not everything that is good is recognised. So your Hawthornes and your Emily Dickinsons achieve posthumous greatness and thank goodness they went on and did their work without an Arts Council grant. 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 that 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 broadcasters in the early days of the medium to aggregate a mass audience has homogenized the output in ways that it 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 in an ideal communications system. We should therefore try and achieve the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of the best systems around.

So what my policy for broadcasting would 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 the means of production: the 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 at a time where we have seen demonstrated that the best way to achieve innovation is to give lots of individuals the chance to experiment with the future.

The way the U.S. has managed to create new jobs in a period of recession is an illustration of this. But the vast majority of them came from new company formations and the way that innovation has been achieved in the micro-electronic 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 in 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 that 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 about 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, involves the most people possible, achieves efficiencies and economies within that aim? And you cannot possibly pretend that a public airwave that can only be used by some people, not by everyone, 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 in some kind 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.



*‘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.’*



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.")*

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 exchange what they have got to offer with other people.

So what would I do with British television? Here are some suggestions 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 first of all make our first objective the whole vision of popular programs for the mass of the population. There's probably room for something like three

national channels to do that. Now a sensible approach would be to lease those channels to people for a limited period and allow them to provide a service. How would you structure diversity in the system? For a start we would make damn sure that those leases were reassessed every decade and the regulatory authority was not captured by the leaseholders.

The second thing you would do is probably prevent those people making programs themselves. So you would make sure that programs were supplied to them by others. Another thing you might do is to stop any one program producer taking a disproportionate part of the output.

These are all ideas in keeping with the twin objectives of the maximum choice and the maximum diversity. And as you can see they don't allow the market 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 airwaves has problems and difficulties and it makes product expensive. Because of that and because of government's legitimate concern to have certain kinds of public affairs programs, I'd suggest one subsidized channel paid for by the lease rentals on the mass audience channel. A channel run very much like Channel 4 is at the moment. It's a splendid notion and it serves the purposes of setting the standard if those who make decisions

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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 about but lovers were 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 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 want to support and 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 want the maximum freedom for producers, for communicators to be able to utter. We want a diversity of views to be offered in a powerful medium of communication. We want voices to be heard and to make themselves heard. We also want the maximum choice, and the maximum satisfaction. I'm talking about free societies, not societies that seek to restrict the choice available to their citizens, but we also want the maximum choice and the maximum satisfaction for viewers and listeners.

Broadcasting doesn't exist for broadcasters, however elegant their garb or language, it exists to provide satisfaction to audiences. And broadcasting, private broadcasting which doesn't satisfy audiences goes out of business, and public broadcasting that doesn't satisfy audiences should be put out of business.

It ought to be our aim to maximize the choice that is available to viewers and to extend that range of satisfactions. We can all, I hope, agree on that end. The question is to achieve it. David Graham says and he has said it, I may tell you, in rather more absolutist terms than he chose today, terms perhaps more suitable to the Adam Smith Institute in London, where he said that deregulation is the sure and speedy way to achieve that maximization of choice

# The Conservative delusion

by Jeremy Isaacs

and satisfactions. Today he said 'markets well handled.' I'm not an economist, but I think one of the difficult things about listening to people who place such heavy reliance on the market is that one never knows whether they are arguing from the notion of a perfect market (which never did exist, does not exist and never will exist), or whether they are arguing from the evidence of any market that we can recognise. I have to say to David Graham that if he is arguing from any market that he can actually recognise - that is working in the real world, a real world of political pressures, of commercial pressures, as well as the ambitions of program makers and the satisfactions of audiences, then I wish he would name it and tell us where it is that we have to look for the evidence that might persuade us that the drastic solutions that he proposes have any kind of validity or relevance for us.

Where is the evidence that this market works in the way in which he would like to think it works? Does the evidence exist in the United States? We have in the United States hugely powerful and successful systems of broadcasting which provide vast enjoyment and satisfaction to mass audiences. We also have in the United States an ongoing concern to try desperately to add to the range of subjects covered, the range of themes developed, the range of genres exploited, the range of voices that can be heard, make themselves heard in some sort of small scale against the part of the networks.

We have a public broadcasting system which finds it difficult enough under a complacent 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 demeaning 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 hardish 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. What 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.

