

**As Canadian as Possible:
The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1936-1939**

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Abstract

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Since its inception in November 1936, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has been a constant presence in Canada's cultural landscape. In its earliest days, however, that longevity was far from guaranteed as there were plenty of issues threatening the survival of the national broadcaster. Following the demise of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, Canada's first public broadcaster, the CBC was given the responsibility of establishing and expanding Canada's national radio network while also serving as the regulatory body for privately owned stations. In order to fulfill this mandate, the CBC's first three years centred on building stations, expanding its programs, controlling its finances, and maintaining positive and productive relationships.

This dissertation examines the CBC's first three years and the corporation's efforts to survive its tumultuous infancy while also establishing itself as an essential Canadian cultural institution. The CBC's efforts during the Second World War have received plenty of scholarly attention, but a study of its formative period between 1936 and 1939 is essential to understanding the broadcaster's role in Canadian life. The corporation's handling of linguistic tensions, regional divides, and urban and rural separation were all critical to its early growth and played a significant role in providing the CBC the time to build its national network.

Central to that plan was the corporation's tacit policy of continental integration. Prior to the wide distribution of television in the 1950s, radio, which served as the primary source of

mass entertainment in the home, was dominated in Canada by American stations and programs. Understanding the power and popularity of American radio, the CBC aired American programs and developed productive relationships with American radio networks in order to promote its place as Canada's national broadcaster. Through these relationships, the CBC was able to reduce network interference while also using American content to reorient listeners towards Canadian stations. The CBC also sent Canadian programs to American networks, which it then used as proof that it was producing world-class programming. This study argues that the internal structure established between 1936 and 1939 allowed the corporation to position itself as a vibrant national broadcaster, an essential component of which was its successful integration into North America's wider broadcasting system.

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Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to all those who have put up with me over the past five years as I continued to talk about the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Your indulgence has been appreciated.

Introduction

On December 26, 1940, with the Second World War raging in Europe, George Wrong, former head of the history department at the University of Toronto, wrote a letter to Alan Plaunt, who had resigned from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Board of Governors in August. In his letter, Wrong highlighted radio's significance in Canada by writing that "the radio is perhaps our greatest educator. The range of its influence is amazing. It has altered methods in politics, and every effort must be made to keep its operation on a high level. Even our mode of speech is influenced and improved by it. You can hardly be engaged in a more important task than that of the Radio."¹ At the time of his letter, radio in Canada was the responsibility of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and over the previous four years it had managed the industry and made significant progress towards putting the medium in the esteemed position described by Wrong.

Occupying such an important place had been the dream of early radio pioneers at the start of the twentieth century. When Guglielmo Marconi sent the first wireless radio signal across the Atlantic Ocean in December 1901, it was the first in a series of major developments that slowly brought the possibility of commercial radio closer to reality. With Marconi competing with inventors like Canadian Reginald Fessenden, the technology continued to improve, proving its utility in March 1914 when the wireless telegraph system of the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad was able to keep trains safe while a blizzard snarled traffic.² Capitalizing on the advancing technology, several countries used radio during the First World War to

¹ George M. Wrong to Alan Plaunt, December 26, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 5 File 8.

² Tommy Meehan, "Fighting a Blizzard with the Wireless," *Railroad History* no. 199 (Fall/Winter 2008): 42-47.

communicate in the trenches and obtain intelligence from their enemies.³ With the technology in place following the war, North America's first commercial station, XWA Montreal, went on the air in May 1920. From that point, the growth of the broadcasting industry was swift and within three years there were 590 North American stations, thirty-four of which were in Canada.⁴

That growth continued through the decade and in 1928 the Canadian government established a royal commission, named after its Chairman Sir John Aird, to investigate the possibility of creating a national broadcaster. After holding public forums across the country, visiting the United States, and travelling through several European countries, the Aird Commission reported in 1929 that Canada should establish a publicly financed national broadcasting body and predicted that "in a country of the vast geographical dimensions of Canada, broadcasting will undoubtedly become a great force in fostering a national spirit and interpreting national citizenship."⁵ Nothing was done immediately, however, and the onset of the Great Depression in late 1929 clouded radio's future in Canada. Despite that uncertainty, by the time George Wrong wrote to Alan Plaunt a decade later, radio was arguably Canada's fastest growing industry.

In 1932, R.B. Bennett's Conservative government started to consider the radio situation, determined that Canada needed a national broadcaster, and passed the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act of 1932. The Act created the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC), Canada's first public broadcaster and gave the commission the power "to regulate and

³ For a case study in this see: William A. Morgan, "Invasion on the Ether: Radio Intelligence at the Battle of St. Mihiel, September, 1918," *Military Affairs* 51 no. 2 (1987): 57-61.

⁴ J.L. Granatstein, *Mackenzie King: His Life and World*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), 74.

⁵ Report of The Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, September 11, 1929, 6.

control broadcasting in Canada carried on by any person.”⁶ This included the ability to determine the number and location of radio stations, the number of national and local programs, and the distribution of channels. Perhaps more importantly, however, the commission was also given the power to “prohibit the organization or operation of chains of privately operated stations in Canada” and to “make recommendations to the Minister with regard to the issue, suspension or cancellation of private broadcasting licences.”⁷ That the CRBC was granted these regulatory functions on top of its broadcasting responsibilities was not welcome news to many private broadcasters. It was not that private stations fundamentally objected to either a public radio network or a federal regulatory body, but the combination of the two was seen as unfair. Given that the commission would compete with existing stations for listeners, which could negatively affect their advertising revenues, while also maintaining the ability to regulate their programs, the complaints were not unfounded. When the government convened a parliamentary committee to investigate the commission in 1934, eliminating the broadcasting function was suggested by the Dominion Broadcasters’ Association. It did not object to the establishment of a new regulatory body, but argued that the CRBC was a waste of money in the Depression, calling it a “public nuisance” rather than a “public service.”⁸

If the potential conflict of interest caused tension with private broadcasters, the CRBC’s leadership did not adequately address the concerns, which was part of a wider trend of poor administration within the organization. The commission’s first (and only) Chairman was Hector Charlesworth, at the time of his appointment the editor of *Saturday Night*. He did not have an extensive knowledge of broadcasting, however, and wrote in his memoir that he had been

⁶ Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, assented May 26, 1932. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Memorandum Submitted by R.W. Ashcroft, President, Dominion Broadcasters Association, in the House Committee on Radio Broadcasting, February 1934. LAC R.B. Bennett Papers, Microfilm Reel M-1293.

appointed by Bennett because of his knowledge of the country and its culture.⁹ In addition to his lack of familiarity with the technical aspects of broadcasting, Charlesworth also struggled to maintain a positive relationship with his fellow commissioners, Thomas Maher and Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Steel.¹⁰ As Mary Vipond argues, the commissioners “proved to be an awkward and ineffective broadcasting body.”¹¹ David Ellis describes the three as men who “had qualities of character and methods of working which offended many of those who came into contact with them and which militated against their operating as a coherent corporate unit.”¹²

Even if the three had been able to work harmoniously, however, the legislation governing the CRBC largely hamstrung the commission.¹³ Just a year after the passing of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, Gladstone Murray, at the time BBC Director of Public Relations, compiled a report on the state of national broadcasting in Canada. He was generally favourable to the commissioners, but criticized the system’s structure, saying that he was “convinced that the Commission has done its best to carry out its task impartially and efficiently within the limitations of its organization.”¹⁴ The most notable of its limitations was its susceptibility to political interference. Knowlton Nash describes a 1933 incident when, with R.B. Bennett out of the country, his cabinet threatened to cut the CRBC’s budget in half. While the cabinet relented when Charlesworth threatened to resign, it was clear that the commission and its finances could

⁹ Hector Charlesworth, *I’m Telling You: Being the Further Candid Chronicles of Hector Charlesworth* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1937), 43.

¹⁰ Maher was the director of a private station in Quebec City and had unsuccessfully run as a Conservative candidate in the 1930 federal election. Steel had served as a technical consultant to the 1932 Parliamentary Radio Committee.

¹¹ Mary Vipond, “Financing Canadian Public Broadcasting: Licence Fees and the ‘Culture of Canada,’” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 15 no. 2 (1995): 291.

¹² David Ellis, *Evolution of the Canadian Broadcasting System: Objectives and Realities, 1928-1968* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1979), 19

¹³ See: Mary Vipond, “The Beginnings of Public Broadcasting in Canada: The CRBC, 1932-1936,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 19 no. 2 (1994): 151-171.

¹⁴ Gladstone Murray, “National Radio in Canada – Report by Major Gladstone Murray, Director of Public Relations, British Broadcasting Corporation,” 25 July 1933. LAC, RG 41 Vol. 33 File 2-2-3

be vulnerable to the whims of the government. For the next two years the commission struggled to survive and by the time William Lyon Mackenzie King and the Liberals were elected in 1935 it was clear that changes were coming. As CRBC Western Regional Programme Director Horace Stovin wrote to J.R. Radford, manager of CRCV Vancouver, “this business has been one series of disappointments for so long that about the only way one can keep smiling is in losing oneself in the zest of sideling around each obstacle on a new tack and accomplishing the impossible without money.”¹⁵ Perhaps Robert Armstrong put it most generously when he wrote that the CRBC “failed to live up to expectations.”¹⁶

Part of the reason listeners and broadcasters alike were so disappointed with the commission was the significant role radio played during the Great Depression. Paula Romanow argues that the public service aspect of radio was highlighted through these years as “keeping the country in touch with each other, if only to show citizens that conditions were bad everywhere, was more important than ever.”¹⁷ J.M. Bumsted notes that an irony of the Depression was how it encouraged people to get involved in the arts – as those without employment could express themselves and make a contribution to society.¹⁸ Even though they may not have been paid for their activities, the feeling of accomplishment and contribution was enough to ease, if only temporarily, the strain of day-to-day Depression life for some unemployed Canadians – and radio played an important role in this process. Pierre Berton writes that:

It is impossible to overestimate the power of radio in the Depression years. It is not too much to say that it helped save the sanity of the dispossessed. It allowed the world to enter the parlours of the nation, and it provided a sense of community to the drought-

¹⁵ H.N. Stovin to J.R. Radford, 30 March 1936. LAC, RG 42 Vol. 1075, File Parliamentary Committee on Radio.

¹⁶ Robert Armstrong, *Broadcasting Policy in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 29.

¹⁷ Paula Romanow, “The Picture of Democracy We Are Seeking: CBC Radio Forums and the Search for a Canadian Identity, 1930-1950,” *Journal of Radio Studies* 12 no. 1 (2005): 113.

¹⁸ J.M. Bumsted, *A History of the Canadian Peoples, Second Edition* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003) 278.

ravaged farms and lonely coastal backwaters.¹⁹

Ian Clark pursues a similar argument by calling radio a “saving grace” during the depths of the Depression.²⁰ Gil Murray declares that without popular culture “it is hard to imagine how most of the North American population would have pulled through the Great Depression of the 1930s.”²¹ As Susan Douglas puts it, radio during the Depression actually brought an “innocent optimism” to the 1930s.²²

Even with the healing power of broadcasting, families still had to spend the money to purchase a radio, an expense that appears to have been well worth it. Clark argues that the initial cost of a radio eventually paid for itself as a family could enjoy endless hours of ‘free’ entertainment rather than pursue costly options outside the home.²³ In their article “A Kitchen that Wastes no Steps: Gender, Class and the Home Improvement Plan, 1936-1940,” Margaret Hobbs and Ruth Pierson discuss how companies tried to appeal to a woman with a careful “eye on her budget” to try and convince her to spend the family money on home improvement projects rather than frivolous items like radio.²⁴ Such calls did not limit the spread of radio, however, as broadcasting was one of the few areas of significant industrial growth in the 1930s.

Given the cultural importance of radio, it was hoped that when the CBC replaced the CRBC in November 1936 it could overcome the commission’s problems and establish itself as a national institution that actively contributed to Canadian culture. The disenchantment with the

¹⁹ Pierre Berton, *The Great Depression, 1929-1939* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 229.

²⁰ Ian G. Clark, *Canada, Broadcasting, and Me*, eds. Ronald E. White and Keith H. Gagne (Richmond, BC: Darkwood Holding Company, 1990), 24.

²¹ Gil Murray, *Nothing on but the Radio: A Look Back at Radio in Canada and how it Changed the World* (Toronto: Hounslow, 2003), 31.

²² Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination, from Amos ‘n’ Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 4.

²³ Clark, 13.

²⁴ Margaret Hobbs and Ruth Roach Pierson, “A Kitchen that Wastes no Steps: Gender, Class and the Home Improvement Plan, 1936-1940,” in *Age of Contention: Readings in Canadian Social History, 1900-1945*, ed. Jeffrey Keshen (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1997), 156.

CRBC coupled with the economic realities of the Great Depression, however, meant that public broadcasting in Canada was in a precarious position and the corporation's long-term survival was not a given when it took control of broadcasting. Through strong leadership, streamlined operations, improved internal communication, and a focused expansion plan, the CBC evolved into a principal source of information for Canadian listeners by the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. Had the war started in the fall of 1936, the CBC would not have been able to respond to the crisis nearly as effectively as it did in the fall of 1939. It took three years and a substantial effort for the corporation to assume its vital position during the war. Apart from preparing the CBC for the challenges brought on by the war, these formative years were crucial as they fundamentally shaped the structure of Canadian broadcasting. From maintaining positive relationships with private stations, enhancing its technology, expanding program operations, and improving public relations, the CBC's first three years were critical in determining how public broadcasting would work in Canada. There was not a lot of time to figure this all out, however, as the corporation had to provide quality service for listeners across the country and, in meeting that challenge, proved the utility of a national public broadcaster.

It is important to note, however, that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation of the 1930s was not the same as it is today. Following its inauguration, the CBC was responsible for establishing a national radio network and providing programming to Canadian listeners. Additionally, prior to the creation of the Board of Broadcast Governors in 1958, the CBC also regulated Canadian broadcasting. Centralized in Ottawa, the CBC had regional offices across the country, the biggest of which were in Toronto and Montreal. Another critical distinction is that prior to the Second World War, the English term CBC and the French term Radio Canada were interchangeable. Internally, Radio Canada was simply the French translation of CBC and did not

signify a separate organization or broadcast system. CBC/Radio Canada, therefore, were both used to describe the central organization based in Ottawa and when listeners discussed the CBC network, they were referring to the corporation's national network. The best example of this interchangeability is the manner in which programs ended – with the sign-off “Ici Radio Canada – This is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.” For the most part, the working language of the CBC was English – a vast majority of the internal documents were written in English – but publicly the corporation stressed its commitment to bilingualism. While its success in this area is debateable, dealing with regional and linguistic concerns represented a major focus of its early years.

While these domestic concerns were significant, the corporation's principal effort during the 1930s was its pursuit of a continental strategy in its operations. As early as the Aird Report in 1929, cultural nationalists in Canada were concerned that too much American programming on Canadian stations would contribute to a disintegration of the nation. When boiled down, the question was often presented as ‘the state or the States.’²⁵ This fails to accurately describe the situation as it relates to the CBC, however. The corporation understood that it could not completely eliminate the American presence on Canadian radio and acknowledged the need to develop cooperative relationships with American networks in order to address issues of wavelength interference and program exchange. Had the CBC attempted to directly compete with American networks – whether in terms of wavelength allocation, interference, or programming – the corporation would not have been successful. It did not have the resources, both technological and financial, to go head to head with the powerful American networks. As a result, it pursued a strong policy of continentalism in order to ensure its own survival.

²⁵ The question was first asked by the final report of the 1932 Parliamentary Committee investigating radio.

As Damien-Claude Bélanger notes, defining continentalism as pro-Americanism or pro-Americanization is too simplistic. In discussing Canadian intellectuals through the first half of the twentieth century, he argues that “continentalists embraced the essentially North American nature of Canadian society and were favourably inclined towards some form of continental integration.”²⁶ They did not believe that Canada was threatened by the American presence, but rather could actually benefit from a closer North American relationship. Tasked with serving as a national institution, a policy favourable to this type of continentalism could be seen as contrary to the CBC’s mandate. But as Graham Carr argues, one of the central tenets of the interwar continentalist perspective was “that the potential benefits to Canadian identity of...cross-border connections far outweighed the costs.”²⁷ Similarly, Allan Smith notes that continentalists believe that “nation building had to involve working with, rather than against, the grain of American strength.”²⁸ For the CBC this meant that rather than assume a subservient position to more powerful American stations, it would work with American radio networks to strengthen its own position. The CBC’s continentalist approach, therefore, can be expressed as its constructive engagement in Pan-American radio diplomacy.

This was never overtly expressed to listeners as the corporation preferred a tacit approach to its continental strategy. For instance, the corporation’s decision to air popular American material is sometimes viewed as a gesture to Canadian listeners – the argument goes that the CBC did not want to air the programs, but understood their popularity and, with the need to attract people to Canadian stations, begrudgingly included them in the schedule. Such a view

²⁶ Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 32.

²⁷ Graham Carr, “‘All we North Americans’: Literary Culture and the Continentalist Ideal, 1919-1939,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 17 no. 2 (August 1987): 146.

²⁸ Allan Smith, “Doing the Continental: Conceptualizations of the Canadian-American Relationship in the Long Twentieth Century,” *Canadian-American Public Policy* 44 (2000): 5.

discounts the corporation's wider efforts to actively engage with American networks in order to establish mutually beneficial relationships. Publicly, the CBC may have been acknowledging the popularity of American programs, but internally it saw this as merely one aspect of its efforts to successfully integrate into the existing North American broadcasting structure. At the same time it aired American content, the corporation sent programs to the American networks that aired nationally in the United States. This served as validation of the quality of corporation programs while also strengthening its international relationships. The practice of sending programs to the United States was so common by the start of the war that, as Austin Weir pointed out, "the CBC had the double responsibility of meeting the new needs of Canadians and favourably impressing American listeners."²⁹ It should be noted that the continental focus also included fostering relationships with Mexican broadcasters, particularly in the area of wavelength allocation. With their powerful transmitters, Mexican stations were responsible for plenty of interference on Canadian stations and the CBC was proactive in raising its concerns with its Mexican colleagues. These efforts were not as extensive as with American networks, however, because there was no program exchange with Mexican stations. As this thesis will demonstrate, in examining the CBC's continental approach the phrase 'the State or the States' does not apply to its early years. Instead, it would be more accurate to say 'the State and the States.'

As a result, it is necessary to re-examine the CBC's position as a nationalist institution. The corporation is often viewed as a protective barrier to the ever-present onslaught of American programming. Internally, the CBC did not view itself as such, however, and rather understood its nationalist purpose as re-orienting listeners towards Canadian stations and, in doing so, establishing an east-west network that would unite Canadians through radio. The corporation did

²⁹ E. Austin Weir, *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 269.

not view itself as a prophylactic against American cultural invasion, but rather as an outlet giving expression to a Canadian voice. The great irony in this is that in order to express this national voice, the corporation needed to adopt a policy of continental integration. It is therefore necessary to re-cast the theoretical framework of early Canadian broadcasting and examine the CBC not only as a national broadcaster, but also as an actor within a wider North American broadcasting structure. By studying the CBC's early operations through that lens, I identify how, in the 1930s, the CBC's national mission was only possible through a measure of continental integration.

One way in which this continentalist strategy manifested itself was through the corporation's initial prioritization of technical expansion over programming. There was a strong internal belief that by building transmitters, growing the network, and limiting international interference, the CBC could meet its mandate of serving as a national broadcaster. The ability to deliver programs to Canadians was, early on, more important than the content of those programs. This fits within Marshall McLuhan's contention that "'the medium is the message' because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action. The content or uses of such media are as diverse as they are ineffectual in shaping the form of human association."³⁰ As this relates to the CBC, the act of simply having a national broadcaster was what was important in terms of promoting Canadian culture and unity – the content was initially ancillary to the mere existence of a coast-to-coast network that reached a vast majority of Canadians. Therefore, the CBC could simultaneously work within a continental framework and air American programs while also serving a nationalist function. That people could increasingly pick up a station originating in Canada was the initial source of pride for corporation officials. The CBC understood itself as a national institution and believed it was serving a nationalist

³⁰ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 9.

purpose, but to truly appreciate the full scope of its early years it must be examined through a continental perspective.

Despite the significance of the CBC's early years, they have not received much attention in the historiography of Canadian radio. Where there is a good deal of material examining radio's early years in Canada – Mary Vipond's *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* is the definitive source for this period – there is little analysis of the corporation's first three years. The literature tends to jump from the 1936 legislation establishing the CBC to the outbreak of the Second World War with only a cursory examination of the intervening years. These years are noted as a period of expansion for the corporation, but there is little discussion of how that was accomplished. Former Chairman of the CBC Board of Governors R.L. Dunsmore highlighted this perspective during a 1961 speech in Montreal when he said that after 1936 “the next significant year in CBC history is 1952. The intervening years – 1936 to 1952 – were busy ones: the building of new stations; the increase in power of the older stations; the increase in coverage to difficult areas by the installation of relay transmitters.”³¹ In addition to being critical to the corporation's war effort, the years of increasing power and building stations were essential in allowing the corporation to establish an extensive public relations strategy and attempt to earn the trust of a skeptical country. Without a thorough examination of its first three years, it is difficult to understand how the corporation positioned itself as a vital national institution prior to the Second World War and ultimately legitimized the concept of public broadcasting in Canada.

While the CBC's role during the war has received plenty of attention in the historiography of Canadian broadcasting, it should be noted that highlighting the medium's importance to the conflict is not unique to Canada. For example, American radio historian J. Fred

³¹ R.L. Dunsmore Speech to the Kiwanis Club in Montreal, January 26, 1961. LAC RG 41 Vol. 472, File 31-9.

MacDonald has referred to the Second World War as “a radio war.”³² In the Canadian context, however, this is presented as significant because it served to orient listeners away from American and towards Canadian stations, which served to increase the medium’s importance to the war effort. For instance, Frank Peers notes that by the end of the 1930s, radio had come to play an important role in daily life and “with the outbreak of war, this was to be demonstrated even more dramatically.”³³ He adds that “during the war years, it became evident that Canadian broadcasting was reaching a professional level that it had never dreamed before.”³⁴ Sandy Stewart agrees and argues that while “the Second World War plunged Canadians into a whole new era ... for Canadian radio it was also the beginning of a new age with a different set of problems and challenges.”³⁵ Similarly, Alex Toogood writes that “the public utility aspects of radio were greatly emphasized” during the Depression and war, a fact which “enhanced the public service function of the CBC.”³⁶ Perhaps Richard Collins expressed this view best when he argued that “the Second World War, particularly in its early stages when the United States was not a combatant, oriented Canadian listeners to Canadian radio and particularly to the national CBC services.”³⁷

It is undeniable that the Second World War thrust the corporation into the public consciousness in a manner never before seen, but to understand the CBC’s wartime contributions it is vital to analyze the preceding three years. Given the rather scattered state of public broadcasting in 1936, the CBC had to undertake an aggressive strategy of expansion. The level

³² J. Fred MacDonald, *Don’t Touch that Dial: Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 65.

³³ Frank Peers, *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 281.

³⁴ Peers, 282.

³⁵ Sandy Stewart, *A Pictorial History of Radio in Canada* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1975), 75.

³⁶ Alex Toogood, *1919-1969: Canadian Broadcasting in Transition* (Ottawa: Canadian Association of Broadcasters, 1969), 62.

³⁷ Richard Collins, *Culture, Communication, and National Identity: The Case of Canadian Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 59.

of wartime service the corporation provided would not have been possible in 1936 as the CBC did not have the network, personnel, or financial resources for such a task. The Royal Tour in the fall of 1939 has occasionally been seen as a testing ground whereby the CBC was provided an opportunity to practice for the war – given the number of live, remote broadcasts – but, like the war, that series was only possible because of its earlier efforts.³⁸ The Royal Tour was undoubtedly important in terms of preparing the corporation for war, but it was only after solidifying its network, expanding its schedule, and hiring new announcers and engineers that the CBC could respond to the challenges presented by the Second World War. By glossing over that process, the historiography has therefore presented an incomplete picture of the corporation during its formative period.

In examining the wider English-language Canadian historiography, it is possible to identify the cause of this oversight. The formative studies of early Canadian broadcasting were penned in the 1960s, during a nationalistic period in Canadian history. As David S. Churchill argues, during the 1960s “forms of Canadian nationalisms manifested themselves across the ideological spectrum of Canadian politics with significant intellectual and policy presence in all major political parties as well as extra-parliamentary movements.”³⁹ Similarly, P.A. Bucknor has argued that prior to the late 1960s, there was a consensus among Canadian historians “to minimize the significance of internal divisions within Canadian society by focusing on the things which united Canadians and distinguished them from other peoples.”⁴⁰ As a result, the early formative works on Canadian broadcasting highlighted the nationalistic purpose of establishing a

³⁸ For example, during a 1951 address, CBC chief engineer during the Tour Gord Olive said that the equipment ordered for the Tour was “put to good use during our wartime operations both in Canada and abroad. G.W. Olive talk on Evolution of CBC Engineering Department, December 12, 1951. LAC RG 41 Vol. 74 File 3.