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 defined aims 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, be-

cause of all of a sudden he was advocating a protected, regulated, subsidized channel in order to ensure that some variety of political opinion, that 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-dominated, 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, 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...Someone the other night, I must admit to my horror (and this is my regulated broadcasting reflexes working), advocated dissension and disaffection among Her Majesty's forces; he said 'mutiny.' And I asked the next morning if they had checked this stuff out with a lawyer and of course my colleagues on this occasion had not. We seem, touch wood, to have gotten away with it.

Who is going to provide space in this market for Mr. Peter Tatchell to advocate that Her Majesty's forces should mutiny rather than carry out (what he believes to be) unlawful instructions? Who is going to provide the funding for the sort of program that David does, in which political reporters of opinions and convictions and guest editors of a variety of political stances, come forward and tell us how to look at the world?

Every society must work out for itself what sort of broadcasting it wants. And every society has to do so in conditions which are particular and peculiar to itself. But I think that David has to show that what he has to say will provide more satisfactions than what we at Channel 4 have. I rather doubt what he seems to be saying, 'sweep away the old, wing in the new and we will all be happy.'

Let me say something very briefly about Channel 4. We provide a whole range of a different mix of programs and we play these programs in peak time and in accessible hours and are able to do so, are protected in doing so, by the cunning device of whereby we receive our money. It is unique, it is unlikely to be copied in any other society in the world. It is a peculiar British compromise. It consists of letting one group of people make a fortune by giving them a monopoly in commercial television, a monopoly of television advertising unthinkable in Canada, unthinkable in the United States, and then taxing that monopoly, taxing the revenues of that monopoly to provide a very different sort of service.

*National culture is a very dirty phrase, with all its resonances of the Nazi period until just a few years ago. It now seems to me to be a more than appropriate and absolutely necessary concern that societies need to express*



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 within that society.

There is one very important thing I must tell you about Channel 4 which I believe to be the reason why we are held up as an example to others, and that is, of the budgets available to us, we try to spend 90 per cent on programs and only 10 per cent on our own administration. We failed last year – we spent 89 per cent on programs and 11 per cent on administration. When I look

at the difficulties that national broadcasting institutions face which know before they start that 60 - 70 per cent of their monies are going to have to go into keeping the plant going, then I sympathise with them and I believe that our system does have something to offer. We now get the share of audience which encourages those who fund us to get their money back, they ought to get their money back.

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-

(Cont. on p. 37)

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JAPAN

# NHK: The public is the best defence

by Keiji Shima

*‘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.’*

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 Broadcast 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 total 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, have proved most reliable among the Japanese audience. NHK is also internationally known for its high-quality educational and entertainment programs.

I would say it is our unique financing system, free from government intervention or commercialism, that has made it possible for us to produce these high quality programs. NHK at present pro-

duces 97 per cent of all its radio and TV programs. This means that NHK is among the foremost in the world in terms of self-reliance in program supply.

Thanks to our dependable news coverage and high quality programs, we have been able to enjoy strong public support.

It is NHK's unique 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 or refused to pay this fee. Still, we now have an extremely high license-fee collection rate of more than 96 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 now taking place in people's view of NHK.

One reason for this is that with the remarkable development of the nation's economy, commercial broadcasters, who rely heavily on revenue from advertisements from increasingly powerful private enterprises, have become able to offer higher quality programs during the past 10 years. The commercial broadcasters each have their own nationwide networks, and they have recently been quite active in competing with NHK in both news coverage and program production.

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-relayed international news coverage as well as a need for information for Japan's further internationalization. News exchanges among the Asian Broadcasting Union (ABU) members along with those with broadcasters in the United States and Europe have become increasingly active year after year. NHK now annually conducts more than 5,000 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 sharp 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 big events seriously affect NHK's finances. By the way, I am having a hard time negotiating for the broadcast rights for the Calgary Winter Olympic and Seoul Summer Olympic games for 1988 on behalf of the Japanese broadcasters. Also it took me over two years, precisely seven meetings with Mr. Uberoth, to reduce the rights for the L.A. Olympic games in half.

Under these circumstances, NHK is

now obliged to make a thorough review of its policy of sticking to its self-reliance rate of 97 per cent in program supply, and is thinking of reducing the in-house producing rate to 60 per cent with the next three years.

It may be helpful to purchase more programs from overseas broadcasting organizations and also increase co-production with foreign broadcasters. But it is essential, above all, that NHK's own financial basis be further expanded and strengthened.

Recent rapid development in the field of micro-electronics has ushered in the "age of new communications media". It is in fact a "technological revolution." In Japan, too, following the United States, CATV, video discs and videotext have become increasingly popular as new types of media. NHK has already clarified its intention to actively participate in the present "information revolution."

But here again, our financial difficulties are posing a major obstacle. Satellite TV broadcasters, which NHK has undertaken as the world's first broadcaster to do so, are an enormous-scale project costing a total of 42-million dollars (U.S.). Nevertheless, the broadcast satellite BS-2a launched in 1984 has developed trouble; two of its three transponders have broken down. Great expectations, therefore, are being placed on the BS-2b which was launched earlier this year. The BS-2b is expected to go into operation this October as the world's first full-scale broadcast satellite.

When our new service starts this fall, we will have a total of four TV channels combining terrestrial and satellite broadcasting, plus two medium wave, one FM and two PCM, Pulse Code Modulation, broadcast channels. This would make NHK truly the largest broadcaster in the world.

Furthermore, what we call "High Definition Television" (HDTV) is attracting growing attention, although it is not for direct application to actual broadcasting at this time. This new generation television was developed by NHK's Technical Research Laboratory as the world's first new TV system of its kind. It features ultra-fine texture images comprised of 1,125 scanning lines. It is entirely different from the conventional system and has enormous potential. Primarily HDTV has attracted the attention of the movie and publishing industries. NHK has already begun a co-production with Toho, a Japanese movie company, to make a film with HDTV, and the film is expected to be completed in the spring of '87.

NHK's energetic activities in these new fields have inevitably caused apprehensions among some quarters. They are concerned about our constant growth which seems almost boundless. In fact, some have presented plans calling for the "division and privatization"

FRANCE

# Leave television alone!



## Nelson

(Cont. from p. 25)

*works, it could be assumed that the government expected that a private network would be formed to compete with the CBC. (emphasis mine)*

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 pretended to consult 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 – to cry out: *Enough is enough!*

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 all the citizens of France who saw her come into this world and have followed her youth and adolescence. And now that's she full-grown, you want to force her into roles she wasn't made for. By what right? Why? And to the profit of whom?

*Enough is enough* because, in fact, you despise her and all those who have given her life, namely, the public.

*Enough is enough* because you've never understood or wanted to understand that she is part of the patrimony of our country, inscribed within our cultural identity to such a degree that her disappearance would be fatal.

*Enough is enough* because you have not known nor wanted to know how, through your laws, to discern or enhance her qualities and give her the independence to grow in.

You reply: "We have a majority. And we have been mandated to carry this out." Are you sure?

Don't you think there are other priorities or greater reasons compelling you? You claim to want her unique, that is to say, imprisoned in a ghetto where you would hold all the power. But the ghetto is always next door to the graveyard.

You politicians, leave her alone. She needs to get her strength back, not so that you can sell her off, but to be herself, and to be us.

Above all, no more surgery.

She has survived many a trial; she has survived inspite of all the blows that have been inflicted upon her. But, this time, she won't.

Understand, you politicians, that there are crimes that go unpunished. Cultural crimes.

But they remain written forever in the memory of nations.

Enough is enough, you politicians, leave television alone!

*Brief by the Syndicat français des réalisateurs de télévision, presented at the FISTAV executive committee meeting, Montreal, June 1986.)*

of NHK. At the same time, however, strong opinions persist that new ventures in broadcasting should be left for 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 undeniable however, that there are problems, arising from the 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 "a smaller staff of competent personnel."

Last year, we carried out a major reorganization of our news department, consolidating 12 divisions 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 companies in the future.

At the same time we can not rely on receiving fees alone in coping with the various developments in the new age. Any increase in our present license fees would be extremely difficult, just as a raise in public utility charges is bound to have wide-spread social repercussions. Therefore, NHK is making concerted efforts to increase its secondary revenue by establishing various related enterprises under us. These new companies form the "United Stations of NHK" I mentioned before. They are endeavoring to increase NHK's secondary revenue through the sales of software and various other activities. The TV documentary *The Yellow River* we have co-produced with China's CCTV for example, is being sold worldwide. In fact, I am the salesman for this project.