³⁹ David S. Churchill, “Draft Resisters, Left Nationalism, and the Politics of Anti-Imperialism,” *Canadian Historical Review* 93 no. 2 (2012): 229.

⁴⁰ P.A. Bucknor, “Regionalism and Nationalism in Canadian History,” *Acadiensis* XXX no. 1 (Autumn 2000): 5.

national broadcaster. For example, Austin Weir's 1965 *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada* identifies the CRL's emphasis on nationalism as a main factor leading to the Bennett government's decision to enact legislation in 1932, which he describes as "easily the most significant and far-reaching accomplishment of Bennett's five years in office."⁴¹ In his conclusion, Weir, who worked for both the CRBC and CBC before retiring in 1956, expressed fear that the contemporary battles over broadcasting were detracting from the medium's unifying role, pleading with Canadians to put "aside our needless strife, petty differences, the search for power, and join once more in making broadcasting the symbol that united us with such special emphasis and clarity on [Canada's Diamond Jubilee] nearly forty years ago."⁴²

Four years later, Frank Peers' *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951* quickly became the formative work on early Canadian radio. While focusing on broadcasting's administrative side, Peers also highlighted the nationalist motivation for establishing a national broadcaster and the unifying effects that resulted. He bluntly stated that "nationalist sentiment has achieved Canadian ownership and control of stations."⁴³ A similar focus on national unity through broadcasting was present throughout the radio historiography of the 1960s. For example, in her highly influential 1965 article "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada," Margaret Prang stated that one of the primary conditions leading to state intervention in radio was "the willingness of influential groups of Canadians to use the power of the dominion government in the search for national security in the face of economic and political threats from the United States."⁴⁴ Perhaps the best example of the nationalist literature of the 1960s was Albert Shea's 1963 *Broadcasting the Canadian Way*, in which he argued that "it is no exaggeration to say that

⁴¹ Weir, 135.

⁴² The Diamond Jubilee was Canada's first national radio broadcast. Weir, 451.

⁴³ Peers, 440.

⁴⁴ Margaret Prang, "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* XLVI no. 1 (1965): 1.

the survival of Canada depends on making use of modern communication to maintain the integrity and unity of the nation.”⁴⁵ For both Prang and Shea, the nationalist focus of early broadcasting was on protecting Canada from American cultural domination while uniting the country’s divergent regions. While this fit within the wider nationalist literature of the 1960s, it situated early Canadian national broadcasting not as a cultural institution, but as a form of national defence.

In response to the nationalist focus on the corporation, there was a series of works examining private broadcasters. In 1969 the Canadian Association of Broadcasters published Alex Toogood’s *1919-1969: Canadian Broadcasting in Transition* in an effort to highlight private broadcasters’ role in shaping Canadian broadcasting. T.J. Allard’s two books over the next decade – *The CAB Story, 1926-1976* in 1976 and *Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada, 1918-1958* in 1979 – were similar in their desire to re-cast Canadian broadcasting as a joint venture between private and public stations. They also attempted to address the nationalist works of the 1960s, in which private broadcasters were often seen as opponents of the nationalistic broadcasting institutions. For example, in *The CAB Story* Allard argues “more often than not, the functions and purposes of the [CAB] and its membership were misrepresented or vilified.”⁴⁶ This is the result of the CAB’s opposition to the CRL, which, given the way in which the CRL is characterized as ultra-nationalist, means that the CAB is seen as anti-Canadian (or at least pro-American). Through this dichotomy, Allard believes that the CAB was just as nationalistic as the CRL: it simply had a different concept of what was best for the country. He believes that the CAB “has constantly displayed a conscious sense of its responsibilities to the community, and responded in mature fashion to the challenges its unique form of service

⁴⁵ Albert A. Shea, *Broadcasting the Canadian Way* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1963), xiii.

⁴⁶ T.J. Allard, *The C.A.B. Story, 1926-1976: Private Broadcasting in Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Association of Broadcasters, 1976), 45.

produces.”⁴⁷ In *Straight Up* Allard adds that most private broadcasters consciously tried to adhere to the ‘public service’ concept “because most stations were owned in the area they served [and] operated by men and women who were neighbours of their listeners.”⁴⁸

That nationalist theme that emerged in the early histories of both public and private radio has remained a constant in studies of Canadian broadcasting. For example, in his history of the CBC, long time anchor of *The National* on CBC television, Knowlton Nash, argues that the CBC is an essential part of Canadian culture and that since its creation it “has reflected to mass audiences the spirit and reality of this country as nothing else could, and without it, Canada would be a soul-starved nation, hiccupping the cultural values and history of our southern neighbour.”⁴⁹ Similarly, Dorothy Zolf has written that “the evolution of Canadian broadcasting policy reflects the view that control of the broadcasting system is deemed to be essential to the maintenance and development of national unity and a strong national identity.”⁵⁰ Perhaps Ross Stuart best explained the cause of the nationalist argument when he argued that “without a culture Canada is merely a political or economic convenience that will not remain united and independent,” which “is why Canada’s cultural destiny is crucial to the very survival of this country as we know it.”⁵¹

This theme of national survival which emerges in the literature examining broadcasting’s nationalist function tends to focus on one particular item: the efforts to minimize the American content Canadians heard. Such a focus, however, does not adequately address the complexity of

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ T.J. Allard, *Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada, 1918-1958* (Ottawa: Canadian Communications Foundation, 1979), 51.

⁴⁹ Knowlton Nash, *The Microphone Wars: A History of Triumph and Betrayal at the CBC* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1994), 11.

⁵⁰ Dorothy Zolf, “Educational Broadcasting: A Problem of Divided Jurisdiction,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 12 no. 2 (1986): 22-23.

⁵¹ Ross Stuart, “Strike Four: The Story of Canada’s Cultural Sellout,” *Atkinson Review of Canadian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1983):14.

Canadian broadcasting's nationalist gaze in the 1930s. As Peers concedes, nationalist sentiment in early Canadian broadcasting was "broader than patriotic jingoism and something more ambiguous than national self-interest."⁵² As it relates to the CBC's earliest years, a major intricacy of its nationalist purpose was not attempting to completely reject the American presence on Canadian airwaves, but rather trying to fit within broadcasting's continental structure. Radio waves do not adhere to borders and, as a result, establishing a national broadcaster in a vacuum was impossible. Publicly the corporation discussed the benefits of national broadcasting to Canadians and presented itself as a nationalistic institution, but in its operations the CBC needed to situate itself within the existing North American broadcasting infrastructure. As a result, my work forces a re-examination of the existing literature by arguing that while the CBC may have viewed itself as a nationalist organization, its operations could not be that narrow in their focus.

Expanding that focus to study the continental role of early Canadian radio also addresses the historiography of Canadian-American cultural exchange. While a majority of Canadian works examining this relationship focus on the American presence in Canada, there is an emerging literature investigating the Canadian presence in the United States, but it has been restricted to the second half of the 20th century. For instance, Andrew Holman has written about how Canadian players in American collegiate hockey were viewed as a threat to the purity of the American game.⁵³ Paul Attallah has focused on the CBC's television exports to American networks, which started with *The Nature of Things* in 1956.⁵⁴ Kyle Conway has studied the

⁵² Peers, 440.

⁵³ Andrew C. Holman, "The Canadian Hockey Player Problem: Cultural Reckoning and National Identities in American Collegiate Sport, 1947-80," *Canadian Historical Review* 88 no. 3 (2007): 439-468.

⁵⁴ Paul Attallah, "Canadian Television Exports: Into the Mainstream," in *New Patterns in Global Television: Peripheral Vision*, eds. John Sinclair, Elizabeth Jacka, and Stuart Cunningham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 161-191.

American commercial and popular success of Canada's *You Can't Do That on Television* and argues that the program was successful because it managed to simultaneously be mysteriously foreign and endearingly familiar. As Conway rightly points out, "to focus exclusively on the flow of programming from the U.S. to Canada is to miss an important aspect of cultural trade between the two countries."⁵⁵ This project is the first to study early Canadian radio from this continental perspective and not only fits within this emerging historiography, but also expands its temporal framework to include the 1930s. As a result, my analysis not only contributes to radio historiography, but also to the literature examining North American cultural exchange.

Despite the nationalist perspective of broadcasting historiography, there has not been plenty of attention on the CBC's early years. A major factor in this is the wider historiographical shift in Canada away from political history.⁵⁶ Early historians of Canadian broadcasting, heavily influenced by Peers, tended to focus on the political forces that shaped Canadian radio. Prang addressed this focus by noting that government intervention has played a larger role in Canadian economic development than in most European countries or the United States.⁵⁷ As a result of this heavy investment, historians remained focused on the government's role well into the 1970s when David Ellis published his 1979 *Evolution of the Canadian Broadcasting System*, in which he studied the federal government's regulatory role and the political process involved in establishing the CRBC and CBC.⁵⁸ Nash offered an explanation for this trend when he noted that "since all Canadians are stockholders in the CBC, it is both inevitable and proper that there is an

⁵⁵ Kyle Conway, "Heading South to Make it Big: The American Success of Canada's *You Can't Do That on Television*," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 35 no. 1 (2005): 45.

⁵⁶ It should also be noted that several authors have direct connections to the radio industry. Austin Weir, Frank Peers, and Knowlton Nash were all CBC employees, T.J. Allard worked for the CAB, and Michael Nolan (CBC), David Ellis (federal government), and Alex Toogood (CAB) all had works published by organizations invested in broadcasting. While Peers, Nolan, and Toogood do have academic backgrounds, it is not surprising that those who worked for the corporation tend to present a more sympathetic view of public broadcasting than those associated with the CAB.

⁵⁷ Prang, 1.

⁵⁸ Ellis, 76.

incessant downpour of evaluation and criticism.”⁵⁹ Perhaps the best explanation for the early literature’s focus on government involvement comes from Marc Raboy’s lament for Canadian broadcasting in *Missed Opportunities*, where he cites Herschel Hardin’s conclusion that Canada “did not choose public enterprise freely. It was forced on us by American expansion.”⁶⁰

The presence of partisan actors in Canadian broadcasting means that political history and biography have become excellent sources for information on the history of Canadian broadcasting. In their respective biographies of William Lyon Mackenzie King, Blair Neatby looks at the Prime Minister’s use of radio in the 1930 election campaign,⁶¹ while Jack Granatstein focuses on his role in establishing the Aird Commission by noting that its report was “the beginning of the process that led to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.”⁶² In addition, Larry Glassford’s analysis of the Conservative Party under R.B Bennett in *Reaction and Reform* provides great detail into Bennett’s opinion of public broadcasting and notes that Conservative Party initiatives like the CRBC, Bank of Canada, and Canadian Wheat Board, all “became institutional pillars of the Canadian landscape.”⁶³ Perhaps the most influential book dealing with personal agency in broadcasting is Michael Nolan’s study of Alan Plaunt, where he outlines Plaunt’s incredible contribution to Canadian broadcasting from its earliest days until his death in 1940 and argues that “probably more than any other single individual, [Plaunt] was responsible for the permanent establishment of publicly owned radio in Canada during the 1930s.”⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Nash, *The Microphone Wars*, 11.

⁶⁰ Marc Raboy, *Missed Opportunities: The Story of Canada’s Broadcasting Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 17.

⁶¹ H. Blair Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King: The Lonely Heights, Vol. 2 1924-1932* *Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), 335.

⁶² Granatstein, 75.

⁶³ Larry A. Glassford, *Reaction and Reform: The Politics of the Conservative Party Under R.B Bennett, 1927-1938* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 172.

⁶⁴ Michael Nolan, *Foundations: Alan Plaunt and the Early Days of CBC Radio* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1986), 12.

More recently, however, studies of early Canadian radio have followed wider historiographical trends in increasingly moving away from the organizational and administrative aspects of broadcasting in favour of analysis of its social importance. Perhaps the earliest sign of this shift came in 1985 when Sandy Stewart published *From Coast to Coast: a Personal History of Radio in Canada*.⁶⁵ This was quickly followed with another personal history in 1990, Ian Clark's *Canada, Broadcasting, and Me*. These personal histories preceded an increasing number of articles focusing on the social rather than political nature of Canadian broadcasting, with one of the leading scholars in this new direction being Anne MacLennan, whose combination of content analysis and social history approach has provided a unique perspective on radio's place in 1930s Canada, which has included an examination of the evolution of women's programming and the relationship between radio listeners and newspapers.⁶⁶ Her 2008 article looking at Depression-era programming targeted to women, for instance, argues that as more households purchased radios "women became a new audience to be taken into account by early radio broadcasters."⁶⁷

Such studies that look at broadcasting's role in the community have recently been the hallmark of radio's social history. Stacy Lorenz's 2000 article "A Lively Interest on the Prairies," examines the media's role in sustaining interest in sport on the Prairies and concludes that "in conjunction with telegraph and wire services, daily newspapers and radio constructed a

⁶⁵ Sandy Stewart, *From Coast to Coast: A Personal History of Radio in Canada* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1985).

⁶⁶ Anne F. MacLennan, "Women, Radio, and the Depression: A 'Captive' Audience from Household Hints to Story Time and Serials," *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 37 no. 6 (2008): 616-633; Anne F. MacLennan, "Reading Radio: The Intersection Between Radio and Newspapers for the Canadian Radio Listener," in *Radio and Society: New Thinking for an Old Medium* ed. Matt Mollgaard (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 16-29.

⁶⁷ MacLennan, "Women, Radio Broadcasting and the Depression," 620.

community of interest around sport in Canada and the United States.”⁶⁸ Peter Neary looks at the irony of the Jewish episode of CBC’s *Venture in Citizenship* program on November 9, 1938, the same day Nazis launched a “furious attack” on German Jews.⁶⁹ Similarly, Paula Romanow has examined radio’s role in establishing a Canadian identity through the 1940s and 1950s, Len Kuffert has analyzed the intimacy of broadcasting and programs featuring “mystic sciences,” and Marcus Klee has studied the connection between radio and the creation of a national working-class.⁷⁰ Certain aspects of this social history are incorporated here – particularly the audience reaction to programs – but the focus is the CBC’s internal machinations and its perception of its social importance. As Gene Allen and Daniel J. Robinson note, concepts of broadcasting’s imagined community and public sphere are not disseminated through media, but rather are spaces brought into existence by media. With respect to the CBC, therefore, the establishment of the institution provided the opportunity for the emergence, disappearance, and reconstitutions of the different types of publics studied in these social radio histories.⁷¹ It is difficult, however, to study the CBC’s programs and audience without an extensive understanding of the corporation’s administrative structure and policies. Through this study, therefore, I provide the organizational context to the recent social histories of Canadian radio.

Despite being generally overlooked, there are two trends that emerge when the corporation’s first three years are discussed. The first is a focus on the high-profile internal

⁶⁸ Stacy L. Lorenz, “‘A Lively Interest on the Prairies’: Western Canada, the Mass Media, and a ‘World of Sport,’ 1870-1939,” *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 2 (2000): 195.

⁶⁹ Peter Neary, “The CBC ‘Ventures in Citizenship’ Broadcast of 9 November 1938,” *Canadian Jewish Studies* 10 (2002): 109.

⁷⁰ Paula Romanow, “The Picture of Democracy We Are Seeking: CBC Radio Forums and the Search for a Canadian Identity, 1930-1950,” *Journal of Radio Studies* 12 no. 1 (2005): 104-119; Len Kuffert, “What do you expect of this friend? Canadian Radio and the Intimacy of Broadcasting,” *Media History* 15 no. 3 (2009): 303-319; Len Kuffert, “Tempest in the Tea Leaves: Broadcasting the Esoteric Arts and Mystic Sciences, 1937-1953,” *Canadian Historical Review* 91 no. 1 (2010): 1-26; Marcus Klee, “Hands Off Labour Forum: The Making and Unmaking of National Working-Class Radio Broadcasting in Canada, 1935-1944,” *Labour/Le Travail* 35 (1995): 107-132.

⁷¹ Gene Allen and Daniel J. Robinson, “Introduction,” in *Communicating in Canada’s Past: Essays in Media History*, edited by Gene Allen and Daniel J. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 9.

disputes within the CBC. For instance, Allard argues that for its first nine years the “CBC skittered from one crisis to another like a gin-sodden filly on ice; and several times slithered within whispering distance of oblivion.”⁷² Similarly, Nash argues that the CBC ignored early criticism that it was a partisan organization because “it was too occupied by an internal battle royal between Alan Plaunt and his erstwhile protégé, Gladstone Murray, over Murray’s drinking problem and his expense accounts.”⁷³ Peers also discusses the rift between Murray and Plaunt, but notes that it was not until the outbreak of war when “other events took place which hardened Plaunt’s opposition to Murray’s conduct of the corporation, and which made him determined that the board should give full and early consideration to the question of whether he should be replaced.”⁷⁴ Toogood argues that amongst all the criticism of the CBC in its early years “the biggest storm was over the activity of the General Manager, and the lack of activity of the Board of Governors,” but he concedes that it did not reach “crisis proportions” until the early 1940s.⁷⁵ In his study of Alan Plaunt, Michael Nolan notes that “war conditions produced considerable differences of opinion between Plaunt and Gladstone Murray.”⁷⁶ Where Plaunt had been skeptical of Murray’s finances through the latter part of the decade, the war, as Marc Raboy points out, “crystallized the simmering divergences between democratic and technocratic conceptions of public broadcasting. Within the CBC, this took the form of a split between board member Alan Plaunt and general manager Gladstone Murray.”⁷⁷

The second is the tension between the CBC and Minister of Transport C.D. Howe, who was responsible for the corporation. Howe frequently disagreed with the Board of Governors

⁷² Allard, *Straight Up*, 124.

⁷³ Knowlton Nash, *The Swashbucklers: The Story of Canada’s Battling Broadcasters* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001), 109-110.

⁷⁴ Peers, 300.

⁷⁵ Toogood, 57.

⁷⁶ Nolan, *Foundations*, 151-152.

⁷⁷ Raboy, 67.

over the corporation's expansion plans as he thought priority should be placed on programming rather than technical improvements. While this resulted in some uncertainty, the CBC managed to work around the Minister's objections. As David Ellis notes, the corporation was able to establish a strong working system "despite all the problems with Howe."⁷⁸ The situation came down to, as Raboy notes, the fact that "the strong-minded minister, C.D. Howe, worked hard to impose his vision of the role to be played by a public bureaucracy against the resistance of more liberal visionaries like Alan Plaunt."⁷⁹ Weir argues that it was apparent quite early that "there were wide divergences of opinion between the Minister and the Board," but that it ultimately did not deter the Board as "Howe's interpretation of their functions was a rude jolt that might have deterred less determined men ... it only served to spur them on." Peers devotes an entire chapter to the relationship between Howe and the CBC and argues that "over great opposition, the CBC governors had succeeded in building a strong chain of powerful stations."⁸⁰ Despite the fact that there were no major policy changes because of his objections, one of the reasons why Howe's resistance is so notable in the historiography is because of the way in which the corporation was funded – radio receivers in Canada were subject to an annual licence fee, which the government was responsible for collecting and transferring the proceeds to the CBC – allowed for the possibility of political interference. As Vipond argues, "because the licence revenue was allocated by way of an annual parliamentary vote or mentioned in budget estimates, at least once a year the subject of utility of the fee and the service being provided was on the national political agenda."⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ellis, 23.

⁷⁹ Raboy, 60.

⁸⁰ Peers, 221.

⁸¹ Vipond, "Financing Canadian Public Broadcasting," 292.

The on-going tension between Howe and the Board of Governors and the growing animosity between Plaunt and Murray are interesting aspects of the corporation's early years, but they did not fundamentally affect the organization's operations in its formative period. There is a general consensus that the Plaunt-Murray falling out did not truly materialize until the start of the war – although it was clearly brewing through the summer of 1939 – and, despite his objections, Howe was unable to change the corporation's expansion plans. In fact, one of Howe's only successes in lobbying the Board of Governors was when he agitated for more live coverage of hockey games featuring Fort William, Ontario, his home team. As a result, this behind-the-scenes tension is more tangential to the story of the CBC's formative period than it is a central feature of its early years. I discuss both here – Howe as a temporary obstacle and Plaunt-Murray as a precursor of later troubles – but neither was overly influential in the 1936-1939 period.

One factor that did heavily influence the CBC during this period, however, was Canadians' lingering disappointment with the CRBC. The corporation was focused on presenting itself as a new public broadcaster, not merely a continuation of the CRBC. It was not always successful, however, as well into 1939 it still received letters addressed to 'the radio commission.' That failure to differentiate between the two organizations can also be found in the literature as it is frequently claimed that the CRBC simply evolved into the CBC. For instance, Paula Romanow writes that "in 1936 the CRBC became the CBC."⁸² In his biography of R.B. Bennett, John Boyko states that assertions that it was the Mackenzie King government that established the CBC are "falsehoods" as it was Bennett who "helped to protect and promote Canadian culture and social uniqueness through his creation of what became the Canadian

⁸² Romanow, 112.

Broadcasting Corporation.”⁸³ It is true that the CBC inherited the commission’s assets and a majority of its staff, but there are several critical differences between the two – most notably the establishment of a Board of Governors and the simplified access to funding. In addition, the corporation’s early policy decisions were often influenced by the commission’s failure. As Nolan notes, corporation officials shaped their policies on election broadcasts after being “mindful of the fate of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission.”⁸⁴ It is therefore important to be aware of the difference between the CRBC and the CBC and not treat the corporation as a re-named version of the commission. The commission greatly influenced the corporation, but the structural differences between the two were significant and each needs to be studied as an independent organization.

In contrast to the English-language historiography, the Canadian French-language material not only focuses primarily on Quebec, but also emerged later. French-language radio histories started to appear in earnest in the 1970s and 1980s, a period when Quebec historiography came to be dominated by the revisionists, a group more interested in the twentieth century than previous generations of scholars. Ronald Rudin describes revisionists as historians who concentrated “on the way in which Quebecers had been secular, materialistic, and urban since early in their history, much like their neighbours in North America.”⁸⁵ Within that context, it is possible to view much of the French-language historiography as part of the revisionist movement. For instance, in his article examining the British and American presence in Canadian radio between 1900 and 1928, Alain Canuel makes no distinction between radio in Quebec and the rest of the country, noting that “l’*évolution de ce nouveau mode de communication a*

⁸³ John Boyko, *Bennett: The Rebel who Challenged and Changed a Nation* (Toronto: Key Porter, 2010), 25, 267-268.

⁸⁴ Michael Nolan, “Canadian Election Broadcasting: Political Practices and Radio Regulation, 1919-1939,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 29 no. 2 (1985): 185.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

provoqué un apport considérable quant à l'autodétermination du Canada, particulièrement sur le plan naval et, partant, a favorisé l'image politique de ce pays à l'échelle internationale."⁸⁶

Another article dealing with the American presence in Canadian radio comes from Michel Filion and his 1997 "La publicité américaine à la radio canadienne." Unlike Canuel, however, Filion examines American advertising and its affect on Quebec radio programming. Rather than see this as a negative development for French Canadian culture, Filion argues that American advertising in Quebec had a positive impact because "la publicité accompagne un contenu québécois."⁸⁷

Caroline Boily picked up on this with her 2004 article "L'usage de la radio dans l'enseignement secondaire à Montréal, 1920–1970," where she argued that even as radio faded from schools in favour of educational television in the 1960s, the medium had been a successful teaching tool, specifically in the teaching of the French language. She identifies "les progrès de la technique, la démocratisation de l'enseignement secondaire et la pédagogie active comme des facteurs importants dans l'institutionnalisation de la radio scolaire."⁸⁸

In addition to these articles there have been several monographs on radio in Quebec, one of which comes in the form of Greg Marc Nielsen's *Le Canada de Radio-Canada: sociologie critique et dialogisme culturel*, in which he examines the cultural differences between Quebecois and English Canadian societies with respect to radio.⁸⁹ In their survey of radio in Quebec between 1920 and 1960, Jean Du Berger, Jacques Mathieu, and Martine Roberge note that radio was part of a fundamental shift in Quebecois culture, a shift which introduced urban life and

⁸⁶ Alain Canuel, "La présence de l'impérialisme dans les débuts de la radiophonie au Canada, 1900-1928," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 20, no. 4 (1985): 58.

⁸⁷ Michel Filion, "La publicité américaine à la radio canadienne : le cas du réseau français de Radio-Canada, 1938-1958," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 51, no. 1 (1997): 92.

⁸⁸ Caroline Boily, "L'usage de la radio dans l'enseignement secondaire à Montréal, 1920-1970," *Paedagogica Historica* 40, no. 1/2 (2004): 222.

⁸⁹ Greg Marc Nielsen, *Le Canada de Radio-Canada: Sociologie Critique et Dialogisme Culturel* (Toronto: Éditions de Gref, 1994).

established new cultural practices.⁹⁰ They argue that radio helped foster a more open and democratic culture in Quebec by arguing that “avec la radio, une culture populaire fondée sur l'égalité des personnes. Le père et le curé ne furent plus seuls en position d'autorité.”⁹¹

It would difficult, however, to classify the work of French-language radio historians as exclusively revisionist. For example, in his 1994 *Radiodiffusion et société distinct: des origines de la radio jusqu'à la Révolution tranquille au Québec*, Filion notes that while radio in Quebec did develop along lines similar to other regions of North America, there were significant social and political dynamics unique to the province that require its media to be viewed as distinct from the rest of the continent.⁹² Andrew Maio has argued that the study of Quebec's print media has been limited by the revisionist approach and that a post-revisionist perspective would allow an examination of how distinct local factors shaped its development. He writes that “in Quebec, unlike in other Canadian provinces, its citizens faced undue political and religious pressures, and the print media was no exception.”⁹³ The early development of radio in the province would have been subjected to similar pressure – after all Quebec was one of two provinces that challenged the federal government at the Privy Council about whether radio fell under provincial or federal jurisdiction.

Despite the unique factors that shaped radio in Quebec, there were plenty of ways in which the development of radio in the province was analogous to experiences across the country. Just as Quebecers wanted to preserve local culture through radio, so too did Nova Scotians and Albertans. In addition to each section of the country wanting radio to reflect their culture, radio

⁹⁰ Jean Du Berger, Jacques Mathieu, and Martine Roberge, *La Radio à Québec, 1920-1960* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1997), 11.

⁹¹ Du Berger, Mathieu, and Roberge, 276.

⁹² Michel Filion, *Radiodiffusion et société distinct: des origines de la radio jusqu'à la Révolution tranquille au Québec* (Laval: Méridien, 1994).

⁹³ Andrew Maio, “A Step Past Revisionism,” *Journalism History* 37 no. 1 (2011): 53.

also led to a more open and democratic society. In fact, this point is stressed in works dealing with broadcasting throughout the Western world. In his discussion of British radio and the development of the BBC, Mark Pegg argues that “in its educational role, radio was seen as a ‘social revolution,’ a ‘great force for enlightenment’ and the ‘most important essential for an educated democracy.’”⁹⁴ In the American context J. Fred MacDonald argues that national radio “became the thread that tied together all people.”⁹⁵ While a revisionist perspective may be limited when it comes to radio, it is difficult to deny that there were many areas in which early radio development in Quebec was remarkably similar to the rest of North America.

There is a strong literature that acknowledges this middle ground and situates radio in Quebec as simultaneously distinct and as developing along similar lines to the rest of the continent. In particular, historians have extensively studied the province’s private stations and their programming. Filion has examined CKCH Hull and how the station dealt with a double mission of reflecting both regional and national identities.⁹⁶ Similarly, Renée Legris has studied theatrical radio productions that aired in Quebec between 1923 and 2008 and argues that while writers were influenced by contemporary events, the characters in these programs were critical to a culture that was in transition in these years.⁹⁷

The choice to focus specifically on Quebec has also been adopted by French Canada’s most prolific radio historian, Pierre Pagé. In one of his earliest works, *Le comique et L’humour à la radio québécoise*, Pagé argues that radio comedy in Quebec was tied to the collective experiences of Quebecers and that “par leur durée et par leur rayonnement, ils ont modifié, avec

⁹⁴ Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society, 1918-1939* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 166.

⁹⁵ J. Fred MacDonald, *Don’t Touch That Dial: Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 37.

⁹⁶ Michel Filion, *CKCH – la voix française de l’Outaouais* (Gatineau: éditions vents d’ouest, 2008).

⁹⁷ Renée Legris, *Histoire des genres dramatiques à la radio Québécoise: Sketch, radioroman, radiothéâtre, 1923-2008* (Québec: septentrion, 2011).

d'autres oeuvres de la radio, l'imaginaire québécois, et ils ont maintenu vivante une représentation humoristique de la vie quotidienne."⁹⁸ A year earlier, in the introduction of his extensive directory of Quebecois radio programmes, Pagé stressed that the items presented "ont accompli une fonction souvent modeste mais ils ont quelquefois permis l'expression irremplaçable d'un regard critique sur la vie québécoise."⁹⁹ Part of this impact, as outlined in his 1993 *Radiodiffusion et culture savante au Québec*, was the increase in radio's educational role from the Depression through the 1960s.¹⁰⁰ Picking up on this theme, his most recent work, a general survey of radio in Quebec, looks at the connection between broadcasting and French-Canadian culture. He argues that the 1968 *Loi sur la radiodiffusion* was a key moment in the history of Quebec radio because "prenant acte d'une tradition vécue depuis les origines, définissait officiellement la triple responsabilité de mandat d'une Service national de radiodiffusion: cet être un service équilibré qui renseigne, éclaire et divertisse des personnes de tous âges, aux intérêts et aux goûts divers?"¹⁰¹

Given that the work of French-Canadian historians generally focuses exclusively on Quebec, they are not used extensively here. This is not to suggest that Quebec was devoid of a vibrant radio community that included plenty of popular programs as the historiography has shown this not to be the case. My focus, however, is on the CBC's central operations and its national programming, which, for a variety of reasons that will be discussed, did not include French-language programs. The corporation did develop and air French-language material on its

⁹⁸ Pierre Pagé, *Le Comique et L'Humour à la Radio Québécois: A pérçus historiques et textes choisis, 1930-1970* (Montreal: La Presse, 1976), 42.

⁹⁹ Pierre Pagé, *Répertoire des oeuvres de la littérature radiophonique québécoise, 1930-1970* (Montreal: Fides, 1975), 29.

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Page, *Radiodiffusion et culture savante au Québec, 1930-1960: les cours universitaires à la radio, le service de Radio-College, le théâtre de répertoire internationale* (Montreal: Maxime, 1993).

¹⁰¹ Pierre Pagé, *Histoire de la radio au Québec: Information, éducation, culture* (Quebec: Éditions Fides, 2008), 18-19.

Quebec stations, but those offerings did not air nationally. As a result, the popular French-language programs that aired on both CBC and private stations were regional in their scope and intended audience and do not receive extensive attention here. While I do not specifically examine French Canadian culture, there is discussion of how the CBC attempted to reach French Canadians – both in and out of Quebec. The CBC did focus on Quebec and serving French Canadian listeners, but it was within its wider effort to provide programming to all Canadians. As a result, it is necessary to examine the corporation's efforts to serve Quebec listeners by analyzing the province as a component within the wider national system.

Through its early years the CBC simultaneously attempted to unite Canada's regions together as a collective while also providing regional content to satisfy local tastes. A complex challenge on its own, it was only one of the many obstacles the corporation needed to overcome between 1936 and 1939. It was not always successful, but the overall strategy and choice of priorities by CBC officials worked well enough that the corporation was able to slowly grow into a viable national network. Through strict financial control, aggressive public relations, patient expansion, and assertive negotiation, the CBC went from a scattered, vulnerable organization to a vibrant, national broadcaster. Along the way, it successfully integrated into an existing continental system that prevented international interference and promoted cultural exchange. It is not unreasonable to suggest that had the war started three years earlier, Canadian broadcasting would not have been prepared to meet the demands. It was only through years of investment, growth, and experience that the CBC became an essential national institution during the Second World War.

It is important to note that earning that distinction was not inevitable. The concept of public broadcasting was vulnerable in 1936 as there was a segment of the population that would

have been satisfied had the government's experiment in broadcasting ended. With the creation of the CBC, however, the notion of a national public broadcaster was given a reprieve. This was not lost on CBC officials like Gladstone Murray and Leonard Brockington: they acknowledged that significant progress was needed in order to restore the country's trust in public broadcasting. From its first day it struggled to earn that trust with a strategy based on network growth, improved broadcast standards, and thorough public relations. The CBC understood that it could not do this alone, however, and actively sought the support of private stations, national cultural organizations, and foreign broadcasters. In doing so, it strove to earn a reputation as a world-class broadcaster.

It was not perfect in its quest, however, as there were plenty of missteps along the way. For example, the CBC was unimaginative in its handling of national French-language programming. By caving to public pressure, the corporation failed to provide adequate service to Francophones across the country. The unwillingness to experiment with alternative options to provide national French-language service is part of the CBC's overall miserly financial policies. Despite its strong financial position through its early years, the corporation cut services to certain communities and refused to expand to others. In doing so, it failed to provide truly national service prior to the Second World War. In addition, the CBC was not always clear in its enforcement of the regulations, which led to plenty of complaints from listeners and announcers alike. There were moments when it seemed disinterested in its regulatory role and moments where it seemed heavy-handed and, in both cases, it did not clearly explain its decisions to Canadians. For as much as public relations represented a major tenet of its early years, its inconsistency in its regulatory role compromised the corporation's overall efforts. Despite these

shortcomings, the corporation still managed to emerge from its first three years in position to take advantage of the broadcasting opportunity presented by the Second World War.

What follows is a discussion of the corporation's growth from November 1936 to the end of 1939, arranged chronologically. Within the confines of an institutional study, I examine the various aspects of the CBC's operations in order to understand its development through this critical period in Canadian broadcasting. Where other works have examined issues like audience reception of various programs and perceptions of the CBC by other organizations, I examine the CBC's internal machinations and how it viewed these relationships. How others viewed the corporation is important, but the focus here is the corporation's understanding and interpretation of its reputation and how that affected policy decisions. Studying the CBC's internal structure and growth is essential in order to assess its public role. The corporation's expansion – in its technology, programming, and finances – were all shaped by the organization's culture and the policy decisions made by the executive and Board of Governors. As a result, the way in which listeners interacted with the CBC was directly affected by its internal structure. To assess the corporation's public role, therefore, it is first necessary to examine its internal organization.

Given the internal focus, I have relied primarily on the corporation's fonds at Library and Archives Canada. The collection features internal documents such as memos, correspondence between employees, financial and program reports, speeches, scripts, and letters from listeners. A vast majority of the documents are typed and there are carbon copies of outgoing mail. The files, which are chronologic, are organized first by the department/area under which they fall and second by the specific content in the material. For example, files relating to the engineering department have been subdivided based on theme. Therefore, the material dealing specifically

with the construction of the transmitter in Hornby, Ontario, for instance, is all contained in one file.

All files in the collection which contained material from the pre-Second World War years were consulted. It should be noted that certain files contained both CRBC and CBC material. In these cases both the CRBC and CBC documents were examined in order to understand the commission's influence on the corporation and the transition between the two organizations. Select CRBC-only files were also consulted, but only those containing material from the commission's final eighteen months. This allowed for an understanding of CRBC policies and practices while also assessing the broadcasting environment into which the CBC entered. In addition, certain key files dealing with the Second World War were also analyzed in order to assess the corporation's initial reaction to the conflict and how policies were affected. The material dealing with changes and amendments to the regulations resulting from the war, for instance, were referenced because of their immediacy to the situation whereas files relating to technological changes were not consulted because they represent long-term changes.

It should be noted that even within the wide scope of materials available in the corporation's archives, there are limitations to the sources. The daily conversations that were instrumental in building the corporation's institutional culture were not recorded. This is particularly relevant when discussing the possibility of political influence within the corporation. Where the textual record does not display a politicized culture within the CBC, it does not mean that the corporation was devoid of political influences. While it should be noted that there are moments, as will be discussed, where corporation officials openly criticized those who attempted to exert political influence over CBC programs and operations, this does not necessarily mean that similar efforts were not received differently when delivered in person. One of the limitations

of the textual record is the extent to which the conversations and office interactions, which are essential in understanding the atmosphere within the organization, are reflected. While acknowledging the limitations of the textual record, the available sources do provide plenty of insight into the corporation's day-to-day operations and the priorities of those in charge of Canada's national broadcaster.

Despite the CBC serving as a national broadcaster, audio recordings of its programs did not constitute a significant component of the research. This is primarily because the CBC did not record all its programs during the 1930s, although certain 'important' programs were kept – most notably the opening of new stations, Christmas broadcasts, and the 1939 Royal Tour. These broadcasts have been consulted and have been useful in assessing the corporation's technical development through the period. In certain cases the content has been analyzed, specifically the Royal Tour programs, but I do not undertake a thorough content analysis. This is partly because the recordings that do exist do not represent the whole of the corporation's schedule and, as a result, could lead to an imbalanced view of the CBC's programming. Despite the lack of recordings, the textual collection does contain a wide variety of program transcripts. Scripts for talks or other informational programs have been consulted and are useful because of the general uniformity of their style, with announcers reading the text. For instance, transcripts for the Chatting With the Listener series, which featured high-level employees discussing corporation policies or programs, are extremely useful in assessing the CBC's public relations and the message it wanted to send Canadians. Conversely, transcripts for radio plays or variety programs have not been consulted extensively because of the extent to which a script's meaning can

change depending on an actor's delivery. These transcripts can be useful for content analysis, but the variables in performance make them difficult to analyze for this study.¹⁰²

While the internal documents represent the core of the study, a variety of other collections have been used to provide proper context to the material. The most important of these is the Alan Plaunt Collection at the University of British Columbia. The collection provides key insights not only into Plaunt's position on broadcasting, but also on the corporation as a whole, in particular through Plaunt's correspondence with Gladstone Murray and other members of the Board of Governors. The collection also features plenty of material from the Canadian Radio League and offers a unique insight into the motivation for establishing a national broadcaster.

The corporation's archival holdings have also been supplemented by material from individual and organizational collections. Several high-level corporation employees have individual collections at Library and Archives Canada and these have been consulted in an effort to discern personal opinions on the corporation and their roles. For instance, Gladstone Murray's and Elizabeth Long's fonds include drafts of autobiographies, both of which highlight their roles in the CBC as well as their perceptions of the corporation's internal culture. Similarly, Alphonse Ouimet's papers include a piece reflecting on the challenges of broadcasting the Royal Tour while Ernest Bushnell's contain a copy of a report he penned during a 1938 trip to study the BBC. In addition, the collection of popular host Claire Wallace features transcripts of her programs during the Royal Tour, which have been useful in contrasting a private broadcaster's approach to the Tour with that of the CBC. Similarly, C.D. Howe's fonds allows for further examination of his relationship with the CBC while the position of the governing and opposition

¹⁰² Mary Vipond has addressed the lack of source material, issues associated with understanding early Canadian radio programs and their audiences, and possible ways to overcome these difficulties. Mary Vipond, "Desperately Seeking the Audience for Early Canadian Radio," in *Nation, Ideas, Identities: Essays in Honour of Ramsey Cook*, edited by Michael D. Behiels and Marcel Martel (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000), 86-96.

parties has been examined through parliamentary transcripts. These collections provide insight into these employees' personal feelings for the corporation, feelings which are not always expressed in official documents. As such, they provide further context to the corporation's internal structure and the culture within the organization through its early years.

Perhaps most important of these collections, however, is that of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. Because the CBC was particularly concerned by its relationship with private stations, maintaining positive relations with the CAB remained a priority through its early years. As a result, the CAB's reaction to various developments in broadcasting is vital to understanding the corporation's response. When combined with the CBC fonds and the papers of individual employees, the material from these collections has been brought together to offer a thorough examination of the corporation's early years.

The first chapter begins with the establishment of the corporation in November 1936 and follows its initial progress through its first six months while the second examines the balance of 1937 and how the CBC started to produce tangible results. Chapters three and four analyze the corporation's progress through 1938, with the former looking at the broadcaster's struggles in the year and the latter outlining its accomplishments. The three chapters that follow track the CBC through 1939, arguably the most important year in its history.

Since its inception, the CBC has played a central role in shaping Canadian culture. Its presence has shaped institutions like the CRTC and contributed to regulations like those governing Canadian content. It has gone from a single network that did not reach a majority of Canadians to multiple national television and radio networks. The corporation may not resemble the one of November 1936, but understanding the organization's early years is instructive in assessing its place in an increasingly digital world. As Canadians continue to move towards the

internet for broadcast content, questions about the necessity and viability of a national public broadcaster are being asked with greater regularity. These questions are not unlike those being asked in the 1930s, however, as some Canadians wondered whether a public radio network should be a priority. The CBC's efforts to overcome the scepticism surrounding public broadcasting are illustrative of how a public broadcaster can find its place as a national institution. The specific strategies of the 1930s may not work in the 21st century, but the principles and dedication to serving the public can serve as a needed reminder to the corporation of how it needs to be innovative in order to remain relevant.

Through strong leadership, hard work, and a commitment to its core principles, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation steadily grew through the late 1930s. Over time it started to overcome the problems inherited from the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission and re-defined the nature of public broadcasting in Canada. By emphasizing unity throughout the organization, the corporation developed a cohesive plan for expansion and overcame many of the obstacles presented by politicians, private broadcasters, and listeners. At the same time, the CBC actively engaged with other North American broadcasters to situate itself within a continental broadcasting structure, through which it was able to serve its domestic purpose. The process was not always easy and the CBC made its share of mistakes, but on the whole the corporation emerged from its formative period as an institution central to Canadian culture. In the summer of 1936 Canadians were upset with a commission suffering from “a clumsy set-up and inexperienced commissioners [which] has resulted in an unsatisfactory performance to date.”¹⁰³ Yet only four years later R.S. Lambert wrote an article for *Saturday Night* in which he praised the CBC, calling it “youthful, adaptable and still growing.”¹⁰⁴ Understanding the period between

¹⁰³ Confidential CRBC Memorandum, ca. October 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 2-2-4.

¹⁰⁴ R.S. Lambert, “The CBC is Not a Headache,” *Saturday Night*, November 30, 1940.

those two assessments is critical to understanding the development of public broadcasting in Canada.

Chapter One: The Road to Havana

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) officially came into existence on November 2, 1936. With little to no fanfare, the corporation replaced the country's first national public broadcaster, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) and assumed the daunting task of rehabilitating the reputation of public broadcasting in Canada. In Toronto, *The Globe* welcomed the CBC into existence by wishing the new organization the best of luck while warning that "there should be little delay in straightening out this Dominion's somewhat befuddled broadcasting system."¹ This sentiment certainly reflected the hope in the broadcasting community that the switch from the CRBC to the CBC would be the end of the uncertainty that had clouded the industry. Establishing itself as a major national institution was not the corporation's primary focus in the early days, however, as ensuring its survival, which was not a guarantee, took precedent. There were some Canadians who expected – and even hoped – that the CBC would be a short-lived experiment and broadcasting would become an exclusively private industry. Others, however, were unaware that the broadcasting structure had changed at all and, as a result, the corporation needed to take steps to highlight the change in Canadian radio. Similarly, the corporation needed to announce its arrival to broadcasters throughout North America in order to successfully integrate into the existing continental broadcasting structure. The CBC could not legitimize itself in its first six months, but it could take steps in securing its future.

Understanding its vulnerable position, the administration of the newly formed body saw November 2 as its first opportunity to truly address the issues that had plagued the CRBC and crippled the commission's ability to fulfill its mandate. As previously noted, the CRBC served as Canada's national broadcaster as well as the industry's regulatory body since its inception in

¹ "Radio," Toronto *Globe*, November 2, 1936, 9.

1933. Hamstrung by the limitations of the Radio Broadcasting Act of 1932, compromised by the commissioners' personal differences, limited by inadequate coverage, and damaged by poor public relations, the commission was largely unpopular at the end of its tenure. Understanding the situation into which it was entering, the CBC studied the industry and recognized that the first few months would be critical to regain the trust of a country that had grown tired of the poor coverage, inept fiscal control, and political scandals that had marked the first four years of public broadcasting in Canada. In focusing on these key issues, the corporation demonstrated a marked change from its predecessor, which represented a critical step in its journey towards legitimacy. By displaying a proactive approach to differentiate itself from the CRBC, the CBC was eager to prove that a world-class public broadcaster was not only possible in Canada, but also essential.

When C.D. Howe, who as Minister of Transport was responsible for broadcasting, introduced the Canadian Broadcasting Act to the House of Commons in June 1936, he argued that it would serve as a cure to the ills that had dogged the CRBC. This optimism was the result of the bill closely following the recommendations of the 1936 parliamentary committee, which was important to Howe, as he believed “that had the earlier legislation conformed more nearly to the reports of the royal commission and parliamentary committee that preceded the introduction of that legislation, perhaps we should not have wandered afield in our attempt to reach the ultimate goal.”² As a result, where the CRBC had been severely hamstrung by government control, the CBC was given a good deal of autonomy. This meant that the CBC was granted the power to “maintain and operate broadcasting stations” and “originate...and secure programs,” while also being given broad authority to “do all other things the Corporation may deem incidental or conducive to the attainment of any of the objects or the exercise of any of the

² C.D. Howe, June 15, 1936. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; First Session – Eighteenth Parliament, 3712.

powers of the Corporation.”³ Where this greater authority was most welcome, however, was in the area of finance. The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act of 1932 called for the CRBC to be financed by licence fees, but it was not specific about their collection or distribution. In contrast, the Broadcasting Act of 1936 noted that the collection of the fee would be the responsibility of the Department of Transport, which, after deducting collection costs, would transfer the funds directly to the CBC. This arrangement secured the corporation’s funding and meant that there could be no repeat of 1933, when, with Prime Minister R.B Bennett out of the country, the cabinet threatened to reduce the commission’s budget.⁴

It was also hoped that the legislation would help resolve another long-standing issue that had plagued the CRBC: relations with privately-owned stations. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB), the lobby group responsible for representing the country’s private stations, had long argued that a public network was not necessary as Canada could be adequately served by private broadcasters. During the 1932 parliamentary committee, the CAB proposed that the revenue generated by the licence fee be used to subsidize programming on private stations, which it felt would mean that “the finest artists and the finest orchestras can be delivered to the radio listener in the far northwest, just as they are today delivered to the residents of the metropolitan centres.”⁵ When the government opted for a different scheme, however, there were hopes that private broadcasters would co-operate with the new commission, as Graham Spry, one of the founders of the CRL, wrote to CAB President H.S Moore that “our interests, after all, are

³ Canadian Broadcasting Act 1936. Assented June 23, 1936. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

⁴ The cabinet relented after Charlesworth threatened to resign. Bennett was extremely upset with his ministers upon learning about the situation, which strengthened his protective attitude towards the CRBC. R.B Bennett to Hector Charlesworth, November 30, 1932. LAC Bennett Papers, Microfilm Reel M-1292.

⁵ Submission on Behalf of Canadian Association of Broadcasters to the Special Committee of the House of Commons on Radio Broadcasting, 1932. LAC MG 28 I363 1986-478 Vol. 2.

the same, even if the means we advocate are different.”⁶ Rather than cooperate, though, the CRBC and CAB frequently clashed through the four years that followed as private broadcasters were resentful of the CRBC’s regulatory role, its inability to improve Canadian programming, and its decision to air American programs. During the 1934 parliamentary committee, the CAB argued that the CRBC had actually damaged the industry, as “the result [of poor Canadian programming] is that the bulk of Canadians in Ontario and Quebec now listen to U.S. stations.”⁷

When the possibility of re-organizing the Canadian broadcasting situation became a reality following the 1935 election, the CAB was eager to have its opinions heard. In his proposal, new CAB President R.W. Ashcroft put forth a plan that was based on the fact that “we have had a convincing demonstration during the last three years as to what should *not* be done with Canadian broadcasting.”⁸ The plan called for a new public body that would serve as a national broadcaster, but unlike the CRBC there would be a board of governors with representatives from each region who could make recommendations on regulations, although ultimate regulatory control over radio would be shifted to the Minister. Ashcroft felt that such a scheme would resolve the issues between the public and private stations as “the Corporation would be a Service organization, bending every effort to enable stations to render good broadcasting to the public in their respective areas; and, on the other hand, the stations would not continue to be hampered with unnecessary restrictions and ‘verbotens’ that accomplish no good purpose.”⁹ For Ashcroft, a new broadcasting body along these lines would ultimately improve relations between the public and private broadcasters: “it is anticipated that the relations between

⁶ Graham Spry to H.S. Moore, February 23, 1932. University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 11 File 24.

⁷ Memorandum Submitted by R.W. Ashcroft, President of Dominion Broadcasters’ Association to the House of Committee on Radio Broadcasting, February 1932. LAC Bennett Papers, Microfilm Reel M-1293.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

the Corporation and the Stations would be amicable and cordial from the outset, and there is every reason to believe that this attitude would be spontaneous and could be maintained.”¹⁰

Given that the final legislation included a majority of the provisions supported by private stations, the CAB was largely satisfied with the structure of the CBC and there was a renewed optimism that private and public broadcasters could work together to provide Canada with a world-class radio system.