When we have become able to offer a full service via the satellite broadcast we mentioned before, we plan to ask our audience to share our financial burden by paying an extra fee.

NHK has a number of problems to solve, such as large-scale equipment investment for the new media age, im-

provement of its relations with audience to meet their diversifying demands and deepening of relations with commercial stations.

I firmly believe, however, that NHK, as it is today is ideally functioning as a public organization with the full support of the general public. Today, commercial stations are more conscious of the existence of NHK than ever before. 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 work for the benefit of the public, free from political influence and commercialism. Should we fail, we will lose the vital support of the great majority of the Japanese which we have long had. It is not the government or any specific private enterprise or group that supports our public broadcasting. We must always have people's strong backing 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 Television Festival panel, "Public Broadcasting: Who Cares?," May 26.)*

What's most important about this 1958 piece of legislation is that it tried to pretend as though nothing significant had happened to the broadcasting structure. The Broadcasting Act of 1958 blithely 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 one big circle (the CBC) containing within itself a small circle (the private broadcasters), we can see that, by removing regulatory 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 bouncing off not only each other but a third entity as well – an independent regulatory agency. This radical change in the Canadian broadcasting structure was effected **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 had now 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. Had the demotion of the CBC been accompanied 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 unacknowledged, structure frees them to

## Nelson

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 contribution to the stated national goals 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. At one time there was, at least in structure and in theory, but the 1958 Act effectively abolished it, while pretending nothing had been changed. This pretence — 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' and 'the circulatory system', 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 that impulse 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 a fully separate entity. Unfortunately to have acknowledged the 1958 structural change would have clearly opened up a huge can of worms. No wonder legislators at the time (and since) have preferred to pretend nothing had changed.

The myth of the "single system" worked extremely well for the private sector — that, 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 proving that the "single system" does exist, and works — if only the private sector can become strong enough. The illusory notion of a "single system" has been continually used to justify CRTC decisions that cater to private-sector expansion.

In 1980, for instance, the CRTC allowed the merger of Canadian Cable-systems 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 creation of such a large conglomerate because of the dangers of concentrated media ownership, the CRTC "pointed out that the Broadcasting Act spoke of a 'single Canadian broadcasting system.'" (*The Globe & Mail*, July 13, 1980). On the other hand, when the CBC wished to use that "single system" to distribute its proposed TV-2 network via cable, the CRTC turned down the proposal by protesting that the service would reach only a limited audience.

More recently, the CRTC agreed to let private TV stations cooperate in producing "Canadian content" shows, with

each getting full on-air credit for them. Meanwhile, the CBC, which is clearly committed to producing quality Canadian programming, has its budgets cut. In a speech to the Canadian Club on Feb. 7, 1985, CBC president Pierre Juneau stated that, after the then most recent \$85 million cut, CBC had suffered budget cuts of more than \$420 million over the past seven years, or "more than \$60 million a year."

Things have come full circle: back to a structure similar to that of 1932. But today it's the private broadcasters who constitute that bigger circle containing within it a smaller one that represents the CBC: circumscribed, well-bounded, and effectively curtailed.

## Ostry

(Cont. from p. 27)

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 gave us an average of nearly \$40.00 each. Our most recent BBM rating gives us 2,750,000 weekly viewers in Ontario and Quebec — a 9 per cent increase over the period last year.

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 best defence of all is to continue to 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.

Then, as now, we shall be programming 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 viewers and learners in far, isolated 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 understanding, to art and other cultures, 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 continuance 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 talent and the resources, we are 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 in its commitment to 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 a will. The happy ending could be 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. from p. 29)

central Canada the idea of public broadcasting was too closely associated with the CBC by itself.

In any case, the idea of decentralized as well as centralized organization in television is now accepted. In the 1970s one risked being branded a traitor for these ideas. The Trudeau era was extremely damaging that way and I myself came to have an almost visceral dislike of that whole regime and that whole cast of characters and I'm somebody who is a nationalist, who wrote a book on Canadian federalism, *A Nation Unaware*, who speaks French, who always defended Canadian things and who was very, very happy to have Trudeau elected and have those people come in because it allowed a part of the country to share power that should have been shared a long time ago.

Well, that's all gone but thank God we're not paranoid now about Canadians having more power, more scope to do things where they live both locally and provincially.

### The almighty dollar

Nothing can be more open to the Americans than what we have now. The trouble is that there is money to be gained by doing things the American way in Canada and by riding on American television's back in Canada. That's how English-language private television works at least: it rides on the back of the American television system and film system in Canada. When a controversy occurs, or a debate occurs, about, say, Canadian content, then that lobby goes to work on the federal government and on its decision-making apparatus. The citizens as a whole aren't involved, they are too remote from it all and there are some citizens whose ire can be raised to attack any Canadian measures. This doesn't mean necessarily that Canadians don't have or don't see the need for having their own culture, but they have no way of getting to-

gether and speaking to each other. So what happens is though the official centralized process is very much in favour of Canadian objectives, those objectives are overlooked. The eventual resolution of lobbying forces impinge on the Minister of Communications and the CRTC eventually just extends the American system. When you have more decentralized structures, as well as centralized ones, they provide ways and means for Canadians locally to get together and to express their Canadian objectives in their own way. Then when the crunch comes you do have some kind of an opposing political force against this sellout to American television.

One of the things that I realised was how local citizens' organizations trying to change things at a national level were bound to fail and that the Canadian Radio League, which led the debate in the original radio days of Alan Plaunt and Graham Spry, wasn't really a model for what we need now because it was actually quite a small group of people in days when the Canadian government was much more elitist than it is now and the old tradition of political centers of power had more sway. Then again it was a rare historical juncture where the newspapers were also in favour of public broadcasting because their sources of advertising revenue were threatened. Anyway the Canadian Radio League succeeded in getting the original radio legislation into place but then very quickly more or less dissolved and from that point on their original ideal began to fray at the edges, began to be eaten into by commercial radio lobbying and television and became the system we have today.

That's why I like the idea of provincial broadcasting organizations and viewer-governed organizations where there is at least some kind of structure. When you're involved in an actual organization that makes programs or that can say we don't want violent children's programming so we're not going to have it, when you're in an organization that can actually do that, then there is a good reason for citizens to get involved. And it would represent a counterbalance to the political power and the lobbying power that now exists on the other side.

### The power of lobbying

There's no particular reason to be hopeful in the present context — life doesn't work out the way one thinks it should work out. What you do in that situation, I think, is the same kind of thing you do in a hopeful situation inasmuch as you have liberty to involve yourself. You still fight for what you believe in and you still try to popularize good ideas. Really what's happening is happening not because private-sector television is a good thing, nor is it a good thing for a non-American country to have to contend with the American television industry, but it is simply the result of the strengthening of relative economic powers in society. To pick a case in Canada, the breweries are spending \$80 million on advertising of all kinds, a good part of which was going to television. You have this handful of large breweries, a few executive

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 breweries are able to underwrite a lobby with much more resources than the Mothers Against Drunk Driving are able to. And we are in a very mercantile age, where willy-nilly the holders of mercantile power and the others like advertising agencies are taking over more of everything, including what used to be the cultural sector. Anybody who is really interested in changing things can't be narrowminded about this: they have to realise that if they're going to be critical about what's happening with television in Canada, then they are wasting their time. They can howl until hell freezes over that the CBC should have more money or that public broadcasting is being abandoned, it won't do a damn bit of good. Whereas if they point to the leverage that the breweries have over television expenditure and that god-awful, aggressive commercials on television are not only unnecessary economically but are also 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 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, for example. It is very general and that was supposed to be its virtue. It is actually its weakness.

Another sad thing in this whole skein of events is that because of the extraordinary power given to the CRTC, new structural changes in television have not required parliamentary debate and public debate. New levels of television licenses have been added without legislation, hence without affording well-researched criticism in the House of Commons or the criticism of an opposition political party that might be interested, or even the awareness of the government of the day or the Minister of Communications as to what was happening. Because it wasn't done by legislation, but was done instead by regulatory agency, a lot of things have happened that wouldn't have quite so easily had it gone through legislation and had the debate been visible to the general public. That reflects another change in my own views from the time I first got involved when I considered that the CRTC as an independent, a supposedly independent agency, was able to look upon things rationally and not be caught up by demagogic outcries against Canadian content. I quickly realised that the best defence of Canadian content is public debate at the

highest levels, even if people might say, well, Members of Parliament, most of them are dummies who cave in to a handful of letters from their constituents saying, "No way should we have Canadian content stuffed down our throats." There are some people who think that way. I don't. I think that if we're going to have any defence against being submerged by American product and against abandoning our own structures, that defence is our elected representatives and public debate and the political process.