Before this could be achieved, however, the government needed to determine who would lead this new entity. The 1936 parliamentary committee was wary of recreating the dysfunctional management dynamic that existed in the CRBC and stated that the new organization’s Board of Governors should be created and staffed by “men of broad outlook, having knowledge of the tastes and interests of the listening public who can make a definite contribution to the solution of the problems before the corporation.”¹¹ There was very little debate on this point as even those who felt as though the CRBC could be salvaged with only small tweaks agreed that a change in leadership was essential to the survival of Canadian public broadcasting. Conservative MP Charles Cahan, who would remain a strong critic of the CBC throughout his term in Parliament, said that “it is perhaps not to be expected that Mr. Charlesworth [CRBC Chairman] would be thoroughly competent and qualified for the financial part of the work.”¹²

The Broadcasting Act of 1936 called for eleven governors to be appointed for three-year terms, but, despite the CAB’s recommendation, there were no specific regulations with regards to regional and linguistic representation. Perhaps the most obvious choice for the Board was Alan Plaunt, leader of the Canadian Radio League (CRL). Founded in 1930, the CRL supported

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Radio Broadcasting, May 26, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 287 File 14-1-1-3.

¹² Charles Cahan, June 15, 1936. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; First Session – Eighteenth Parliament, 3714.

the federal government in securing jurisdiction over radio in 1931 and advocated for the establishment of a national public broadcaster during the parliamentary hearings in 1932. The group had disbanded with the creation of the CRBC, but Plaunt revived the organization in 1935 due to his disillusionment with the commission.¹³ An extremely powerful force through the middle of the decade, the CRL has been described as the most powerful lobby group in Canadian history. The group was so prominent that Paul Martin, one of the members of the 1936 Parliamentary Committee on Radio, wrote to Plaunt to note that he was hoping “to become informed” on the issues involved in broadcasting and that “I would very much appreciate having your ideas, and possibly some material.”¹⁴ Plaunt agreed with the CAB that any national broadcaster needed a Board of Governors as a way to protect against government interference, writing in 1935 that a Board would “be regarded as trustee, the guarantee to the nation that broadcasting will be administered in a non-partisan and business-like way.”¹⁵ Plaunt further felt that those appointed to the Board needed to understand the cultural issues facing Canada in order to make policy decisions, while technical expertise could be left to the General Manager and Assistant General Manager.

Beyond his advocacy, however, Plaunt was a clear choice for the Board of Governors because he appealed to both advocates of public broadcasting and private station owners. Where the CRBC maintained a tense and occasionally heated relationship with private stations, Plaunt believed in the maintenance of private stations. Therefore, when it was announced that Plaunt had been appointed to the Board of Governors, private stations were pleased. For instance, J.G

¹³ The major change in the composition of the radio league was the departure of Graham Spry. Spry had co-founded the CRL with Plaunt in 1930 but did not return in 1935 in favour of running for the CCF in the 1935 federal election.

¹⁴ Paul Martin to Alan Plaunt, March 26, 1936, UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 3 File 9.

¹⁵ Alan Plaunt, ‘Memorandum on Broadcasting Reorganization,’ October 1935. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 7 File 13.

Hyland, manager of CJIC Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, wrote to congratulate Plaunt, saying that “I am very pleased to note that you have been appointed as a governor of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and I am sure that all the stations in Canada agree with me.”¹⁶ This reputation brought great anticipation, with one CRL supporter telling Plaunt that “I am expecting great things from you.”¹⁷

The idea that appointees to the Board did not require extensive technical knowledge of radio clearly resonated with the government, which appointed a Board that was well versed in Canadian affairs while lacking broadcasting expertise. The Vice-Chairman, René Morin, who would later go on to become the first francophone Chairman in 1940, had served as the mayor of Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, and later as an MP in his long public service career. Brigadier-General Victor Odlum was a veteran of both the Boer War and First World War who had been working as a journalist in Vancouver at the time of his appointment. The sole woman on the Board, Nellie McClung, brought her background of activism while Nathan L. Nathanson was a veteran of the film industry.¹⁸ With Father Alexandre Vachon, Colonel Wilfrid Bovey, and J. Wilfrid Godfrey rounding out the group, the corporation’s five regions were represented. In order for the appointments to be official, however, Board members had to take an oath affirming that they would uphold the principles of public broadcasting and that they would not accept any other employment in radio.¹⁹

¹⁶ J.G. Hyland to Alan Plaunt, October 2, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 15.

¹⁷ A.J.T. Taylor to Alan Plaunt, September 26, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 4 File 23.

¹⁸ In 1920 he led a group of investors in incorporating Famous Players Theatres. Ted Magder, *Canada’s Hollywood: The Canadian State and Featured Films* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 33.

¹⁹ It should also be noted that the appointments were unpaid. The full oath read: I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR that I will faithfully, truly, and impartially, to the best of my judgment, skill and ability, execute and perform the office of Governor of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and that, while I continue to hold such office, I will not accept or hold any other office or employment, or have any pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, individually or as a shareholder or partner, or otherwise, in broadcasting or, in the manufacture or distribution of radio

In examining the members of the Board, it should be noted that there were several who had ties to the Liberal Party. McClung had served as a Liberal MLA in the Alberta legislature, Morin was a member of the Liberal caucus as an MP, and Plaunt had spent the better part of the past year earning the trust of prominent Liberals. Odlum, who owned the *Vancouver Star*, was elected to the British Columbia legislature in 1924, serving as a Liberal MLA for Vancouver.²⁰ While not directly involved in politics, Nathanson, president of Famous Players Theatres, which was a partner of Paramount Pictures Corporation, was a strong supporter of the Liberal party.²¹ As Reginald Whitaker notes, during the 1935 election Nathanson donated \$10,000 to the Liberal party's Toronto finance committee and allowed a film about Mackenzie King to be shown in 221 Paramount theatres across the country.²² These strong connections to the party led Liberal publications like the *Ottawa Citizen* to tell readers that "the government is to be congratulated upon having enlisted such representative citizens to serve on the board. They should at once inspire public confidence in the new Canadian Broadcasting Corporation."²³

Appointing a Board of Governors with such strong connections to the Liberal party was a poor decision given the experience of the CRBC. Weir argues that the appointment of Thomas Maher, editor of the Conservative paper *Le Journal*, in 1933 was the first step in the

apparatus, so help me God." In addition, the Chairman would be granted a \$1,500 honorarium while members of the executive committee would receive \$1,000. All other governors would receive \$50 per board meeting, with a maximum of \$500 annually. Canadian Broadcasting Act 1936, Assented June 23, 1936.

²⁰ Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-1941* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 270.

²¹ Nathanson and his son established the Canadian Odeon theatre chain in 1941 as a response to the increasing American control of the Canadian film industry. See Paul S. Moore, "Nathan L. Nathanson Introduces Canadian Odeon: Producing National Competition in Film Exhibition," *Journal of Canadian Film Studies* 12 no. 2 (2003): 22-45.

²² Reginald Whitaker, *The Government Party: Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 81.

²³ "Radio Service for the Nation," *Ottawa Citizen*, September 11, 1936.

politicization of the commission.²⁴ The Liberal appointments to the Board of Governors could have easily caused similar damage to the CBC. What was different about the corporation, however, was the presence of men with substantial broadcasting experience leading the organization. A vast majority of accounts from broadcasters in the 1930s stress the familial atmosphere of early radio – an atmosphere that fostered one primary sentiment: to provide listeners with the best possible programs. By putting those with extensive radio experience in charge of the corporation’s daily operations, this mindset permeated the culture of the CBC, which served as a protective barrier to partisanship from the Board of Governors. Additionally, the Governors cherished the CBC’s legislative separation from the government and were wary of any efforts to assert political influence over the corporation. While there were situations where Board members used their Liberal connections to secure favourable conditions from the government, the Liberal party did not receive overtly preferential treatment from the corporation. In fact, as will be discussed, there were multiple situations in which the relationship between the Liberals and the CBC was contentious.²⁵

With the Board of Governors in place, the next step was to figure out who would lead the group as Chairman. Initially there was a thought that Plaunt would be a good option, but it was ultimately decided that Leonard Brockington, a Calgary lawyer, would serve in that role. The appointment was initially praised by the likes of the *Ottawa Citizen*, which stated that while not the most prominent member of the Board, Brockington “is highly esteemed everywhere throughout the country as one of Canada’s most brilliant members of the legal profession.”²⁶

²⁴ E.A. Weir, *The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965), 138.

²⁵ It should also be noted that the selection of the General Manager received much more attention in the press than did the Board appointments, which meant that their Liberal connections were not heavily remarked upon.

²⁶ ‘Radio Service for the Nation,’ *Ottawa Citizen*, September 11, 1936.

There were some in Western Canada, however, who did not agree with this assessment. J.F. Garrett, editor of the *Western Producer* and long-time supporter of the CRL, wrote Plaunt to express his concern over how Brockington's appointment would be received on the Prairies. Brockington was widely recognized as the Grain Exchange spokesman, meaning that in some western communities he was seen as "one of the bitterest foes to organized agriculture" and to a significant number of western Canadians his appointment "simply means that Mackenzie King has handed them another kick below the belt."²⁷ Garrett was so concerned that he advised Plaunt that a scheme of publicity needed to be immediately developed for the West in order to prevent damaging the corporation's reputation before it was even formally established. Plaunt did not seem fazed by Garrett's warnings, however, and felt that Brockington "knows how to handle the Board with tact and firmness," "will stand for no government or community interference," and "no better man could be found in all Canada."²⁸

Comfortable with its chairman, the Board of Governors went to work on finding someone to lead the administrative side of the corporation as General Manager. This was really the first opportunity for the CBC to truly distinguish itself from the CRBC. For many Canadians, Hector Charlesworth, the first and only chairman of the CRBC, was the embodiment of everything that was wrong with public broadcasting. Eager to avoid a similar fate, Gladstone Murray, a Canadian who had found a significant level of success working for Sir John Reith at the BBC in London, was named General Manager. In his early years, Murray had founded the *McGill Daily*, worked for the *Montreal Herald*, been selected as a Rhodes scholar and met Reith through his

²⁷ J.F. Garrett to Alan Plaunt, September 11, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 10.

²⁸ Alan Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, September 25, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 7 File 24.

work for League of Nations Union.²⁹ In his position as Director of Press Services for the BBC Murray had managed the occasionally tense relationship between the BBC and the British press and earned a strong reputation. His appointment as General Manager caused some disappointment in Britain, as the *Daily Record and Mail* in Glasgow reported that “the BBC’s loss will certainly be our Dominion’s gain.”³⁰ And while Murray felt a “keen regret at the prospect of having to part company with a host of good friends in the United Kingdom,” he was grateful for “the honour of being considered for such an opportunity of service to my country.”³¹

That Murray was honoured to accept the position was not surprising given the influential role he had already played in the development of Canadian broadcasting. He understood that for Canadian broadcasting to be successful it needed to integrate into an existing global broadcasting community. In 1933 he authored a comprehensive report on the state of radio in Canada in which he argued that “Canadian broadcasting should develop on its own distinctive lines, availing itself of the best experience of the rest of the world, yet being distinguished as essentially Canadian.”³² Through the next three years, Murray continued to monitor the broadcasting situation in Canada from London and lamented the poor public response to the CRBC. Feeling as though he could improve the situation, Murray wrote to Alan Plaunt in 1935 saying that he “could succeed in Canada where the others have failed: that I could do something of value in broadcasting, and perhaps something important for Canada internationally and imperially.”³³ Murray stated that he

²⁹ ‘Murray Biographical Information,’ LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds, MG 30 E186, Vol. 2, File Murray, W.E.G. – Biographer

³⁰ ‘BBC’s Loss,’ *Daily Record and Mail* (Glasgow), September 24, 1936. LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds MG 30 E186 Vol. 14, Murray’s Scrapbook.

³¹ “Managership Offered to BBC Official,” *Northern Daily Telegraph*, September 23, 1936. LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds MG 30 E186 Vol. 14, Murray’s Scrapbook.

³² Gladstone Murray, “National Radio in Canada: Report by Major Gladstone Murray, Director of Public Relations, British Broadcasting Corporation,” submitted July 25, 1933. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 2-2-3.

³³ Gladstone Murray to Alan Plaunt, March 7, 1935. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 3, File 14.

was willing to do whatever it took to help the Canadian situation, so much so that he would avoid any commitments in Great Britain “if there is the faintest prospect in Canada.”³⁴

Despite his clear ambition, the prospects in Canada did appear to be faint through the summer of 1936. While Murray had long been the preferred choice of Alan Plaunt as well as other supporters of the Canadian Radio League, it was Minister of Transport C.D. Howe who ultimately had the power to make the final appointment. That being the case, it was important, given the political scandals of the CRBC, that appointments to the CBC not have the slightest hint of partisanship.³⁵ As W.D. Euler, a Liberal MP from Waterloo, Ontario said in 1935, radio was too important to be left to private interests and “politics must be kept out of it and it must be so conducted that the confidence of the Canadian public may be maintained.”³⁶ Plaunt and the CRL agreed that the appointment needed to be based purely on ability, as “the success of the...broadcasting corporation will depend upon the calibre of the appointments made.”³⁷ With this emphasis on finding the best possible individual, Howe was sceptical that Murray fit the criteria, a scepticism that was largely the result of persistent rumours about Murray’s proclivity for alcohol.³⁸ Plaunt attempted to assure the Minister that the rumours had “not a shred of basis” and summoned references from employees at the BBC in order to “put such malicious gossip to

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ In his memoir Hector Charlesworth recounted a story where R.B Bennett yelled at a man during a cocktail party when it was suggested that Charlesworth’s appointment had been the result of a political favour. In addition, the appointment of Thomas Maher, who had served as a Conservative candidate in the riding of Charlevoix-Saguenay during the 1930 election, politicized the commission and cast doubt as to the qualifications of the commissioners.

³⁶ W.D. Euler, April 16, 1935. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons, Sixth Session-Seventeenth Parliament, 2776.

³⁷ Canadian Radio League Memorandum, June 7, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 7 File 21.

³⁸ Knowlton Nash devotes the better part of a chapter to the debate over who would serve as General Manager. He identifies Murray’s perceived alcoholism as the key issue and titles the chapter “A Booze Problem for the CBC.” Knowlton Nash, *The Microphone Wars: A History of Triumph and Betrayal at the CBC* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), 127-141.

rest.”³⁹ Two weeks after writing the Minister, Plaunt felt confident that he had been able to assuage Howe’s fears that Murray’s drinking was not a problem and that it “was an issue that was grossly, absurdly exxaggerated. [sic]”⁴⁰

Howe had not been so convinced, however, and was seriously considering Reginald Brophy, NBC’s head of station relations. While Brophy, who was Canadian, received the endorsement of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, it is important to note that he was not heavily opposed by all those who supported Murray. J.F. Garrett believed that Murray was the best choice for the position, but felt that Brophy would be “the best alternative.”⁴¹ For some members of the CRL, there was a sense that the Liberal government, which had been so eager to reform the CRBC, would not make an unqualified appointment. John W. Dafoe, editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, tried to assure Plaunt that “the Government has given a good many evidences of its sincerity in its desire to establish publicly controlled radio” and that they would not jeopardize the endeavour by appointing “someone not in sympathy with their purposes and not competent for the job.”⁴² One of Brophy’s biggest assets was his experience in both Canadian and American radio, which would have been an asset given the new corporation’s need to cooperate with American stations. That being the case, Howe felt Brophy’s experience in the United States better prepared him for the realities of Canadian broadcasting than did Murray’s British experience.⁴³

³⁹ Alan Plaunt to C.D. Howe, June 11, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 7 File 21.

⁴⁰ Alan Plaunt to John W. Dafoe, June 26, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 7 File 22.

⁴¹ J.F. Garrett to Alan Plaunt, April 7, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 10.

⁴² Dafoe felt as though Howe would appoint Brophy, but did not believe that it was an issue worth further representations to the Minister. John W. Dafoe to Alan Plaunt, June 17, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections. Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 3.

⁴³ C.F. Crandall to Alan Plaunt, June 17, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 2.

It should be noted that there does not appear to have been any serious consideration of potential candidates from the Canadian broadcasting industry. The explanation of this is rather pragmatic, however, and was born out of the experience of the CRBC. As noted, Hector Charlesworth had no broadcasting experience when he was appointed as CRBC Chairman. Given the commission's difficulties, there was a sense that a similar appointment needed to be avoided and the new leader of Canadian public broadcasting had to have high level experience at a national broadcaster. With the unpopularity of the CRBC, the other commissioners were not viable options. Canadian private stations were local, and while some station managers had experience as affiliates of the CRBC or American networks, there was nobody in the private ranks who had substantial experience operating a *national* network. As a result, Canada had to look abroad for its General Manager. To be certain, the appointee had to be Canadian, but the national network experience was the primary qualification of the two principal candidates.

Despite Howe's support, Plaunt was not comforted by Brophy's experience and sent a memo to CRL members calling the support for Brophy "a sinister lobby" and arguing that "responsible opinion would entertain the most lively misgivings if someone were chosen whose whole association hitherto had been with one branch or other dominant commercial group of this continent."⁴⁴ Still weary of Brophy's candidacy, he wrote Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King the next day to vouch for Murray, saying that his record at the BBC was impeccable and any rumours of a demotion, extravagant spending on official trips, or excessive drinking were untrue.⁴⁵ During the CBC Board of Governors' preliminary meeting in late September 1936, Howe stated that while Brophy could likely be had for a lower salary than

⁴⁴ Canadian Radio League Memo entitled 'A Sinister Lobby,' July 2, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 406 File 23-2.

⁴⁵ Alan Plaunt to William Lyon Mackenzie King, July 3, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 7 File 23.

Murray, he would support whatever decision the Board made.⁴⁶ As Plaunt had the support of the Board, Murray was named the first General Manager of the CBC. The debate over the General Manager was important not only in filling the position, but also in setting a precedent whereby Plaunt and the Board of Governors had the ear of the Prime Minister in situations where they disagreed with Howe and his policies. This would later prove crucial as the two sides would frequently disagree over policy matters.

Simon J. Potter has argued that Murray's appointment was part of a larger trend where British influence played a significant role in the development of Canadian public broadcasting. He argues that while the BBC did not have a "coherent master plan," BBC officials in the 1920s "were keen to spread the gospel of public broadcasting all around the world, due to a shared conviction that public broadcasting was the best type of broadcasting and a desire to arrest the spread of U.S.-style commercial broadcasting and American cultural influence."⁴⁷ Potter points out that the CRL had unsuccessfully lobbied to have Murray appointed as Chairman of the CRBC and that Plaunt's desire to have Murray head the CBC was actually welcome news at Broadcasting House in London. Sir John Reith had suspected that Murray was responsible for leaking confidential information to the British press and informed him in April 1936 that if he accepted the Canadian job he would not be publicly dismissed from the BBC. This prompted a fractious falling out between Murray and the BBC, with Murray claiming that he had been the victim of a smear campaign and Felix Greene meeting with Alan Plaunt to warn him about Murray's character.⁴⁸ Potter argues that, despite his strong imperialistic tendencies, Murray was

⁴⁶ Minutes of the First Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, September 26-27, 1936. LAC RG 41 Microfilm Reel T3040.

⁴⁷ Simon J. Potter, "Britishness, the BBC, and the Birth of Canadian Public Broadcasting, 1928-1936," in *Communicating in Canada's Past: Essays in Media History*, edited by Gene Allen and Daniel J. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 81-82.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

presented as a worldly candidate who would not sell out to American interests while drawing on occasionally contradictory ideas of broadcasting.⁴⁹ Perhaps the most critical aspect of the debate, however, was the contentious way in which Murray left the BBC, which foreshadowed his eventual departure from the CBC in 1942.

Despite the circumstances, the appointment did bring with it some much needed good publicity for the corporation, partly because of Murray's British connection. In November, James Wedgwood Drawbell wrote in *Maclean's* that the CBC had a top quality executive in Murray, who at the BBC "was the personality that bridged the gap between a struggling new art and a critical body of opinion outside" and that he "kept his finger on the pulse of British democracy."⁵⁰ While it was understood that this appointment did not mean that listeners would suddenly change their listening preferences and immediately tune into Canadian stations, it did create a newfound interest in Canadian broadcasting. As the Port Arthur, ON *Daily-Times Journal* noted, the appointment "may be expected to introduce a new era in Canadian radio and the progress under Major Murray will be watched with interest."⁵¹

Another one of the people ushering in this new era was, ironically, an influential figure in the initial push towards public radio, Assistant General Manager Augustin Frigon. Where Murray brought a public relations and programming background to the CBC, Frigon brought a strong and well-respected technical background. Frigon was an electrical engineer by trade and had held a variety of professional positions, most notably serving as the Director General of Technical Education in Quebec. What made him particularly appealing to the CBC was his position on the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting in 1928-1929. Known as the Aird

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ James Wedgwood Drawbell, "Canada's New Radio Head," *Maclean's*, November 15, 1936. LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds, MG 30 E186 Vol. 14, Murray's Scrapbook.

⁵¹ "The New Radio Manager," *The Daily Times-Journal* (Port Arthur, ON), September 28, 1936. LAC C.D. Howe Papers MG 27 III B20 Vol. 204, File Clippings Radio (6)

Commission after its chairman Sir John Aird, Frigon helped author a report which concluded that “in a country of the vast geographical dimensions of Canada, broadcasting will undoubtedly become a great force in fostering a national spirit and interpreting national citizenship.”⁵²

While this sympathy towards national broadcasting and engineering expertise were welcome, that he was a French Canadian was also a major asset to the Corporation. The CRBC’s three-year tenure was marked by major controversies over linguistic and regional representation and it was critical for the CBC that it overcome those problems. The Frigon appointment was the first step in that process. In fact, when Frigon was suggested by René Morin at the Board’s preliminary meeting in September 1936, it was pointed out that “it was essential that no racial misunderstanding be permitted to jeopardize the Corporation’s work from the outset.”⁵³ At its first official meeting in November, the Board of Governors re-affirmed that the CBC “would function as a free body, independent of partisan political considerations...ever mindful of the necessity of maintaining just and generous relations between the two mother races.”⁵⁴ In unanimously approving Frigon’s appointment, the Board of Governors was clear in its belief that he could help overcome these long-standing issues.

With the Board of Governors and top administrators in place, the CBC was set to begin the process of distinguishing itself from the CRBC. The great irony of this was that the majority of the 133-member CRBC staff was retained and became the staff of the CBC. While this could have been a cause for concern, Murray, Frigon and the Board felt as though inheriting an experienced staff was a strong point for the corporation. There may have been debate over the exact causes of the commission’s failures, but it was generally agreed by people in the industry

⁵² Report of The Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, September 11, 1929, 6.

⁵³ Minutes of the Preliminary Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, September 26-26, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615, Microfilm Reel T3040.

⁵⁴ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, November 2-4, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615, Microfilm Reel T3040.

that the employees were not one of them. In their final meeting, the commissioners of the CRBC “desired to place on record its deep appreciation of the loyalty and efficient co-operation of the men and women who have constituted the personnel of its staff” and that all employees “had contributed with zeal and ability towards making public service broadcasting and betterment of radio conditions a reality in Canada.”⁵⁵ It was a group that included Ernest Bushnell as the General Supervisor of Programmes, a man who, according to one of the most influential women in early radio, Elizabeth Long, was “a frank and imaginative top executive.”⁵⁶ Another holdover was Frank Willis, who in the summer of 1936 was one of most recognizable figures in North American radio for his coverage of the Moose River Mine Disaster.⁵⁷ Upon his death in 1969, *The Mail Star* eulogized that “in the innovative years of CBC, he personified an institution, cherishing the responsibility of linking Canadians to Canadians and making them aware of their identities.”⁵⁸ Willis was really emblematic of a staff united in its responsibility to serve the public. Long recalled that “we realized our personal responsibility of broadcasting to the Canadian people – in fact when we were hired, we were told that our main duty was to serve the people of Canada.”⁵⁹

The next step in providing that service was to address the CRBC’s issues in the broadcasting realm. As Graham Spry said in September 1936, “the appointments are entirely satisfactory and the only small problem left is making broadcasting popular and useful. If the

⁵⁵ Minutes of the 174th Meeting of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, October 30, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 547 File 2-2-10.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Long, Unpublished Memoirs. LAC RG 41 Vol. 405 File 23-1-6

⁵⁷ This was one of the biggest radio news stories in the history of the medium at the time. For more information, see chapter seven.