Because policy really should be done by legislation from the House. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind that the CRTC should not be a policy-making agency. It should be the House of Commons and it should be done by legislation. By the same token, neither should a cabinet minister nor the cabinet have that power.

### End political virginity

In many ways the battle has just begun. In many ways we are just beginning to realise how things really happen and I think that's one of the very useful things that a reading of **Closed Circuits** will give people - it will show them how things really happened as different from the facade that one got if one only read the mass media in Canada.

Now we know what's happening and that's a step forward from the ways things were 10 years ago. We know the CRTC is a cipher that can't be depended upon. We are also getting an understanding now that television does not stand alone as an issue: it is part of a larger question of economics and political power. One thing that bothers me is that the people in the profession have always tended to shy away from talking about things in that way - you know, that's politics, that's economics, that's not us, we're in television, we're creating something in entertainment and culture - as if getting involved in the larger economic and political issue was somehow going to contaminate them, was going to rob them of their integrity. I think that people in the trade should lose their political virginity and should dirty their hands and get involved in those larger issues. If they put their arguments for their own industry in context, they are not going to be caught with decisions already made like the CBC cutbacks - and have to cry injustice without any effect at all, after the decision was made and when nothing can be done. So maybe they have finally learned their lesson and realise what kind of argument has to be put - I hope so.

Western Europeans today are coming to grips with things that we came to grips with, or failed to come to grips with, a long time ago. But in many ways, they missed the boat by not really being responsive to their publics. I don't know that much about French television but my impression is that it is very highly centralized. It certainly was the case that the journalistic independence the CBC and the BBC have enjoyed has not been the case with French television. Because of that, they left themselves open to challenges from other kinds of structures, from the Rupert

Murdochs, from satellite television, from the idea of commercial broadcasting which argues that it is going to give the people more of what they want. So that part of what is happening to the traditional national broadcasters is their own fault. Now at the same time, when these kinds of challenges do happen, public broadcasters have at times fought back and fought back very successfully. The classic case is of course when commercial television came to Great Britain and decimated the BBC's audience. The BBC didn't just lie down and play dead and say, "Ah, public broadcasting is finished." They fought back, they fought back very hard with great skill and determination with a very clear idea of what their targets were. 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 BBC 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'm certainly hoping, not a defeatism, but a determination to fight back and this time with heavy armaments, with the whole panoply of ammunition, and let the other side have it - they've had their way in the last little while without any effective criticism or challenge for far too long.

*(Excerpted from an interview with Michael Dorland, Associate Editor, Cinema Canada.)*

## Isaacs

*(Cont. from p. 33)*

tally with something that David Graham said - he said that we should seek to achieve the strengths and avoid the weaknesses of the broadcasting services that we now have in moving into the future.

So, yes, let us encourage diversity. Yes, let us seek to maximize the benefit we can get from cable and satellite, and the different sort of services and satisfactions and the internationalism that such services can provide. But let us also cherish those broadcasting institutions if they can adapt, as they need, to change, which satisfy the notions of our own national culture.

National culture is a very dirty phrase, with all its resonances of the Nazi period until just a few years ago. It now seems to me to be a more than appropriate and absolutely necessary concern that societies need to express. And they are expressing those concerns in country after country in Europe. And they are right to do so, as they look at the possible implications of an international, a multinational, supernational, satellite service which buys programs at \$1,000 an hour and pumps them, as Rupert Murdoch's Sky Channel for example is doing, into millions of homes.

What we want, as we move into the end of this century, is broadcasting that maximizes the satisfactions of viewers by preserving the best of what we've got and adding to it. What we don't want to do, in my judgement, however tempting the siren bugle that dere-



gulators are blowing, is eliminate our present good broadcasting, we want to preserve what is best in it and add to it. And if we haven't got the adequate broadcasting that we seek in a particular society then we need to add now to what we've got

What we don't want to do is sweep away everything we've got for the sake of the unproven assertions of a market heaven which I do not expect to live to see.

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

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