⁵⁸ “A Famous Radio Voice is Stilled,” *The Mail Star*, October 26, 1969. LAC RG 41 Vol. 50 File 2-3-6-3.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Long, Unpublished Memoirs. LAC RG 41 Vol. 405 File 23-1-6. The general historiography of radio is full of similar accounts from radio pioneers around the world. Early broadcasters often felt connected by the public service nature of their operations and cherished that bond. So while the CBC did not have a monopoly on placing a priority on public service, it is important to note that this mindset was stressed to new employees when they were hired.

results are not favourable, there is nothing left for us but the tall timbers of advocacy of the glories of private ownership.”⁶⁰ Perhaps the biggest task for the Board in preventing this outcome was to establish a clear financial structure for the corporation. The first step was the legislation that did not allow the House of Commons to withhold the revenue from the licence fees as it had with the CRBC, an act that Charlesworth correctly predicted “would handicap the work of the Commission to a very large extent.”⁶¹ In addition to the guarantee of the licence fee, the Broadcasting Act also contained a provision authorizing the Minister of Finance to provide an annual loan of up to \$500,000 for capital works.⁶²

With the new legislation giving more financial freedom to the corporation, it was important to establish clearly defined rules and procedures to monitor its finances. Murray stressed the need to quickly find a certified accountant to serve as treasurer in order to maintain a “rigid” control of expenses.⁶³ At the Board meeting in December, Harry Baldwin was hired to implement this control, but Murray was so eager to establish a culture of fiscal responsibility within the corporation that he did not wait for the appointment to send a memo to all employees calling for greater control of expenses. While admitting that “no doubt the constitutional difficulties of the Radio Commission contributed to anomalies in financial methods,” he called on employees to take greater care with everything from taxi rides to long distance phone calls.⁶⁴ Murray was focused on ensuring that every possible step was being taken to avoid unnecessary expenditures. With the CBC producing programmes primarily in Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg,

⁶⁰ Graham Spry to Alan Plaunt, September 26, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 4, File 20.

⁶¹ Hector Charlesworth to Watson Sellar, February 14, 1933. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33, File 2-2-4.

⁶² Provision 16, Canadian Broadcasting Act, 1936, Assented June 23, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

⁶³ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, November 2-4, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 File T3040.

⁶⁴ CBC Internal Memo No. 4, Gladstone Murray to All Staff, December 1, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

and Vancouver, treasurer's cashiers were hired at each location in order to assist with the payment of artists while also controlling "other expenditures at the branch."⁶⁵

These initial steps paid off as, starting with the Annual Report for the 1936-1937 fiscal year reporting an operating surplus of \$128,819.75, the corporation reported annual budget surpluses through the end of the Second World War in 1945. That the corporation was able to achieve a surplus was remarkable in part because it had inherited a number of financial obligations from the CRBC, which included lease agreements with stations across the country as well as a wire line contract with the CPR and CNR for \$375,000.⁶⁶ The contract provided for thirty-two-and-a-half hours a week of national service, which worked out to \$221.90 per hour. From its beginnings the CRBC struggled with this rate and as early as December 1932, Russell Kelley, who owned his own advertising agency, complained to Charlesworth that the rates were prohibitive and opined that "the land line companies have been short-sighted in placing their charges so high and...we would have more good Canadian programmes on the air today from private sources but for the lack of foresight in this connection."⁶⁷ In November 1936, *Variety* magazine reported that the contract accounted for 40% of licence fee revenues and was "possibly the chief drawback to the success of Canadian broadcasting."⁶⁸

The CRBC was unable to re-negotiate the contract and the prohibitive cost plagued the commission through its four years, leading the 1936 parliamentary committee to report that as soon as possible it would be important to "review, readjust, or amend the contracts for wire line

⁶⁵ Harry Baldwin to George Taggart, April 23, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 130 File 6-6.

⁶⁶ CRBC Memorandum of Liabilities and Obligations Under Existing Contracts and Leases October 31, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 97 File 3-16-9.

⁶⁷ Russell T. Kelley to Hector Charlesworth, December 16, 1932. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-2-13-2.

⁶⁸ "40% of Canadian Radio Revenue Goes to Wires Controlled by Monopoly," *Variety*, November 11, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 400 File 23-1-3.

networks.”⁶⁹ Murray agreed with the committee and had long felt as though the arrangements were “grossly unfair” and that “the lines problem will have to be tackled early.”⁷⁰ This was critical because of the way in which the national network operated. When it took over from the CRBC, the CBC, either through lease or direct ownership, operated eight stations, while fourteen privately owned stations supplemented the network to provide further coverage of CBC programs.⁷¹ Locally owned stations across the country were eager to join the CBC network because it provided hours of programming while also connecting the community to the rest of the country. It was these smaller rural stations that were most affected by the wire line rates as the cost of joining the network was prohibitive, particularly in more isolated regions. Advertisers were also agitating for a renegotiation of the contract as a larger network meant an expanded market. C.M. Pasmore of the MacLaren Advertising Company wrote Murray in October 1936 asking him to renegotiate the contract, as a reduction in fees “would be the quickest means by which the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation could produce definite evidence of improvement in the service of broadcast entertainment to Canadian listeners.”⁷² What was worse, however, was the public perception that the rates had reached such a point that they were interfering with stations’ ability to air National Hockey League (NHL) games. An editorial in *The Vernon News*

⁶⁹ Third and Final Report of the Special Committee on the Canadian Radio Commission, May 26, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 287 File 14-1-3.

⁷⁰ Gladstone Murray to Alan Plaunt, November 2, 1935. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Box 3, File 15.

⁷¹ Twenty-six of the nation’s sixty-four stations in operation were a part of the national network. The corporation operated stations in Halifax, NS, Chicoutimi, QC, Quebec City, QC, Montreal, QC, Ottawa, ON, Toronto, ON, Windsor, ON, and Vancouver. Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission Memorandum of Liabilities and Obligations Under Existing Contracts and Leases, October 31, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 97 File 3-16-9.

⁷² C.M. Pasmore to Gladstone Murray, October 23, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 218 File 11-22-2-2.

pointed out that “hockey fans are enraged” while the *Kelowna Courier* and *Penticton Herald* asked “where are the hockey broadcasts?”⁷³

With so much agitation for a new agreement, Frigon went to work negotiating on behalf of the corporation and was quickly able to come to terms on a deal in early 1937. Although the contract was not finalized until November, it provided a good deal of relief for the corporation as it called for an annual rate of \$515,000 for sixteen hours a day, lowering the hourly rate for national service to \$78.60.⁷⁴ With the substantial savings from the wire contract, Murray prioritized finding similar reductions in expenses as he felt as though the CRBC did not maintain strict enough financial controls. To that end, all requisitions over \$100 needed to be approved by Murray and local managers were unable to approve expenditures over \$2. By May 1937 Murray expressed satisfaction with the new financial controls, telling Frigon that, along with Baldwin, “we take some satisfaction from the fact that the control has had a restraining influence and has already saved the Corporation many unnecessary expenditures.”⁷⁵ Searching for any efficiency was one of the primary responsibilities of John C. Stadler, the Assistant Treasurer, who tackled the procedures for issuing cheques, cleaning, and approving expense accounts, which elicited this response from Baldwin: “You are doing just what I hoped you would do and, if you can bring your reformatations about, we shall all have much to be grateful for. My only fear is that your zeal might frighten someone.”⁷⁶

This control of finances was only one part of the corporation’s larger emphasis on separating itself from the CRBC. Given Murray’s background in dealing with the press, he

⁷³ “Hockey Fans are Enraged,” *The Vernon News*, November 12, 1936; “Where are the Hockey Broadcasts?” *Kelowna Courier*, November 12, 1936; “Where are the Hockey Broadcasts?” *Penticton Herald*, November 12, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 218 File 11-22-2-2.

⁷⁴ Wire Line Contract between the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canadian Pacific Railway, and Canadian National Railway, November 17, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 80, File 3-11-1.

⁷⁵ Gladstone Murray to Augustin Frigon, May 31, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 130 File 6-6.

⁷⁶ Harry Baldwin to John C. Stadler, March 20, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 130 File 6-6.

understood that cultivating a positive public image was essential to the corporation's long-term success. Throughout its tenure, the CRBC had been accused of being an insider's club that was no more than a propaganda tool for the government. In 1934, for example, Burton Till, producer of *Hymns and Ballads* on CFRB Toronto, wanted to move the program to the CRBC and wrote to Charlesworth to argue that the program "would be a credit to the station," but that "I have been told that one has to have 'pull' to get on any Commission programs."⁷⁷ The program was declined and Charlesworth vehemently denied the allegation, but Till was convinced that there was something sinister going on as "not one of you have given me any real business-like reason why the program could not replace the half hour of recordings, which totals up to the four letter word – PULL."⁷⁸ In order to avoid similar allegations being lofted against the CBC, Murray required each department to maintain detailed diaries of their operations. This was particularly important for departments dealing with programming as it would ensure that there was no preferential treatment towards any particular group.⁷⁹

But perhaps the strongest sign of the CBC's desire to distance itself from the CRBC was the manner in which it dealt with Charlesworth. At the first meeting of the Board of Governors in November 1936 there was agreement "as to the difficulties which would be encountered in absorbing him in the Corporation's services" and, therefore, a severance package of \$4,000 per year for four years would be offered.⁸⁰ Charlesworth had been the face of the CRBC and was on the receiving end of many of the complaints about the system. As such, dismissing him was not a difficult decision for the Board of Governors, but it was an important step in distinguishing the CBC from its predecessor. Even though Brockington did not want corporation employees to

⁷⁷ Burton Till to Hector Charlesworth, February 11, 1934. LAC RG 41 Vol. 40 File 2-2-8-2.

⁷⁸ Burton Till to Hector Charlesworth, March 2, 1934. LAC RG 41 Vol. 40 File 2-2-8-2.

⁷⁹ CBC Internal Memorandum, April 1, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

⁸⁰ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Governors, November 2-4, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Reel T3040.

publicly disparage the CRBC – “they had done a difficult job under the most adverse circumstances, and the new Corporation should...be the first to recognize that” – any resemblance to the commission needed to be downplayed in order to maintain popular support across the country.⁸¹ Graham Spry went so far as to stress that “the new commission should not publicly appear to be responsible for the present programmes” given the negative listener reaction, but “when the programmes they and Murray inaugurate do begin, there should be a lot of ballyhoo and preparation; Brockington should speak, Murray should speak, there should be real publicity.”⁸²

Early on, the corporation did manage to create some positive public response, with a Port Arthur *Evening News-Chronicle* editorial in February 1937 expressing gratitude for the proactive way in which the corporation “appears to making a genuine and worthwhile effort to elevate the standard of programs which are given as distinctly Canadian programs” while also arguing that “the Corporation and its management seems keenly alive to the tastes of the people.”⁸³ The CBC felt that these types of positive reports in the press were signs that its public relations efforts had been a success, with the first annual report noting in April 1937 that “the co-operation of the press in publicizing the work and programs of the Corporation has increased considerably” while “the general editorial backing of the Canadian newspapers and periodicals indicates a natural alliance between the press and public service broadcasting.”⁸⁴

Internally, CBC officials felt as though a similar effort to distinguish itself was also required for employees, the vast majority of which had been inherited from the CRBC. The

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Graham Spry to Alan Plaunt, September 26, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 4 File 20.

⁸³ “Work of the Broadcasting Corporation,” *The Evening News-Chronicle (Port Arthur)*, February 10, 1937. LAC C.D. Howe Papers, MG 27 III B20 Vol. 204, File Clippings Radio (6).

⁸⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report, 1936-1937. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds, MG 30 E481, Vol. 45.

Commission's internal structure had not been very well defined, so the corporation immediately set out to resolve this as the second internal memo sent to all employees provided a clear outline of the organization's structure. The corporation would be divided into five different production centres, each one responsible for program development and relations with private stations in its region while major functions such as finances and public relations would be the responsibility of the executive in Ottawa.⁸⁵ Employees were cautioned that "scarcity of money will restrict the original staff to skeleton dimensions, but the organization will be so framed as to permit...development as and when resources are available."⁸⁶ Adherence to this structure was a long-term priority for the corporation, as a 1938 memo outlining a change in the hierarchy warned that "any avoidable lapse in observing this procedure will be regarded as a serious breach of discipline."⁸⁷ In noting that "broadcasting is a business which by its nature necessitates more prolonged and concentrated work than probably any other business," the CBC laid down clear guidelines with regards to every aspect of employees' responsibilities.⁸⁸ Perhaps the biggest sign of the corporation's desire to change the culture within broadcasting came from its first internal memo, entitled "Leakage of Information." Murray stressed that employees were not to discuss corporation operations "with outsiders" as "there are forces at work constantly alert to slow down our progress and to damage our activity."⁸⁹ Murray did stress that he had "so much confidence in the loyalty and devotion of the staff that I feel I am issuing this instruction by way of reminder," but just in case "of misplaced confidence, disciplinary action will follow, as much

⁸⁵ The production centres were in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver.

⁸⁶ CBC Internal Memorandum No. 2, Undated. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

⁸⁷ CBC Internal Memorandum No. 73, October 28, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

⁸⁸ CBC Internal Memorandum No. 3, November 16, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

⁸⁹ CBC Internal Memorandum No. 1, November 18, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

for the protection of the rest of the staff as for safeguarding the vital interests of the Corporation.”⁹⁰

For as much as the corporation was eager to distance itself from the commission, it should be noted that the CRBC had set the stage for the further development of Canadian radio. Gordon Olive, who served as the chief engineer for both the CRBC and CBC, wrote in March 1936 that “in all truth...the network broadcasting system operated in Canada today, in spite of the natural hazards and handicaps which in the early years of operation have retarded its development, is capable of carrying across five time zones of the Dominion, radio programs with transmission quality equal to that found in any other country.”⁹¹ While these comments may have been shaped by Olive’s continuing position within the CRBC, his perspective never changed, telling an audience in 1951 that the early CBC developments like the new wire line contract were “three years of technical planning of CRBC engineers [beginning] to pay off.”⁹² Many listeners did not share this optimistic view of the continuity between the CRBC and CBC, however, which encouraged the corporation to disassociate itself from the commission as much as possible. But since the public had for so long understood the national broadcaster to be the CRBC, the corporation was constantly fighting to brand itself as being a distinct body.

In fact, it was common for the CBC to receive letters addressed to the ‘Radio Commission’ through its early years. This was a point of contention for Murray. For example, when the Assistant to the President of Imperial Oil informed Murray that he had discovered an error in an article from *Northern News* in Kirkland Lake, ON, Murray responded by conceding that “I suppose it is too much to expect that the public should realize just what the situation is

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ G.W. Olive, “Radio Network Broadcasting in Canada,” *Electrical Digest*, March 1936. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 22 File Historical Articles by Augustin Frigon and Gordon W. Olive, 1936-1951.

⁹² G.W. Olive, ‘Evolution of CBC Engineering Department,’ December 12, 1951. LAC RG 41 Vol. 74 File 3.

with regard to broadcasting, but so co-operation as yours should do away with much of the ignorance.”⁹³ Further emphasizing the need for the CBC to brand itself was the fact that the sale of radios in Canada had been strong through the 1930s. While there was a noticeable dip in sales at the beginning of the decade, the annual sales of radios increased from 130,493 in 1933 to 249,191 in 1936.⁹⁴ With the size of the radio audience continuing to increase, it was important for the CBC to be proactive in its efforts to distinguish itself from the CRBC.

For as much as the corporation was active in its efforts to brand itself, it was generally understood that the most effective way to do distinguish itself was by completing the construction of a high power national network. This was so important that Alan Plaunt believed that network expansion would determine “to a very great extent the success of the project of nationalization.”⁹⁵ The 1932 Radio Broadcasting Act did allow for an expansion of the national network through the construction of new stations, but financial difficulties prevented this, which was a major contributor to the negative public perception of the commission. Martha Black, MP for Yukon, gave expression to this discontent in the House of Commons when she argued that “as far as the Yukon is concerned the radio is almost entirely worthless.”⁹⁶ In response to complaints about coverage, the CBC immediately devised a plan to expand the network. At the second meeting of the Board of Governors in December 1936, Frigon presented a plan to extend the corporation’s coverage from 49% of the population to 85%. This involved the construction or acquisition of seventeen new stations across the country at a cost of approximately \$2.2

⁹³ Gladstone Murray to W. Frank Prendergast, December 5, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 218 File 11-22-2-2.

⁹⁴ R.C. Poulter, ‘Radio Trade Builder’s Estimate of Radio Receivers in use at end of 1937,’ circa. 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 345 File 16-10.

⁹⁵ Alan Plaunt, “Memorandum on Broadcasting Reorganization,” October 1935. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 7 File 13.

⁹⁶ Martha Louise Black, June 19, 1936. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; First Session Eighteenth Parliament, 3940.

million.⁹⁷ The highlight of the plan was the construction of four high power regional transmitters, one each for the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, and Prairies.⁹⁸ Before it could proceed, the board needed C.D Howe's approval for the \$500,000 loan, which proved to be more difficult than expected. When Howe was first approached with the expansion plans in January 1937, he was hesitant to approve the scheme because he felt that the Board's most important function "lies in the direction of building more suitable and satisfactory programmes."⁹⁹ In a pessimistic tone, he informed the Board that "as more financial support than that covered by the present Broadcasting Act cannot possibly be forthcoming until better programmes are in evidence, the whole situation is discouraging, to say the least."¹⁰⁰

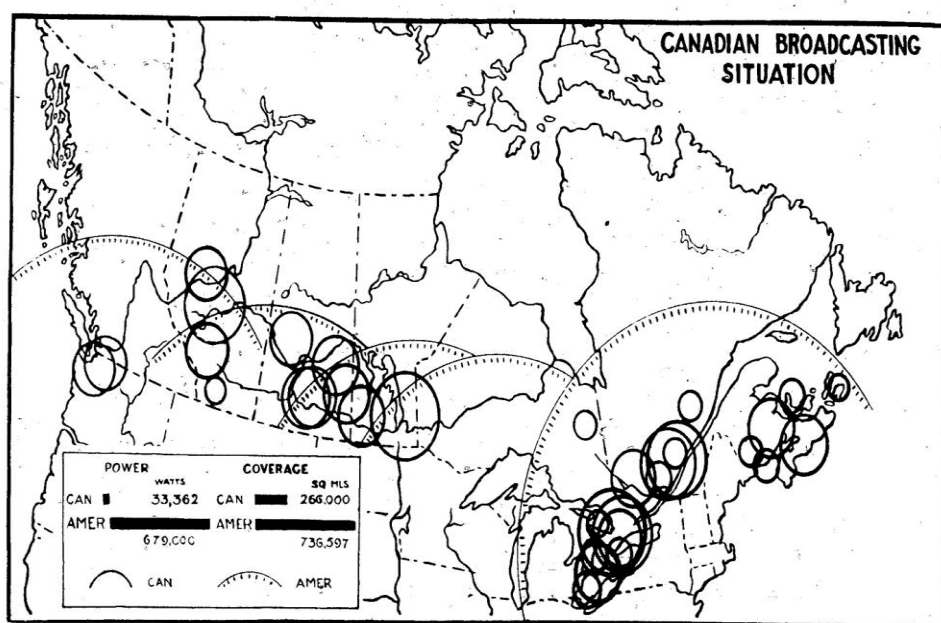


Figure 1 Map of coverage by American and Canadian stations. *Saturday Night*, January 24, 1931.

⁹⁷ Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Board of Governors, December 17-19, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Reel T3040.

⁹⁸ A high power station in British Columbia was not a priority at this point as the corporation owned CRCV (Later CBR), Vancouver's highest power station, and the topography of the province made a central high power station unnecessary. A series of low power local stations was the best way to initiate coverage in the province,

⁹⁹ C.D. Howe to Leonard Brockington, January 4, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 14 File 6.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

While the Board of Governors did not agree with Howe's point of view, it was felt as though some alteration to the plan was necessary in order to secure government funding. Frigon suggested to Brockington that it might be advisable to "proceed immediately with the erection of the two 50 kilowatt stations and get prepared without delay to build the two similar stations early next year. This would give time to finance the 5 kilowatt stations with the help of the Government or otherwise."¹⁰¹ This was a more attractive option to Howe, as the estimates for each new station was just over \$300,000.¹⁰² The decision was made to start with the transmitters in Quebec and Ontario while holding off on construction in the Maritimes and Prairies, in part because those stations would draw substantial advertising revenues which would help off-set the additional operating costs.¹⁰³ After all, Ontario and Quebec did combine to represent more than half of the radio licences purchased in the 1936-1937 fiscal year.¹⁰⁴

In addition, the official opening of CRCV Vancouver in February demonstrated the benefits of a new station. During the inaugural broadcast, "John Citizen" dedicated the station by saying:

Ladies and Gentlemen...this is a citizen of Canada...speaking from the great Pacific Ocean...opening the new studios and high-power transmitter which is to be the authentic voice of British Columbia...a link in a chain destined not only to draw Canada together but also to establish a new sense of solidarity between North America and the British Commonwealth of Nations...and as far as beyond sincere goodwill can be discovered. In your presence...I commend to your service, the new voice of British Columbia...CRCV.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Augustin Frigon to Leonard Brockington, February 4, 1937, LAC RG 41 Vol. 77 File 3-9.

¹⁰² The estimate called for: Transmitter Installed - \$174,000; Antenna and Ground - \$40,000; Land - \$4,000; Building and Furnishings - \$45,000; Power Lines, Telephone Lines, Sub-Station-Water System - \$23,500; Engineering Service and Contingencies - \$17,900; Total - \$305,200

¹⁰³ The CBC estimated that the high-power stations would generate a net income of \$18,455 in Toronto and Montreal \$11,705 in Montreal. Augustin Frigon to Leonard Brockington, February 4, 1937, LAC RG 41 Vol. 77 File 3-9.

¹⁰⁴ Ontario - 420,104; Quebec - 237,154; Total Nationally - 1,024,603. W.H Mortimer to Harry Baldwin, April 12, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 490 File 30-27.

¹⁰⁵ Script for CRCV Vancouver Inaugural Program. Originally aired February 16, 1937 at 11:30 PM EST. LAC RG 41 Vol. 107 File 3-19-21.

With such lofty ambitions and potential to generate goodwill, Howe, despite still strongly feeling as though programming needed to be the corporation's highest priority, notified the Board in March of the government's approval for a \$500,000 loan for the construction of high-powered stations in Ontario and Quebec. While the CBC was glad to have the approval, it was later than it had hoped. In a February 1937 memo to Leonard Brockington, Frigon noted that it was imperative that they move quickly "if we want to derive full benefit from the next winter's commercial season."¹⁰⁶ In addition, the Commercial Department had been considering increasing the rates charged to private stations and sponsors for carrying programs nationally as "the prestige and service to the community counts for a great deal and are factors advertisers take into consideration."¹⁰⁷ As a result, starting construction on the stations was more than just a matter of increasing program coverage; it was also a pressing financial issue for the CBC.

In initially focusing on extending the network over reforming the program schedule, the corporation did not fulfill the traditional definition of a public service broadcaster. Michael P. McCauley argues that public service broadcasting comes with a notion of guardianship – "that government agencies must help decide what the great good is and then find ways to protect it."¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Mary Vipond contends that public broadcasters are often "charged with the task of authoritatively representing and fostering, in some way, the national culture."¹⁰⁹ While the corporation certainly adopted the public service elements of providing access to media and upholding minimum program standards, the purveyors of early national broadcasting in Canada do not appear to have adopted a paternalistic view of their audience. Despite organizations like

¹⁰⁶ Augustin Frigon to Leonard Brockington, February 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 129 File 6-2.

¹⁰⁷ W.E. Powell to J. Radford, January 26, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 39 File 2-2-7-3.

¹⁰⁸ Michael P. McCauley, ed. "Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest," (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2003), xx.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Vipond, "Cultural Authority and Canadian Public Broadcasting in the 1930s: Hector Charlesworth and the CRBC," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42 no. 1 (2008): 60.

the Canadian Radio League lobbying for a national broadcaster for that reason, those responsible for the day-to-day operation of the system seemed more concerned about expanding the network, filling the schedule, and producing entertaining programs than they did about raising the level of national discourse.

For as much as there were critical economic factors in the decision to place a priority on a station in Quebec, the nation's linguistic tensions also played a role. Throughout its four years, the CRBC had struggled with questions relating to language and how much French should be used on national broadcasts. The manner in which the commission handled the issue was a primary reason for its failure to earn public support and the CBC was eager to avoid a similar fate. At its second meeting, the Board of Governors passed a resolution stating:

That to improve the relations between the Canadians who speak French and those who speak English is a fundamental policy of the Corporation; that in carrying out this policy, programs of entertainment appropriately and acceptably built should be exchanged frequently between French and English-speaking Canada; that all official statements of national importance carrying the authority of the Corporation should be adequately summarized in French after being given in English.¹¹⁰

As a result, making French-language programming accessible to French Canadians was prioritized. In May 1937 the Board of Governors approved an agreement to pay \$3,000 per year to a planned station in Rimouski, Quebec to ensure that the station carried corporation programs.¹¹¹ This was the start of the French Network, which would grow over the next three years and allow the corporation to air French-language programs in Quebec while avoiding the stream of protest that resulted from the CRBC's decision to air French-language programs

¹¹⁰ Minute of the Second Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, December 17-19, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Reel T3040.

¹¹¹ Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, May 15-17, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Reel T3040.

nationally.¹¹² The corporation did air musical programs from Quebec over the national network, but spoken word French-language programs were restricted to the French network. As will be discussed, limiting French programs to Quebec was not the best decision for the corporation's long-term growth, but it did address the immediate concern of providing French-language programs to Quebec.

With the emphasis on central Canada, however, a proactive approach was needed to avoid any negative backlash from listeners in the Prairies and Maritimes and the corporation went to work improving both the quantity and quality of the programs offered over the national network. To that end, Murray, who did have some background producing programs with the BBC, felt as though live coverage of special events would provide a boost to the schedule by offering additional programming while also introducing something new to listeners. In a December 1936 memo, it was noted that "in the past it has apparently not been possible to properly organize and co-ordinate the various program and technical groups that must function collectively to guarantee the greatest possible success from each undertaking."¹¹³ With better internal communication and cooperation from the defined corporate structure, the CBC was able to inaugurate more special events broadcasts. One such program, broadcast in May 1937, was the official opening of Ontario's Radio Telephone Service.¹¹⁴ In addition, through the spring of 1937 the corporation increased the number of hockey games aired during the NHL playoffs. Despite these efforts to enhance the schedule with live programming, the corporation was unable to

¹¹² A 1934 poll in the *Regina Daily Star* found that 87% of respondents opposed French broadcasts. The negative reaction was so strong that Hector Charlesworth met with members of the Ku Klux Klan in Regina to try and ease linguistic tensions. A more complete discussion of the French-language network is provided in chapter 4. See also: Sean Graham, "Unity Through Ambiguity," *Strata: University of Ottawa Graduate Student History Review*, Vol. 2 (2011): 1-28.

¹¹³ CBC Memorandum, December 22, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 912 File PG 18-1-1.

¹¹⁴ At the end of April, the Department of Lands and Forests announced plans to install a radio-telephone service to areas in the North, thus allowing radio communication to isolated mining camps. The official opening of the service was carried as a special national broadcast. "To Broadcast Opening Radio Telephone Service," *Kenora Miner and News*, May 22, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 251 File 11-39-6.

markedly improve on the studio programs it produced. The studio and office space the corporation was using in Toronto and Montreal, where a majority of programs were produced, was not adequate.¹¹⁵ This meant that the relative quality of studio programs, which had not captured the imagination of Canadian listeners when produced by the CRBC, stayed the same and struggled to find Canadian audiences.

As a result, the corporation looked towards the United States to supplement its schedule. The CRBC had frequently aired popular American programs and NBC and CBS each had outlets in Toronto and Montreal. The networks had been founded in 1926 and 1927 respectively, but there was not an initial focus on profits as the motivation had been to test “the theory that if it could stimulate the sale of radios perhaps it would not be necessary for it to make profit at all on broadcasting.”¹¹⁶ But as the medium grew through the 1930s and networks started to report substantial profits, more and more Canadians were turning to American stations for their radio content, a fact that was a constant concern for Alan Plaunt and other members of the CRL. Despite their nationalistic concerns, when examined from a business perspective airing American content was an easy decision for both the CRBC and CBC. *Fortune* magazine reported in June 1935 that, despite the Depression, CBS had increased its commercial sales from \$5 million in 1929 to \$19 million in 1934.¹¹⁷ Given the popularity of the networks in Canada, a 1934 poll in the *Regina Daily Star* revealed that, after hockey, Jack Benny was the city’s top “Hate to Miss” program, it was important for the CBC to follow the CRBC’s precedent of airing American

¹¹⁵ At the first meeting of the Finance Committee, Augustin Frigon and Austin Weir were authorized to investigate the possibility of building new studios in Toronto and Montreal. Minutes of the First Meeting of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Finance Committee, April 13, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Reel T3043.

¹¹⁶ “And All Because They’re Smart,” *Fortune*, June 1935. LAC RG 41 Vol. 381 File 20-7.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

programs.¹¹⁸ In its first annual report, the corporation celebrated that it had “extended the number of programs received from NBC, Columbia [CBS] and Mutual [MBS] chains in the United States.”¹¹⁹ The corporation was quick to point out, however, that it had also increased the number of Canadian programs sent to the American networks. For the CBC, if the networks responsible for producing North America’s most popular programs aired Canadian content on a regular basis, it was a sign that Canadian producers had improved to the point that they were capable of creating programs that equalled the quality of their American counterparts.

These programming improvements, which the corporation hoped would ease any resentment from the delayed construction of new transmitters in the Prairies or Maritimes, ironically resulted in further disappointment for listeners in those regions. While the decision made sense economically, it was a major risk from a public relations perspective. In a June 3 editorial, the *Cabri*, Saskatchewan, *Enterprise* expressed disappointment that the corporation had decided to begin its construction in Ontario and Quebec, “whose people have access to a number of good, high-powered stations on both sides of the international boundary carrying excellent programs, are to be served immediately with two such stations, as quickly as they can be built.”¹²⁰ And while the paper did congratulate the CBC for its improvement in programming, it also pointed out that “this improvement only serves to accentuate the disappointment in the delay in bringing these programs to the door of everyone on the Prairies able to own a receiving set.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Other programs and acts named in the “Hate to Miss” category were American staples such as *Amos n’ Andy*, Jack Benny, Eddie Cantor, and Rudy Vallee. The results were based on ballots sent to the newspaper, which reported receiving “close to 700 ballots.” “Disband Radio Commission is Wish of Fans,” *Regina Daily Star*, February 10, 1934.

¹¹⁹ CBC Annual Report 1936-1937. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds, MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

¹²⁰ “National Radio Program,” *Cabri Enterprise*, June 3, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 18 File 9.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

This delay was not only caused by the corporation's decision to start construction on the new transmitters in Ontario and Quebec, but it was also partly due to problems with interference of radio wavelengths. With a limited number of frequencies, Canadian stations competed with stations in the United States, Mexico, and Cuba for clear signals. As early as 1923 the Department of Marine and Fisheries reported that the wavelength situation was not sustainable, but it was optimistic that "it is anticipated that most of the present difficulties can be overcome."¹²² The following year Canada and the United States entered into negotiations to establish exclusive wavelengths for each country in an effort to limit interference. That first agreement saw Canada receive exclusive use of six frequencies and partial use of eleven others.¹²³ Stations on both sides of the border were not shy about ignoring the regulations, however, and over the course of the following twelve years international interference remained a major problem in North American broadcasting.¹²⁴ For example, CJRM Moose Jaw would frequently receive mail from international listeners, with one letter in September 1927 from Bainville, Montana informing the station that it was popular in the town and that it had "done a lot to advertise your town, and many of us hope to see the town, one of these days."¹²⁵ It should be noted that not all radio interference was caused by competing stations, as a variety of electrical circuits and devices were known to cause problems with regards to reception. In December 1936 the CBC put forth a "suggested procedure in connection with enforced

¹²² Department of Marine and Fisheries, "Report of the British Broadcasting Committee on Radio Broadcasting Situation in Canada," May 19, 1923. LAC RG 33 Vol. 5, Report on Broadcasting.

¹²³ There were ninety-five frequencies available for commercial use at the time.

¹²⁴ Interference problems were not exclusive to North America, as European stations also struggled with wavelength allocation. Between 1927 and 1940 there were at least fifteen international conferences on radio. Geneva, 1927; Washington, 1927; Ottawa, 1929; The Hague, 1929; Prague, 1929; Copenhagen, 1931; Madrid, 1932; Ottawa, 1934; Lisbon, 1934; Paris, 1936; Havana, Spring of 1937; Bucharest, 1937; Havana, Fall of 1937; Cairo, 1938; Santiago de Chile, 1940. Gordon Olive, 'Radio Communications,' *The Engineering Journal*, May 1943. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6-1.

¹²⁵ "Radio Phan Says CJRM has put City on Atlas," Moose Jaw *Evening Times*, Tuesday September 20, 1927.

suppression of interference,” which put the onus on the owners of electrical equipment to ensure that they were not interfering with radio signals.¹²⁶ But even as the corporation was trying to address domestic causes, by far the more pressing issue was international interference. This meant that when a conference on wavelength allocation convened in Havana, Cuba in the spring of 1937, Canadian officials were eager to participate and secure an agreement that, unlike previous deals, would put an end to interference.

The Havana Conference took on an added significance for Canada because the country had not sent a delegation to the Paris Inter-Continental Broadcasting Conference held in early 1936. What was particularly telling was the reason why Canada was not represented. In a letter to the Secretary-General of the International Broadcasting Union, CRBC Commissioner Arthur Steel explained that “with a small staff the preparation of suitable papers constitutes an extremely difficult request,” going on to point out that “our conditions here are such that it won’t be possible for anyone outside our own organization to satisfactorily present our view.”¹²⁷ By confessing that the CRBC did not have the resources to represent itself or the goodwill to send a proxy, Steel was admitting to an international forum that the radio situation in Canada was weak. Such a public declaration further hampered any efforts to eliminate international interference as stations in Mexico and the United States did not need to worry about possible sanctions from Canada.

As such, restoring the country’s position on the international stage meant sending a strong delegation to Havana. Since the issue of wavelength allocation rested with the Department

¹²⁶ Owners would be notified by the Radio Branch of the Department of Marine in cases where electrical circuits were causing interference at which point they would be required to resolve the problem. Special exceptions were made in cases where the acquisition of non-interfering equipment was deemed to be economically unfeasible as well as for x-rays and other medical devices. ‘Suggested Procedure in Connection with Enforced Suppression of Interference,’ December 10, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 75 File 3-3-1.

¹²⁷ Arthur Steel to A.R. Burrows, January 29, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 355 File 19-3-1.

of Transport, Walter Rush, the director of the Radio Branch, was not required to bring any CBC representatives to the conference, but did ask Murray to appoint two people who were well acquainted both with Canada's technical requirements and the international situation. The selections were Donald Manson, who had long been involved in Canadian radio after serving as the secretary of the Aird Commission, and Keith A. McKinnon, an engineer who had been given the responsibility of preparing the corporation's requests for the conference. Rush praised the corporation's contributions to the delegation, writing Murray following the March 15-19 Conference to say that Manson and MacKinnon "gave excellent service" and that "their congenial cooperation made my task a light and very pleasant one."¹²⁸ The conference did not come to any conclusions about wavelength allocation, but it did arrive at a tentative basis for frequency redistribution, an issue that would be discussed at a second Havana Conference that November. This meant that Canada had seven months to prepare to explain why it deserved more exclusive frequencies, an argument that would be greatly improved if tangible progress could be made in the construction of a high power network.¹²⁹ As Plaunt wrote to Brockington in April, "our hand at the final Havana conference will be greatly strengthened if we are definitely committed to four instead of two high power stations."¹³⁰ This meant that as the CBC entered the summer of 1937 there was an increased priority on the construction of the network.

Similar to the corporation's burgeoning relationships with American networks in its early months, its participation in the Havana Conference was a major step in its efforts to successfully integrate into the North American broadcasting structure. The corporation could not be combative towards American and Mexican networks because they had greater financial

¹²⁸ Water Rush to Gladstone Murray, April 5, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6.

¹²⁹ Annual Report of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1936-1937. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds, MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

¹³⁰ Alan Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, April 23, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 2.

resources and could simply overpower the CBC's stations. Therefore, for the CBC to successfully meet its mandate of providing programs for Canadian listeners it had to show its utility within North American broadcasting – and providing content for the American networks was essential to that process. In addition to the positive publicity from exporting programs, by developing positive working relationships with CBS, NBC, and MBS, the corporation was in a better position to negotiate for wavelengths, which were essential if the CBC was to successfully build a unified national network. Being seen as a compatriot and not a competitor also gave the CBC greater legitimacy when dealing with Mexican stations, which were notorious for causing night-time interference on the Prairies. Over the course of six months, Canada had gone from a nation not represented at an international wavelength conference to a contributor to the North American broadcasting structure. If the corporation was to be successful domestically, it had to continue to emphasize its international relations.

In a lot of ways the first Havana Conference marks the culmination of the corporation's early efforts to break free from the shadow of the CRBC. While there were still plenty of listeners who had yet to distinguish between the two organizations, internally the CBC had successfully begun the process of changing the culture within public broadcasting. Despite the fact that most of the staff had come from the CRBC, the changes to the internal structure and financial controls brought an attitude to the corporation that was completely different from the commission. Publicly, the revised wire line contract, concrete plans to expand the network, and a new administration changed the way broadcasting operated in Canada and some listeners across the country were starting to take notice. Combined with the improved relationship with the government and the re-emergence of Canada on the international stage, it is clear how the CBC took a proactive approach through its first six months. There were undoubtedly still problems

that needed to be overcome, but the CBC had put itself in a position to emerge as a viable alternative to the American networks that had for so long dominated Canadian radio. With the groundwork laid, it was now up to the corporation to follow through on its plans.

Chapter Two – Building Expectations

As the CBC entered the summer of 1937 there was a sense of optimism about national broadcasting that had not been seen since, arguably, the 1931 Privy Council decision giving the federal government jurisdiction over radio. While everyone at the CBC understood that there was plenty of hard work to be done, there was a belief that the corporation was well positioned and prepared for any future challenges. Despite the optimism, the corporation appreciated that listeners were still sceptical and had no desire to hear how excited the CBC was about its progress. In March, General Manager Gladstone Murray warned on-air personnel against openly praising the corporation, as “anything in the nature of a compliment to ourselves is in bad taste and is rightly resented by the public.”¹ This did not stop members of the Board of Governors from looking forward to the corporation’s expansion, however, and greatly anticipating the completion of its national network. Brimming with confidence, Alan Plaunt wrote to a friend in July that “in case you have any lingering doubts...the Corporation is on its way, knows its direction and that, Deo velente, there can be no turning back.”² For the corporation, this direction included an emphasis on completing its high-power transmitters, expanding its program schedule, fostering a better relationship with private stations, and taking advantage of the opportunity presented by the second Havana Conference in November. Where the corporation’s first months centred on planning for the future and changing the culture of public broadcasting, the latter part of 1937 was a period where the CBC understood that it needed to produce tangible results, lest it lose any credibility it had struggled to achieve. In its efforts to establish itself as a

¹ CBC Internal Memorandum No. 15, March 1, 1937. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

² Alan Plaunt to ‘Mike,’ July 17, 1937. University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 4.

national institution, capitalizing on its opportunity to grow was essential to the corporation's success.

Fortunately for the CBC, an opportunity to generate plenty of goodwill with Canadian listeners presented itself with the Coronation of King George VI on May 12, 1937. The significance of the event was noted in 'Along the Air Waves,' a nationally syndicated newspaper column which reported on May 5 that "Canadian radio is being groomed for participation [in] what will constitute one of the most important undertakings in the history of the medium."³ The CBC had received word from the BBC on February 19 that there would be five different transmissions from Broadcasting House in London over the course of the day and quickly went to work making the arrangements to air these over the national network.⁴ This process was slowed, however, by the BBC, which was not providing enough information to allow the CBC to make firm plans. When Adolph Opfinger, then program coordinator at Mutual Broadcasting System, asked in March if it would be possible for the American network to pick up the CBC's broadcast, General Program Supervisor Ernest Bushnell responded that "frankly we have very little information from the BBC as to the exact procedure that is to take place in connection with the Coronation ceremonies. Anything we have had to date is marked confidential."⁵ But even as the CBC waited to hear from the BBC about the day's events, it planned several broadcasts in the weeks leading up to the Coronation to mark the occasion. Included was a series presenting music by famous English composers such as Gilbert and Sullivan, Edward German, and Samuel

³ "Along the Air Waves," *Napanee Beaver*, May 5, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

⁴ Transmission A from 9:00-17:15 (GMT) featuring the Royal Procession and service; Transmission B from 17:45-19:15 (GMT) featuring news, commentary, and a message from the King; Transmission C from 19:35-23:00 (GMT) featuring a recording of the ceremony; Transmission D from 23:20-4:00 (GMT) featuring a recording of the procession, ceremony, and King's message; Transmission E from 4:20-7:45 (GMT) the morning of May 13 featuring a recording of the ceremony and commentary. J.B. Clark to Gladstone Murray, February 19, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

⁵ Ernest Bushnell to Adolph Opfinger March 9, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

Coleridge-Taylor as a means to celebrate the imperial connection.⁶ It was also decided that the corporation would broadcast the Royal Salute and Governor General's address from Winnipeg immediately following the ceremony.⁷

With such an extensive build-up, stations that were not part of the national network were eager to be included in the Coronation broadcasts. In one case, the commercial director of CKNX Wingham, Ontario, wrote that "from the publicity we have read, the broadcasts would seem to be among the most pretentious yet attempted, and they will naturally be of very great interest locally as elsewhere."⁸ For its part, the CBC understood that including more stations would help raise its profile, which meant that when Murray responded to the request he noted that "we shall be glad to have your station join us in giving the widest possible distribution of an event of such national and world-wide interest."⁹ In the same vein, the CBC also agreed to supervise and feed the Coronation ceremony to a loudspeaker on Parliament Hill.¹⁰ These decisions were very much reactions to the great level of interest which Canadians displayed in their anticipation of the broadcasts. For instance, CKOC Hamilton reported that the station was "being pestered to death" for information about the Coronation.¹¹ Because of this intense public interest, the corporation was more than willing to incur the additional expenses associated with the broadcasts, which included buying extra time from the wire line companies and adding stations that were not a part of the regular network.¹² Initial estimates pegged the costs at just

⁶ Ernest Bushnell to Frank Willis, March 18, 1937; Bushnell to Horace Stovin, March 25, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

⁷ Gladstone Murray to L.R. LaFleche, April 21, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

⁸ B. Howard Bedford to Gladstone Murray, March 19, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

⁹ Gladstone Murray to B. Howard Bedford, March 31, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

¹⁰ Gladstone Murray to C.E. Pearce, April 23, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

¹¹ Gordon Anderson to Ernest Bushnell, April 5, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

¹² Thirteen extra hours would be needed in the east, fifteen and sixteen in the West, and stations in Yarmouth, NS, Prescott, ON, Brantford, ON, Kitchener, ON, Stratford, ON, Wingham, ON, Sault Ste Marie, ON, and Victoria, BC had been approved.

over \$3,200, but, given the importance of the occasion, the wire line companies offered a fifty percent reduction.¹³

In the days leading to the broadcast the CBC tried to capitalize on the national interest in the Coronation to create some positive public relations. The corporation's news release on May 7 was entitled "Coronation Broadcasting to be Most Important Undertaking in History of Canadian Radio," and promoted the network's twenty-three consecutive hours of coverage, which included CBC originations from New York City, Saint John, Halifax, Toronto, Fort William, Montreal, Winnipeg, and Vancouver, to go along with the events being picked up from London.¹⁴ With such an ambitious line-up, the CBC was deeply satisfied when, despite a couple of minor last minute adjustments, the broadcasts were transmitted without any issues and initial reports indicated that audiences greatly appreciated the opportunity to hear the King. Congratulations quickly poured into the CBC from across the country, and even Sir John Reith in London thanked the corporation for the "admirable broadcast."¹⁵ Perhaps Ottawa Mayor J.E. Stanley Lewis best summed up listener reaction to the broadcast when he wrote to say that "the citizens of Ottawa are greatly indebted to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for the service it provided on Coronation Day," adding that he had "much pleasure in conveying to you and your staff our sincere and cordial thanks for your large share in making the day a success in the Capital."¹⁶

¹³ The companies were clear that this was a one-time offer and "should not be considered as a precedent for future occasions." This would cause some tension during the 1939 Royal Tour. See Chapter 7. E.W. Jackson to Gladstone Murray, April 23, 1937; Canadian National Telegraphs and Canadian Pacific Communications to Murray April 30, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

¹⁴ "Coronation Broadcasting to be Most Important Undertaking in History of Canadian Radio," May 7, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

¹⁵ Sir John Reith Telegram to Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, May 12, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

¹⁶ J.E. Stanley Lewis to Gladstone Murray, May 18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

That the CBC was so proactive in broadcasting the Coronation is not surprising given the attachment to the monarchy and strong presence of the Royal Family in Canadian radio. When King George V died in January 1936, the CRBC felt it had been extensive in its coverage of the funeral. The commission aired the funeral services live on January 25 and on January 29 produced an hour-long special program dedicated to the King's memory. As an additional sign of respect, on the day of the funeral "the networks and stations of the Commission [closed] down and [remained] silent for the rest of the day with the exception of the regular evening news period at 10.45."¹⁷ To its surprise, however, the commission was criticized for not providing enough information in the immediate aftermath of the King's death. The Victoria Branch of the Canadian Legion was particularly harsh in its criticism, saying that it "considers it deplorable that in a matter of this nature, our Members were compelled to tune to the American Stations" to receive updates.¹⁸ Even former Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition R.B. Bennett was critical, writing to ask "what is the reason that Canadian listeners-in had to rely upon American stations for information regarding the funeral of His late Majesty King George the Fifth?"¹⁹

For those who were upset, the commission's answer was not particularly satisfying. News of the King's death broke roughly two hours before the network was linked to Vancouver and, as such, the CRBC "had not the facilities at its disposal at the time that His Majesty's death was reported to make an announcement."²⁰ That it was unable to link the network to convey such important news was truly an indictment of the commission. Perhaps the great irony of this was that the King had endeared himself to millions of Canadians with his Christmas radio addresses, through which William Lyon Mackenzie King claimed listeners "were made to feel the

¹⁷ CRBC News Release, January 22, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2-1.

¹⁸ S.W. Norman to Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, February 6, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2-1.

¹⁹ R.B. Bennett to R.P. Landry, February 18, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2-1.

²⁰ R.P. Landry to J.C.G. Herwig, February 17, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2-1.

friendliness and tenderness of his nature. We gained a new consciousness of the nearness of our relationship to each other, because of our deeply cherished common relationship to him.”²¹ This sentiment served to emphasize some Canadians’ feeling that the lack of coverage was disrespectful to the Monarch. The CBC understood that it could not afford a similar reaction from listeners and, as such, it is not surprising that the corporation was so eager to provide such extensive coverage of the Coronation.

With the Coronation complete, the CBC was eager to use the summer of 1937 to make significant progress on the construction of the national network. In March, the Board passed a resolution authorizing “the erection forthwith of one 50Kw broadcasting station at or near Toronto, and one 50Kw broadcasting station at or near Montreal, at a total cost not to exceed \$610,000 without further authorization of the Board, and that the General Manager be authorized immediately to enter into the necessary contracts, subject to the provisions of the Act.”²² With that, Assistant General Manager Augustin Frigon was given the task of accepting tenders and leading the survey to determine the best possible location for the new transmitters. At the Finance Committee meeting in June, Frigon reported that the contract for the radio equipment had been awarded to the Northern Electric Company while the buildings would be built by W.H. Sullivan in Toronto and Dansereau Limited in Montreal.²³ Perhaps more importantly, though, Frigon also announced that the station for Toronto would be built in Hornby, Ontario, while

²¹ William Lyon Mackenzie King, February 7, 1936. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; First Session – Eighteenth Parliament, 17.

²² The Board also resolved that the construction of stations in the Maritimes and Prairies “is essential to the carrying out of the function which the Board believes it has been called on to execute.” This can be seen as a pre-emptive strike as the Board was convinced that there would be another battle with Howe in order to obtain the required funds. Minutes of the Third Meeting of the Board of Governors, March 8-11, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T-3040.

²³ The transmitter at Verchères would cost \$142,040 while the Hornby transmitter would cost \$149,863. The buildings would cost \$56,410 and \$49,750 respectively. The corporation bought 7,728 square feet of land on 51.32 acres at Hornby for \$6,433.60 and 53.4 acres of land at Verchères for \$14,200. CBC Owned and Rented Properties, February 1, 1960. LAC RG 41 Vol. 97 File 3-16-6-3; Second Meeting of the Finance Committee, June 15, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T-3043.

Verchères, Quebec would host the Montreal transmitter.²⁴ As construction began, there were some problems with the location of the Quebec transmitter as there were no suitable accommodations for staff and there was difficulty in securing a water source for the building – problems that resulted in overages of approximately \$30,000.²⁵ This was not a major obstacle, however, as the corporation was expecting overages, the amount was manageable, and the benefits to public relations in having tangible progress towards the completion of the network were critical.

As much as expanding the network was an essential component of the corporation's work, however, the issue of programming also needed to be addressed. At the same time as it had been evaluating its physical resources, the corporation had also been compiling a report on the programming inherited from the CRBC. The report was designed to “determine the extent and character of Canadian resources and the most effective form of program organization,” ultimately finding that Canada had plenty of artistic talent, “much of which, however, required training and development.”²⁶ The report pointed out that the corporation had inherited some popular features from the CRBC, such as the *Northern Messenger* service, *Melodic Strings*, and special events programming. These programs were all critical to meeting the overall program policy of the CBC, which “was to emphasize characteristic Canadian material in its own programs and to relay over its network the best programs obtainable from other sources. There was thus a degree of competition on the Corporation's network between its own programs, those of commercial sponsors and those imported from United States' chains, Great Britain and

²⁴ Hornby is roughly 50 kilometres west of Toronto while Verchères is 44 kilometres southeast of Montreal. Second Meeting of the Finance Committee, June 15, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T-3043.

²⁵ Third Meeting of the CBC Finance Committee, August 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T-3043.

²⁶ CBC Annual Report, 1936-1937. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45 Untitled File.

elsewhere.”²⁷ While the report noted that there was plenty of work to be done, there was an internal belief that the corporation had already been able to improve Canadian programming. Plaunt wrote a friend in May to say that he was pleased with the improvements in programming, crediting Murray, who he felt “has now demonstrated real genius in this direction.”²⁸

This positive view was further buoyed by the Commercial Department’s progress report for May, which noted that advertising agencies, because of the construction on the two new transmitters, were showing a good deal of interest in booking time on the national network. As such, it was recommended that wire line rates be set marginally above cost, thus “allowing but a very moderate profit on line business” as it was “believed much better to count on increased revenues from encouraging the sale of station time through low wire rates than to make large profits on transmission facilities themselves.”²⁹ Both CBS and NBC used similar systems in booking their programs so it was felt that such a scheme would be attractive to advertisers and lead to more bookings. The report also showed a good deal of progress for three of the corporation’s local stations. CRCO Ottawa, despite the fact that its location meant that it “always will be in a difficult position commercially,” was able to increase its business each month and for the summer (May-September) the bookings had already increased over three-times from 1936.³⁰ In Vancouver, where the fact that national network programs aired at such an early hour put the station at a commercial disadvantage, the situation was promising as sponsors such as Ovaltine and General Foods had just made new bookings.³¹ The most dramatic improvement was in Toronto, however, where CRCT had long suffered from the competition of high-power private

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Alan Plaunt to ‘Ed,’ May 10, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 3.

²⁹ Commercial Department Progress Report, May 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

³⁰ Commercial Department Progress Report, May 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

³¹ Ibid.

stations like Ted Rogers' CFRB. But through the first four months of 1937 the station's net revenue was up over \$15,000 from the same period in 1936. Further, with popular new local programs such as *Spotlight Parade* and *Bert Pearl Live* the station boasted that it had fifty-four hours, thirty-nine half hours, and two-hundred-and-forty-five quarter hours of future bookings already secured.³²

The CBC was particularly proud of these new programs and was eager to promote, what it felt, was a much improved program schedule. On June 21, Murray gave a *Chatting With the Listeners* address over the national network where he talked about the corporation's efforts to improve its programming.³³ He started by quoting a letter from a listener who was sick of hearing about network expansion and financial control: "For heaven's sakes, be more practical. All that I care about is what comes from the little radio box in my sitting room. So on Monday, please do not tell us how you are going to save civilization or even how you are going to unite Canada. Stick to the programmes."³⁴ Murray then described the new programs being developed in each of the CBC's five regions – from the "richly rewarding" talent in New Brunswick to the western symphonies. He even addressed the nation's linguistic tensions by pointing out the French-language programs coming out of Winnipeg and reminding listeners that French Canada is "a reservoir of unusual and attractive programme material from which we draw as opportunity permits" – although he added the disclaimer that there would be programs in English to "enable the rest of Canada to share the romance and glamour of Quebec."³⁵ In not only emphasizing the

³² Ibid.

³³ *Chatting with the Listeners* was a series of talks by CBC employees that outlined the operations of the corporation. The feeling was that if the public better understood the CBC, it would be more sympathetic to its obstacles.

³⁴ Gladstone Murray, *Chatting with the Listeners*, originally broadcast June 21, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 466 File 31-1.

³⁵ Murray also felt that listeners would benefit from the friendly competition between the production centres: "There is a healthy spirit of competition between CBC staff in Quebec and Ontario and I think we can look

improvements, but also the separation from the CRBC, Murray noted that the world of broadcasting was constantly evolving and that it “is almost too absorbing and interesting, even for those of us who consider ourselves hard-bitten oldtimers. There is always something new, something unexpected.”³⁶

Murray had just seen what was new two weeks earlier when he attended the corporation’s first National Programme Meeting in Ottawa. The five-day meeting consisted of seventeen staffers involved in programming and included administrators like Murray, well-recognized broadcasters like Frank Willis, and up-and-comers like Bob Bowman. Prior to addressing content issues, they addressed a critical problem afflicting distribution – the difficulty associated with time zones. It was pointed out that stations in the Maritimes were unlikely to air prime-time CBC programming because it came on too late, while stations in British Columbia were unlikely to air that same programming because it came on too early.³⁷ The conference agreed that that could be addressed through improved distribution, which would be greatly increased with the completion of the two new transmitters.

From there the meeting shifted to debates over the relative quality of CBC programs. The discussion revolved around the corporation’s schedule – which one person criticized as unbalanced and featuring “too many musical programmes following one another,” while another

forward to really splendid programmes.” Gladstone Murray, *Chatting with the Listeners*, originally broadcast June 21, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 466 File 31-1.

³⁶ Gladstone Murray, *Chatting with the Listeners*, originally broadcast June 21, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 466 File 31-1.

³⁷ This debate came in the context of an expanded program schedule as the corporation was considering going to a 16-hour broadcast day. By increasing the number of hours, the corporation could cater programs to the regions most likely to be listening at that time – with earlier programs for the east coast and later programs for the West. Ultimately, it was determined that any plans should wait until the platforms for wider distribution (wire line contract, new transmitters) were in place, as they would “gradually increase as money, personnel and studio accommodation permitted.” Report of the Supervisor of Programmes of the Proceedings of the Second Semi-Annual Programme Conference Held in the National Research Building, Ottawa, June 7 to 11 inclusive. RG 41 Vol. 850 File PG1-13.

noted that “there are too many fancy titles.”³⁸ Such criticism was partly the result of the fact that, with the new season set to begin on September 26, the corporation was using the summer as a period of experimentation in order to see what types of programs should be included in the fall schedule. They were cautious, however, of making too many firm decisions because there was a feeling that maintaining flexibility was critical for the corporation’s success. Some at the meeting felt as though too rigid planning had doomed the BBC and that “while we should adopt long term planning we must never lose sight of the importance of flexibility – to be ready to adapt ourselves to suddenly changing circumstances. Every topical event of importance must be reflected.”³⁹ Part of that flexibility involved airing the best programs regardless of where they were made, as the final day of the conference included discussions from regional representatives about program origination. While each representative was eager to have as much programming coming from their region as possible, it was ultimately decided that “our duty to listeners at large is greater than our duty to local patriotism and as we get free from the bondage of the latter broadcasting will continue to improve.”⁴⁰ This sentiment remained a prominent feature of program conferences throughout the early years of the CBC. Elizabeth Long, the first director of women’s programming, would later write that “our chief aim in those days was to forget regionalism, and ‘think Canadian.’”⁴¹

With that mandate, the attendees would struggle to brainstorm new ideas and strategies for programs that would appeal to national audiences. For as much as the formal meeting may have helped in this direction, it was, in fact, the after-hours sessions that not only brought the staff together, but also generated new ideas. Reminiscing in the 1960s, Bob Bowman recalled

³⁸ Report of the Supervisor of Programmes of the Proceedings of the Second Semi-Annual Programme Conference Held in the National Research Building, Ottawa, June 7 to 11 inclusive. RG 41 Vol. 850 File PG1-13.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Long, “I Join the CBC,” Unpublished Memoirs, n.d. LAC RG 41 Vol. 405 File 23-1-6.

that program conferences featured morning and afternoon sessions with people pitching new ideas for shows, but:

Then would come cocktails and dinner and we would go into the evening, not a program meeting but just a good old bull session with plenty of drinking and sometimes a mattress or two hurled out the windows. This is when the real work was done; the next morning the whole setup would have been changed, new programs, new ideas, and that is how the CBC developed.⁴²

Regardless how it happened, the CBC emerged from its first program conference feeling as though it was in a good position to deliver new, high-quality programs for the fast-approaching fall season.

While the conference focused mostly on national commercial programming, the corporation also put an emphasis on improving sustaining programs.⁴³ In a CRCT Toronto press release from June 1937, the station promoted its summer schedule, including the commercial program *Musical Recess*, which was “for the busy housewife [and] is designed to give her fifteen minutes of fine music with sensible remarks by Eileen Beaufort,” and the sustaining program *Bud Walker Time*, which brought “one of the best announcers to the microphone for a cheery bit of chatter and music for fifteen minutes.”⁴⁴ But for as much as this type of publicity was aimed at the listening audience, it was also meant to show advertisers that the corporation was serious about improving not only its physical network, but also its program offerings. When T.W. Baker, who worked in the Traffic Department, sent the release to Austin Weir, manager of commercial operations, he noted that “although possibly somewhat insignificant, [it] is a step in the right

⁴² Reminiscences of Veteran Broadcasters – R.T. Bowman, Recorded November 7, 1963. LAC RG 41 Vol. 401 File 23-1-3-1.

⁴³ While commercial programs were sponsored, sustaining programs were not and were paid for by the stations. Sustaining programs were used to help maintain, and occasionally build, audiences for the station when commercial sponsorships could not be obtained. Since going off the air whenever a commercial program was not available would have negative long-term effects on audience size, sustaining programs were seen as a necessary expense of running a successful station.

⁴⁴ *Musical Recess* aired Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:00AM while *Bud Walker Time* aired weekdays at 12:45PM. CRCT Press Release, July 14, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 102 File 3-18-3.

direction, and I believe our sponsors and the various agencies would be interested in hearing about our endeavours to further improve CRCT.”⁴⁵

Perhaps the best known of these programs designed to improve the station was *The Happy Gang*. In its press release, CRCT celebrated the commercial program featuring “the irrepressible Bert Pearl as master of ceremonies, singing his clever timely lyrics to the popular tunes and offering a special brand of philosophy.”⁴⁶ The variety format used by *The Happy Gang* had a long track record of success, so there was a good deal of hope that it could develop into a staple of CRTC’s line-up. Those hopes suffered a blow when Weir received a negative report on the show in August, which stated that the comedy was “too overlapped,” “too prolonged and somewhat monotonous,” and, despite featuring good music, overall it was “somewhat amateurish” in dialogue.⁴⁷ While not wanting to lose the show’s personality, the report suggested tightening up the comedy routines and writing more well-rounded scripts. *The Happy Gang* took that criticism and used it to evolve into the station’s most popular program, eventually shifting to the national network. In its quarterly report of October 1937, CRTC noted that the show was extremely popular, receiving an average of forty fan-letters daily and having “mail [continue] to pour in from every province in Canada, and from all types and classes of people, from young school children to grand-parents in cities and rural districts.”⁴⁸ From the corporation’s perspective, the program was successful not only because it was well-received, but also, and perhaps more critically, because it was popular with such a wide cross-section of the population. As families gathered together to listen to *The Happy Gang*, the CBC could champion its new Canadian programming and point to its mainstream appeal.

⁴⁵ T.W. Baker to E.A. Weir, June 14, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 102 File 3-18-3.

⁴⁶ CRCT Press Release, June 14, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 102 File 3-18-3.

⁴⁷ Report on *The Happy Gang* by Mr. Stone, August 21, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 102 File 3-18-6.

⁴⁸ CRCT Toronto – Quarterly Report, October 30, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

While the CBC was concerned about the possibility of negative listener reaction to French-language programs airing nationally, it did include musical offerings from Quebec over the national network. During the 1937 season, for instance, the CBC aired programs like *Rendez-vous*, a modern symphony and chorus under the direction of Guiseppe Agostini and Fernand Barrette, and *Paysages de rêves*, an orchestral program.⁴⁹ Through the spring of 1937, depending on the week, anywhere from 90 minutes to four hours on the national network were devoted to musical programs from Quebec with French-language titles. Given that knowledge of the French language was not a prerequisite for these programs, they do not appear to have elicited the same type of negative response as those aired by the CRBC. Even though the corporation was unwilling to devote national time to French-language talks programs, it did acknowledge and provide a national outlet for Quebec's musical talent.

By the time it announced its fall schedule, the CBC felt as though it had been able to develop programs that marked a noticeable improvement from the CRBC. In a nationally syndicated newspaper column on September 30, it was reported that the new season “will bring listeners the best obtainable [programs] in the different forms of drama, music, and talks.”⁵⁰ It promoted historical features like *Within These Walls*, variety features like *Backstage*, and dramas like *Sam Slick*.⁵¹ “Along the Air Waves” was similarly optimistic in its assessment, saying that “prospects of a new high in radio are bright, they say, with plenty of variety that should satisfy all types of listeners.”⁵² For its own part, the CBC promised listeners a schedule that featured “popular and fine music, dramatic presentation...talks by leading authorities and men of

⁴⁹ CBC Program Schedule January 4-10, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 57 File 2-3-10-1.

⁵⁰ “Variety by CBC in New Schedule,” September 30, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 161 File 11-1.

⁵¹ *Within These Walls* was a dramatic series based on historical places and stories from across the country. *Backstage* was a musical variety series produced in Winnipeg. *Sam Slick* was a series based on the novel *The Clockmaker* by Thomas Chandler Haliburton.

⁵² “Along the Air Waves,” *Cobourg World*, August 26, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

important public reputation; actuality broadcasts dealing with many aspects of Canadian life; [and] the presentation of special events and broadcasts by important visitors to Canada.”⁵³

For as much as the corporation had put into the new season, however, it also greatly benefited from the work and interest of outside groups to enhance its schedule. For example, George Glazebrook, a historian from the University of Toronto, was asked in June to be part of the historical series *Forgotten Canadians*, but was informed that he would not be paid nor could the corporation provide stenographical assistance. He said that it was a difficult position for him and that “if I do free work for the CBC, that is because I am interested in the cause,” while also noting that, in general, “historians are willing to co-operate, but they must be carefully treated.”⁵⁴ In providing this caution, Glazebrook unknowingly delivered a critical message to the CBC by pointing out that it needed outside organizations to help build its programs. The corporation employed announcers and engineers, but it needed people who could provide content. Whether historians, scientists, politicians, authors, or musicians, the corporation needed to establish and maintain positive relationships with a wide cross-section of Canada’s professional organizations in order to create quality programming.

One of the ways it tried to achieve this was through the creation of various advisory committees. These committees brought together various experts to discuss different programs within a certain genre. From Gladstone Murray’s point of view, one of the most important of these was the Musical Advisory Committee. Murray believed that music, particularly classical music, was a critical element of the corporation’s schedule, saying that “music is the stuff of

⁵³ CBC New Release, “Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Announces New Fall Program Schedule,” September 17, 1937. RG 41 Vol. 170 File 11-15-1.

⁵⁴ George Glazebrook to Alan Plaunt, June 13, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 2 File 11.

immortality; in the finest written music there is this quality and it cannot surely be changed.”⁵⁵ Because of this, Murray was keenly interested in the work of the committee and its most active member Sir Ernest Macmillan. Macmillan was the principal of the Toronto Conservatory of Music and a long-time supporter of public broadcasting who, in supporting the CRL as early as 1930, believed that “there is no doubt in my mind that there is abundant material of a first-class quality in Canada to provide as fine radio performances as could be wished for.”⁵⁶ He quickly earned Murray’s trust and became an influential voice in the corporation’s decisions on musical selections. In May 1937, for example, Macmillan warned against a proposed broadcast featuring a composite symphony, saying that “I feel strongly that we should put nothing that we are not sure of on a broadcast.”⁵⁷ Murray demonstrated a good deal of trust in Macmillan’s opinions – when Macmillan offered his opinions on certain orchestra broadcasts Murray forwarded them to Ernest Bushnell saying that “Sir Ernest MacMillan’s criticisms are worth reading. They are, of course, only individual opinions but I am glad he has put them down.”⁵⁸

This willingness, or even eagerness, for outside help in programming encouraged some organizations to promote the CBC as an ideal place for members to get experience.⁵⁹ With the CBC planning to expand its daily schedule, the Canadian Authors’ Association informed its

⁵⁵ With respect to the need to broadcast music, Murray wrote: “Literally millions of people have heard, for the first time in their lives, the simple, youthful and sparkling quartet by Hayden, the elegant Mozart, and the joyful early quartets of Beethoven, and realized that therein lies a wealth of melody hitherto undreamed of, of rhythm that invites the toe to tap as well as any reel or foxtrot.” Gladstone Murray, *Draft of Autobiography*. LAC MG 30 E186 Vol. 2 File Murray, W.E.G Autobiography.

⁵⁶ Ernest MacMillan to Alan Plaunt, November 14, 1930. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 3 File 4.

⁵⁷ Ernest Macmillan to Gladstone Murray, May 8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 1140 File 4-25-3.

⁵⁸ Gladstone Murray to Ernest Bushnell, June 8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 1140 File 4-25-3.

⁵⁹ It should be noted that this type of educational program encouraging artists to produce material for radio was not exclusive to Canada. In a 1939 piece submitted to the American Musicology Society’s First International Congress on Music and Science, Davidson Taylor, an executive at CBS, wrote that radio authorities around the world had undertaken similar schemes. He makes specific reference to the work done in Belgium, Hungary, Latvia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Davidson Taylor, “Music Written for Radio,” Report submitted to the American Musicology Society’s First International Congress Session on ‘Music and Science,’ September 15, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 381 File 20-7.

members of the corporation's "sympathy with our object" and encouraged them to start writing material for radio. The group noted that Canadians wanted to experience Canadian literature and that "the authors and composers who spare no effort to seize the enlarged opportunity now presented, by producing the best that is in them to meet the particular needs of the broadcaster, will not find their pains have been wasted."⁶⁰

A critical part of this push, however, was teaching authors how to write for radio, a skill that most writers had not developed. In a 1948 MA thesis at the University of Toronto, Robert L. McDougall identified the difficulty in producing scripts for radio by pointing out that "the play which is written for radio broadcast, then, unlike the play which is written for stage or film production, must be of a certain specified length. Scarcely a line more or less will do, since only a small amount of expansion or contraction can be accomplished by manipulation of production tempo and it is essential that the program end within three seconds of a designated time."⁶¹ With radio scripts being so unique, the CBC published pamphlets and brochures outlining the requirements, with one in 1937 informing authors that "Radio Drama is not Theatre."⁶² While there was a clear benefit to the CBC in working with these groups, it was part of a wider push where the corporation was trying to engage people in the work of radio. If the CBC was serious about putting Canadian artists on the air, it had to provide the facilities for that to happen.

The efforts to improve programming served a dual purpose of both building an audience for corporation programs while also helping smaller, locally-owned stations. Small, community stations that were not part of the regular CBC network were eager to be added for national commercial programs. Airing these programs allowed stations to create some revenue while

⁶⁰ "Electrifying Authorship: Opportunity in Radio," *The Canadian Author*, Vol. XIV No. 3, April 1937, 3-4.

⁶¹ Robert L. McDougall, "Drama Designed for Listening: A Study of Radio Drama and Its Practice in Canada," MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 1948, 14.

⁶² John Coulter and Ivor Lewis, "Radio Drama is not Theatre," 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 210 File 11-19.

simultaneously eliminating the cost of airing a sustaining program. This meant an extra cost for sponsors, however, and it was often a struggle for the corporation to sell time.⁶³ In one case in the summer of 1937, CKPR Fort William alleged that the corporation was not doing enough to encourage sponsors to buy time on the station and felt that an increase in its power would help. Austin Weir responded to the request by noting that the station was in a peculiar position as “unless a sponsor is going to Western Canada, you have very little hope of being included.”⁶⁴ The situation became tense in February 1938 when the station’s manager, H. Dougall, wrote a letter to Weir accusing the CBC of lying to a sponsor in order to avoid sending a program to Fort William, saying that the “treatment from your department is astounding to say the least.”⁶⁵ The tension between the station and the CBC was clear as Weir responded by saying that “your accusation is too absurd for words” and reminding Dougall that “our business is to supply you with programs” and “to be so grossly accused of untruth and unfairness, is more than even I can take.”⁶⁶ While relations between the Fort William station and the CBC remained bitter, the incident is illustrative of the pressure the CBC faced to improve its programming. Creating top-quality programs that could compete with American networks was not just about building audiences, but it was also about helping community stations in rural parts of the country.

In addition, the CBC was hopeful that improving its own programs would eventually raise the quality of all Canadian programming. In November 1937 the corporation inaugurated a series of closed-circuit broadcasts for private stations entitled ‘The Art and Business of Broadcasting.’ In a letter sent to every Canadian station, Horace Stovin noted that each broadcast

⁶³ Each station that was not part of the regular network had a set rate for its inclusion. Rates were based on wire line cost and station time. The further removed a station was from the regular network, the more expensive its inclusion. This mostly resulted from the increased cost of wire lines.

⁶⁴ E.A. Weir to H. Dougall, July 29, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 105 File 3-18-43.

⁶⁵ H. Dougall to E.A. Weir, February 14, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 105 File 3-18-43.

⁶⁶ E.A. Weir to H. Dougall, February 26, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 105 File 3-18-43.

would feature a discussion of various topics, including libel and slander, actuality programs, building a program, merchandising, sales procedures, and remote control pickups.⁶⁷ And while the CBC was going to produce the programs, Stovin stressed that “we are particularly desirous of securing contributions from those in private stations as we feel that their researchers, resourcefulness, pioneering and investigations can go far to benefit all Canadian broadcasting in its variety of phases.”⁶⁸ Some of the early speakers in the series included such influential figures as E.W. Jackson on radio traffic, Rupert Lucas on the role of producers, W.H. Brodie on the importance of proper language, and Foster Hewitt on sports broadcasts.⁶⁹

For their part, private stations reacted positively once the programs started in December 1937, with the manager of station CJCA Edmonton telling Stovin that “whoever thought of this series was a genius” and “while it is impossible for every member of the staff to turn out and listen to each individual talk, as many as possible do seat themselves in Studio A and listen.”⁷⁰ The series, which continued until 1940 when shortages resulting from the war forced its cancellation, was part of the corporation’s effort to improve the state of Canadian broadcasting. As a 1938 memorandum noted, “despite relatively meagre resources Canadians can by means of such a policy have at their disposal the finest programs available anywhere while producing programs which will advertise Canada effectively in the United States and elsewhere.”⁷¹ Where expanding the network and building new transmitters presented long-term improvements to Canadian broadcasting, the immediacy of programming meant that even slight progress could provide a much needed short-term increase in goodwill. At the highest level of the corporation’s

⁶⁷ CBC Circular Letter No. 54, Horace Stovin to All Stations, November 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 400 File 21-1-3.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Horace Stovin to Ernest Bushnell, November 24, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 400 File 21-1-3.

⁷⁰ F.H. Elphicke to Horace Stovin, January 22, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 400 File 21-1-3.

⁷¹ CBC Information Memorandum, April 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 399 File 23-1.

administration, network expansion and financial responsibility remained higher priorities than programming, but, especially given Murray's background at the BBC, there was an understanding that addressing deficiencies in the schedule was a necessary part of distinguishing itself from the CRBC.

Apart from the clear commercial and public relations benefits, developing successful programs was important for the corporation as it prepared to expand to a 12-hour schedule. Starting with local outlets, the CBC expanded its offerings in order to compete with private stations while also providing further proof to the public that it was working towards improving the country's radio situation. In doing so, however, there was some concern that staff would be over-worked and unhappy. As such, the corporation started to phase out tasks that were deemed to be non-essential. In November, operations engineer J.A. Ouimet sent a memo outlining a new procedure to "bring to an end the anomalous situation wherein the operator [serves] as producer" which "has resulted in a certain degree of inefficiency which these regulations are intended to avoid."⁷² For example, the corporation had carried on a frequency monitoring service for local private stations, but in May Murray informed managers that "this is a matter which now comes under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transport" and "accordingly there will be no more monthly graphs of daily frequency measurements mailed to those stations."⁷³

Private stations may have understood the decision, but reducing services did carry some risk, however, as the public could see this as the corporation reneging on its responsibilities. The CBC received some help in this regard in August when the nationally syndicated 'Along the Air Waves' column published an interview with a member of the CFJC Kamloops staff. When asked about the popular perception that jobs in radio were "soft," he responded by saying "ask your

⁷² Engineering Operations Letter No. 10, November 12, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 75 File 3-3.

⁷³ Gladstone Murray to CKLW, May 27, 1937. RG 41 Vol. 104 File 3-18-21.

readers...how they would like to answer two phones, make an announcement, change a record, also a phonograph needle, and swat a fly on the back of their neck, all at the same time!”⁷⁴ Regardless of any potential public backlash, the CBC understood that expanding the schedule would provide further stress to an already taxed workforce. As a result, Murray informed all staff in April that, “provided the work of the corporation permits,” they would be given alternating Saturdays off.⁷⁵ Offering some relief to its heavily-burdened staff continued to be a priority for the corporation as a year later when CBL Toronto expanded its hours to 1AM Monday through Saturday, manager Peter Aylan noted that “I am anxious that the staff should not be called upon to work any longer hours than is absolutely necessary, so we will continue to sign off at 12:00 midnight on Sundays.”⁷⁶ Maintaining positive relations with staff was critical for the corporation and continued to represent a major issue as operations expanded leading up to the Second World War.

As the CBC managed its relationship with employees, it also took a proactive approach in trying to improve the fractured relationship it inherited with private stations. While the change in structure from the CRBC helped, gaining the trust of private stations would be a long process. The CBC understood that one of the major complaints from private station owners about the CRBC was that the commission was both competing with and regulating their stations. Len Kuffert has argued that this joint function was part of a paternalistic concern for listeners as “the perceived intimacy of radio became another rationale for strong control over programming on Canada’s public and private stations.”⁷⁷ Regardless of the motivation, the arrangement proved

⁷⁴ “Along the Air Waves,” Kamloops *Sentinel*, August 3, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

⁷⁵ At this time, it was standard for all regular employees (non-performers or engineers) to work Saturday mornings. Gladstone Murray Memorandum, April 29, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

⁷⁶ Peter Aylan to W.C. Little, May 6, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 75 File 3-3.

⁷⁷ Len Kuffert, “What do you Expect of this Friend? Canadian Radio and the Intimacy of Broadcasting,” *Media History* 15 no. 3 (2009): 304.

problematic for the CRBC. At its annual meeting in January 1935, the Western Association of Broadcasters expressed its frustration with the situation by passing a resolution stating “that there is a complete lack of justice in a subsidized Government body being empowered to administrate the operation of private commercial broadcasting stations and at the same time operate in competition with them.”⁷⁸ With the CBC retaining the right to regulate the industry there was a sense that extensive collaboration with private stations was needed in order to maintain cordial relations.⁷⁹ Alan Plaunt was concerned that any regulations drafted by the corporation would be used by private stations as a means to attack its credibility, writing Leonard Brockington in February 1937 to say that “generally speaking I cannot help feeling that our regulations and conventions with regard to controversial matters should be as wide as the limits of decency permit” and the onus should be placed on private stations to interpret the regulations on their own, “otherwise certain stations will not miss any opportunity to place the Corporation in an unfavourable light.”⁸⁰ This was a major concern as the CRBC had fallen victim to an inability to effectively enforce its regulations. When the United Radio Service of America complained that CFCF Montreal was not following the regulations on advertising in August 1934, for example, CRBC Vice-Chairman Arthur Steel responded by noting that “the commission is not a police force” and that it “cannot spend all our time supervising stations in Montreal.”⁸¹ Essentially Steel admitted that the commission could not enforce its own regulations, thus seriously compromising

⁷⁸ Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Broadcasters, January 7-8, 1935. LAC RG 41 Vol. 341 File 15-3.

⁷⁹ Provision 22 of the Broadcasting Act allowed the CBC to make regulations on advertisements, political programs, and networks. It also gave the corporation the power “to control the character of any and all programs broadcast by the Corporation or private stations.” Canadian Broadcasting Act, assented June 23, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

⁸⁰ Alan Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, February 24, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8, File 1.

⁸¹ Arthur Steel to United Radio Service of America, August 23, 1934. LAC RG 41 Vol. 39 File 2-2-7-4.

its authority. In order to avoid a similar fate, the CBC needed private stations to support the regulations and willingly abide by them.

One way to ensure that private stations would voluntarily follow the regulations was to include them in the process. Consultation with the CAB on regulatory matters started early as Harry Sedgwick attended the Board of Governors meeting in March 1937 to discuss advertising, which was followed by eleven CAB representatives advising on potential restrictions at the next meeting in May.⁸² Sedgwick was encouraged by the meetings and noted that because CAB members “generally realize the duties they owe to the public and the absolute necessity of keeping themselves in their listeners’ good graces...there should be very little cause of disagreement between the two bodies.”⁸³ In addition to concerns over advertising, the CBC also wanted to address the amount of political broadcasting on Canadian stations. This was particularly important given the ‘Mr. Sage’ controversy during the 1935 federal election, where the Conservative Party aired a series of partisan broadcasts over the CRBC. The broadcasts were not identified as such, however, which led to accusations that the commission was simply a tool for government propaganda. In order to prevent a similar controversy in future elections, the CBC was eager to establish clear rules for all political programming. After all, if radio was to serve as a democratizing force – Labour MP Humphrey Mitchell believed that through radio “the citizens of the country would be their own newspaper men” – it would need to provide equal time to various political points of view.⁸⁴ Ontario Senator Arthur Charles Hardy, owner of CHML Hamilton, felt the issue needed to be a top priority as “there can be little doubt that the

⁸² Minutes of the Third Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 8-11, 1937; Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, May 15-17, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

⁸³ Harry Sedgwick to Gladstone Murray, March 10, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

⁸⁴ Humphrey Mitchell, January 22, 1935. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Session 1, Seventeenth Parliament, 98.

deluge of radio broadcasting both in 1930 and even more so in 1935 Federal Elections was rather devastating.”⁸⁵

Before proceeding, however, the corporation sent a circular letter to all stations in January 1937 informing them that it had begun the process of establishing new guidelines and “before definitely drafting any regulations” it “should be glad to receive any suggestions you may wish to make based upon your past experience in assigning time on your station for political broadcasting.”⁸⁶ Private stations responded positively to the request and appear to have appreciated being consulted. John Beardall, manager of CFCO Chatham, Ontario, responded by saying that he “was indeed pleased to learn of your inquiry and also the confidence placed in the broadcasters by requesting their opinion before taking any definite steps on the subject.”⁸⁷ The Northern Broadcasting Company, which owned CFCH North Bay, CKGB Timmins, and CJKL Kirkland Lake, said that it appreciated “your intention of carefully considering this problem from all angles before enacting regulations under which private owned stations must operate.”⁸⁸ K.S. Rogers of CFCY Charlottetown gave perhaps the strongest endorsement of the plan when he wrote that “you may rest assured that any regulation you put out which will carry out the principle outlined above, will meet with our hearty approval.”⁸⁹

The responses were not universally positive, however, as some privately owned stations used the opportunity to argue that further regulation over broadcasting was not necessary. William C. Borrett, manager of CHNS Halifax, said that while he hoped the suggestions would help in the process, in his experience stations “are very fair.”⁹⁰ Philip H. Morris of CFPL

⁸⁵ Arthur Charles Hardy to Gladstone Murray, March 15, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

⁸⁶ CBC Circular Letter No. 6, January 14, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

⁸⁷ John Beardall to Gladstone Murray, January 19, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

⁸⁸ Northern Broadcasting Company to Gladstone Murray, May 8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

⁸⁹ K.S. Rogers to Gladstone Murray, January 21, 1937. RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

⁹⁰ William C. Borrett to Gladstone Murray, April 27, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

London, Ontario bluntly stated his belief that “no attempt should be made to prescribe the proportion of time which may be devoted to political broadcasts by private stations.”⁹¹ In Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, manager of CHAB H.C Buchanan felt that “there does not appear to be the necessity of regulation other than the power in the General Manager to correct any abuses” and that, in general, “the fewer regulations tending to curtail free speech the better and...radio should be placed under no great handicaps in that respect than the platform or the printed word.”⁹² One of the reasons why some stations were concerned over the regulations was because of radio’s immediacy. Where Humphrey Mitchell praised radio’s ability to provide an unabridged address, there was also concern that a station’s inability to edit a live speech could lead to problems. The lawyers for CKBI Winnipeg pointed out that even when stations required political speakers to submit a copy of their texts prior to broadcast, something different would frequently be said, which, in the moment, the station could not do anything about. As a result, the lawyers suggested that “there should be some law protecting the owners when they have taken precautions to guard against any defamatory statements being made” as “the newspapers enjoy certain protection with respect to libel and there is no reason why radio station operators should not enjoy protection also.”⁹³ The corporation understood this and was forced to find a balance where it could resolve the issues left over from the CRBC while not being seen as a government censor.

While soliciting opinions from private stations was a major step in that process, the CBC also relied heavily on Brooke Claxton and the Department of Justice in drafting the regulations. Claxton, a lawyer and First World War veteran who would later go on to a long political career, had argued at the Privy Council in 1931 in favour of federal jurisdiction over radio on behalf of

⁹¹ Philip H. Morris to CBC, January 18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

⁹² H.C. Buchanan to Gladstone Murray, February 22, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-8-1.

⁹³ Davis & Davis to Leonard Brockington, February 6, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 153 File 9-29.

the CRL.⁹⁴ With this background the CBC felt confident that Claxton could help Murray and the Board compose the new regulations. When CBC secretary Donald Manson sent the first draft to Claxton in late January, he responded that they should be sent to Mackenzie King and C.D. Howe because “the Government would be ultimately responsible, so it should perhaps be consulted in advance.”⁹⁵ Claxton was particularly concerned over the possibility that the regulations could be seen as censorship, at one point re-drafting a regulation to include a note stating that there was no intention to limit freedom of speech and affirming the belief that in a democratic nation the press should serve as an instrument for the spread of information.⁹⁶ After another draft of the regulations was sent in May, Claxton foreshadowed future problems when he pointed out that “there is nothing in the regulations to make it clear that in the event of a breach of the regulations, the Corporation will have the right to shut the person off the air.”⁹⁷

While Claxton was a trusted figure in the process, the corporation was extensive in its consultation with official bodies to ensure that the regulations were amenable. John M. Godfrey, a commissioner at the Ontario Securities Commission, gave his approval to the regulation on advertisements for bonds, shares, and other securities.⁹⁸ R.E. Wodehouse, the Deputy Minister of Pensions and National Health, offered some suggestions on the regulations for the advertisement of patented medicines.⁹⁹ Not wanting to take any chances on this issue, the corporation also consulted with T.H. Leggett, President of the Canadian Medical Association, who wrote that he was “heartily in sympathy with the idea of careful precautions being taken so that there will be

⁹⁴ The case pitted the Province of Quebec, with the support of Ontario and New Brunswick, against the federal government. The decision came down to a clause in section 92 of the British North American Act that “exempts Lines of Steam or other ships, railways, canals, [and] telegraphs from provincial legislation.” See Sean Graham, “Unity Through Ambiguity, *Strata: University of Ottawa Graduate Student History Review* Vol. 2 (June 2011): 1-27.

⁹⁵ Brooke Claxton to Donald Manson, February 26, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

⁹⁶ Brooke Claxton to Donald Manson, March 2, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

⁹⁷ Brooke Claxton to Gladstone Murray, June 1, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

⁹⁸ John M. Godfrey to Gladstone Murray, March 5, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

⁹⁹ R.E. Wodehouse to Gladstone Murray, March 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

no danger of any broadcast taking place which might cause needless fear with regard to Cancer in the minds of the general public.”¹⁰⁰

Internally, high ranking officials with extensive backgrounds in radio also provided their feedback on various drafts. For these individuals, however, the focus was not so much on the legality of the regulations as it was on their practical implications. E.W. Jackson, who was in charge of radio traffic, felt as though the regulation requiring a program log was not clear enough while Commercial Manager Austin Weir felt that the restriction on price mentions would “prove a definite handicap in the booking of National Network business from the United States.”¹⁰¹ With all the feedback and suggestions, the corporation continued to revise and edit the regulations through the spring and summer, taking great pains to ensure that everything was in order prior to enactment. In August, W. Stuart Edwards, the Deputy Minister of Justice, signed off of the latest draft by saying that they “are in proper form and within the powers of the Corporation under Section 22 of the Canadian Broadcasting Act.”¹⁰² With this, the Board of Governors convened a meeting in September for the exclusive purpose of approving the regulations.¹⁰³

The regulations themselves were extensive and covered a lot of the contentious issues in the broadcasting industry. From Section 5 requiring each station to submit a weekly copy of its program schedule to Section 7 preventing the broadcast of “obscene, indecent or profane language,” “false or misleading news,” “abusive comment on any race, religion or creed,” “upon the subject of birth control,” “venereal disease,” and “people presenting a person who claims

¹⁰⁰ T.H. Leggett to Gladstone Murray, October 22, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 144 File 9-8.

¹⁰¹ E.W. Jackson to Donald Manson, June 17, 1937; E.A Weir to Donald Manson, June 3, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

¹⁰² W. Stuart Edwards to Gladstone Murray, August 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

¹⁰³ The regulations were the only item on the agenda for the meeting in Toronto on September 8, 1937. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Board of Governors, September 7, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

supernatural or psychic powers,” the corporation was hopeful that it had been thorough enough in its consultations to prevent any controversy.¹⁰⁴ But it was the later regulations that, over time, would prove to be important additions. Section 9 restricted advertisements to no more than 10% of broadcast time, Section 13 called for all advertisements on articles that fell under the Patent Medicine Act or Food and Drug Act to be approved by the Department of Pensions and National Health, Section 14 banned the release of news published or collected from a newspaper, Section 18 prevented private stations from creating chains or networks, and Section 19 prohibited the use of mechanical reproductions in primetime.¹⁰⁵

With the regulations in place, Murray sent a letter to Canadian stations saying that their observance “will contribute to the general progress of broadcasting in Canada,” and, while acknowledging that there would certainly be initial difficulties over interpretation, “it is the settled policy of the CBC to develop co-operation with privately-owned stations, and in this connection, it is hoped to initiate regular exchange of suggestions, ideas and plans.”¹⁰⁶ While this hope that stations would be proactive in following the regulations had long been emphasized, there was some uncertainty as to how much commitment there was from private broadcasters. In August, for example, CFNS Halifax aired a dramatized political broadcast, which was a violation of the Radio Broadcasting Act’s prohibition of such programs. What set a dangerous precedent, however, was that the Board of Governors decided to warn CFNS and distribute a letter to all stations advising them that similar programs were not allowed.¹⁰⁷ Given the controversy associated with the ‘Mr. Sage’ broadcasts during the 1935 federal election, the corporation’s

¹⁰⁴ Regulations for Broadcasting Stations Made Under Canadian Broadcasting Act, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ CBC Circular Letter No. 43, Gladstone Murray to All Station Managers, October 7, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-3.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Board of Governors, August 5-8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

decision not to sanction the station or impose some sort of punishment for the violation was potentially damaging as it threatened to compromise its regulatory authority. In a 1972 MA thesis, Hugh Lawrence Saunderson argued that, just like the CRBC, the CBC serving as both regulator and programmer “often resulted in the Corporation having to choose between one of its two basic responsibilities” and that, in making the choice, “the Corporation often placed a higher priority in extending the national service than in supervising the system as a regulator.”¹⁰⁸

While Saunderson was right in identifying the expansion of the network as taking up a lot of the corporation’s attention, the way in which it tried to curry the favour of private stations and the need to separate itself from the CRBC could also account for its lax approach to regulation. Prior to the CBC implementing its regulations in the fall of 1937, the CRBC regulations remained in place for Canadian broadcasting. Given the unpopularity of the commission, it is possible to see why the CBC would be hesitant to enforce the regulations with a heavy hand. Given the extensive effort to earn the support, and perhaps just as important, trust of private stations, enforcing unpopular regulations could compromise the progress it had made in this regard. Through its early years, it was “a major policy with the Corporation to maintain adequate and cordial relations with public bodies and private institutions,” which may have affected the CBC’s view of its regulatory function.¹⁰⁹ While it was important to maintain outside support, it could be argued that there were times when the corporation was too concerned with its popularity, particularly in its enforcement of regulations. Between November 1, 1937 and March 1, 1938, the corporation noted forty-three violations, yet only took action in one case.¹¹⁰ All

¹⁰⁸ Hugh Lawrence Saunderson, “Growth of the Single System in Canada,” MA Thesis, Carleton University, 1972, 78.

¹⁰⁹ CBC Information Memorandum, February 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-3.

¹¹⁰ The one case was when Reverend Morris Zeidman and Reverend Charles Lanphier were both banned from broadcasting for using their respective religious programs for political discussion. This will be discussed

other violations were met with letters informing stations that a program had violated a regulation. The corporation likely wanted to provide time for stations to acclimatize to the new regulations, but the lack of enforcement meant that there were no consequences for violations. This laxity compromised the corporation's authority and, as will be seen, made it more difficult in the rare occasions when it attempted to punish violators.

Not everyone felt as though the corporation was too soft when it came to enforcement, however, as accusations of censorship were common. The CBC was sensitive to this, as Murray would respond to all claims of censorship by quoting the footnote to Section 7 of the regulations, which stated that:

It is not the intention of the Corporation to restrict freedom of speech nor the fair presentation of controversial material. On the contrary, the policy of the Corporation is to encourage the fair presentation of controversial questions. At the same time, it should be realized that the message of broadcasting is received at the fireside in the relatively unguarded atmosphere of the home, reaching old and young alike. Certain subjects, while meriting discussion elsewhere in the public interest are not necessarily suitable for this intimate medium.¹¹¹

The Communist Party, however, was one organization that felt as though the CBC was not living up to its stated policy. In September 1937, party leader Tim Buck wrote to Murray to complain that station CKCL Toronto had cut parts of his script because of CBC regulations, saying that "I can see nothing in the rules as posted to explain the seeming difference in the standards of censureship [sic] applied to different people."¹¹² Murray responded by citing the corporation's lax history with regards to enforcement, pointing out that "if broadcasting throughout Canada were administered by the CBC under unified control, after the model of the BBC in the United Kingdom, uniformity of interpretation would be rightly insisted upon," but since that was not the

further in Chapter 5. Decisions on Broadcasting Regulations, November 1, 1937 to March 1, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 287 File 14-1-4.

¹¹¹ Regulations for Broadcasting Stations Made Under Canadian Broadcasting Act, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

¹¹² Tim Buck to CBC, September 28, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 260 File 11-40-3.

case the best the CBC could do was try to ensure that the regulations were enforced as fairly as possible with “the exercise of a reasonable degree of public conscience.”¹¹³

Buck was not satisfied with this response, saying that a policy of equal time for political parties “could unquestionably be operated through the stations of the CBC and could probably be operated by agreement between the CBC and most of the private stations if the method of application was such as to not discriminate.”¹¹⁴ This was not the last time that Buck would argue that he had been improperly censored by the CBC, but Murray’s admission that uniform enforcement was impossible was telling. In a circular letter in December, he informed stations that scripts did not need to be submitted to the CBC for approval, which he said was unnecessary, and that “for the most part there should be an identity of interest between the station and the CBC as it is bad for broadcasting generally to encourage the misconception that either the Act or the CBC is responsible for tyrannous censorship.”¹¹⁵ If he truly felt as though the corporation was ultimately powerless to enforce the regulations, it does call in to question the legitimacy of the organization as a whole. It also becomes clear that while the consultations with private stations were in part motivated by a desire to draft the best possible regulations, the wider rationale was to establish in the private stations a sense of ownership over the regulations as a measure to ensure their compliance. This was not the case, however, and the result was that over the course of the next two years the corporation was constantly struggling to enforce its regulations.

Part of that struggle could also be attributed to the fact that not everyone was happy with the regulations. H.R. Carson, General Manager of United Broadcast Sales, pointed out that most broadcasters wanted price mentions in ads and argued that there is not “any direct rule you can

¹¹³ Gladstone Murray to Tim Buck, October 2, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 260 File 11-40-3.

¹¹⁴ Tim Buck to Gladstone Murray, November 8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 260 File 11-40-3.

¹¹⁵ CBC Circular Letter from Gladstone Murray, LAC RG 41 Vol. 151 File 9-23.

follow for all types of advertising,” which he believed meant that such decisions should be left to regional directors.¹¹⁶ The Lord’s Day Alliance of Canada met with the Board of Governors during its meeting in November to ask that, among other things, a ban prohibiting the broadcasting of professional and commercialized sports on Sundays be introduced.¹¹⁷ Some listeners also felt as though further restrictions needed to be put in place, with one listener in Quebec asking that alcohol ads be prohibited because “it is difficult enough to bring up children in these days according to one’s ideal of right living, without this added scourge being brought right into our homes.”¹¹⁸ Even the Canadian Medical Association, which had been supportive of the draft regulations, “feels that the subject of cancer should be added to the list of prohibited subjects requiring your approval.”¹¹⁹

While the CBC did not have any expectations of the regulations receiving unanimous support across the country, the mixed reaction by some reminded the corporation of the need to remain proactive in its public relations efforts. When rumours of a possible deficit at the CBC began to circulate in October, Alan Plaunt wrote J.F.B. Livesay, General Manager of the Canadian Press, to caution its members against carrying the story. He wrote that “if the newspapers are in fact contemplating a grand sabotage of the CBC I think they had better first take a dispassionate look at all the facts and factors.”¹²⁰ To that same end, in November the Board of Governors considered printing an information brochure to coincide with the opening of the new session of parliament which would be “advantageously distributed to licence holders” in

¹¹⁶ H.R. Carson to Gladstone Murray, November 26, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

¹¹⁷ Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the Board of Governors, November 16-18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹¹⁸ Lexy L. Fellows to Gladstone Murray, n.d. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

¹¹⁹ T.C. Routley to Gladstone Murray, November 23, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 144 File 9-8.

¹²⁰ Alan Plaunt to J.F.B Livesay, October 24, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 4.

order to gain the “understanding and good-will of the public.”¹²¹ The corporation also decided to re-brand its stations in the fall; CBC stations were given new three-letter call signs, thus “mak[ing] our new station call letters distinctive” which “will have the effect of stressing the identification of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and will also make our calls a little different from others.”¹²² This effort to distinguish itself also included some CBC employees interacting with the public. For example, in February 1938 Plaunt gave an address in Winnipeg in which he hoped “to dispel some doubts, to allay some misgivings and to remove some misunderstandings.”¹²³ It is perhaps no coincidence that these efforts to re-brand itself coincided with the release of the regulations as the corporation attempted to be proactive in its public relations efforts.

Further buoying these efforts, the corporation eagerly awaited the final results of the Havana Conference, which reconvened in November. At its first meeting, the Board of Governors had resolved that “a letter be written to the Minister of Transport suggesting the possibility of revision of the arrangement with the United States regarding broadcasting frequencies, stressing the urgency for the need of such revision,” so there was some disappointment that through the summer and fall the corporation had to continue to field complaints over poor reception.¹²⁴ W.C. Little, a regional engineer from Toronto, wrote chief engineer Gordon Olive in July to say that he had received complaints “in connection with noisy radio sets, poor quality, etc.”¹²⁵ As a result, it was important for the Canadian delegation to come

¹²¹ Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, November 16-18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹²² CBC Circular Letter No. 39, Gladstone Murray to Regional Directors and Station Managers, September 28, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

¹²³ Alan Plaunt Speech in Winnipeg, February 3, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 16 File 2.

¹²⁴ Minutes of the First Meeting of the Board of Governors, November 2-4, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹²⁵ W.C. Little to G.W. Olive, July 27, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 75 File 3-3.

out of the conference with a good arrangement. Donald Manson, who served on the delegation, wrote to Plaunt in November outlining his belief that, given each country's desire for clear channels, Canada should ask for more than it needed. He believed that the conference would be difficult and that so long as Canada gets "enough channels to satisfy our needs we should not worry about the number that Mexico or any other country may get."¹²⁶ CBC engineer K.A. MacKinnon, who again served as a part of the Canadian delegation, outlined those needs in October. His feeling was that, so far as the CBC was concerned, Canada's top priority at the conference needed to be securing high-power wave-lengths. He wrote that "it is essential that our plans for a high powered chain of stations operating without interference within our borders be made possible" since "at present ... the CBC has no channels on which there is a satisfactory lack of interference at night."¹²⁷

MacKinnon also expressed support for an American proposal which would give Canada a total of ten clear channels and provide protection against night-time interference across the country, with the exceptions of the Rocky Mountain region in British Columbia, New Brunswick near the Maine border, and Northern Ontario.¹²⁸ MacKinnon was certain that achieving a positive outcome was essential to the survival of broadcasting in Canada, warning that:

the CBC must try to give this Canadian delegation no chance to do such clumsy bungling as was evident at the Mexico City Conference of 1932. Ever since that time, because the United States and Mexico could not agree, Canada has been the goat for five long years with no clear channels. The

¹²⁶ Donald Manson to Alan Plaunt, November 25, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collection Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 3 File 6.

¹²⁷ K.A. MacKinnon, "Canada's Needs for the Havana Conference, November 1937: A Summary of the Immediate Needs of Canada as Regards Broadcast Channels in the Medium Wave Band," October 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 355 File 19-5.

¹²⁸ MacKinnon wrote that these regions could not be satisfactorily covered by the corporation with exclusive channels. The frequencies were broken into three categories: Class A, Class B, and Class C. Classes were based on the power of the stations operating on the frequencies, with Class A being the most powerful.

future of the CBC, the writer believes, depends for one thing on clearing up the interference on our high power channels.¹²⁹

In essence, MacKinnon was conceding that for the corporation to be successful domestically, it had to be successful internationally. For all the talk about promoting Canadian nationalism and bringing the country together, the corporation needed to collaborate at Havana on a continental distribution of wavelengths before it could expand the network and implement the plans it had conceived through its first year. The CBC was unable to prevent American or Mexican signals from crossing the border, but it could ensure that those signals no longer interfered with Canadian ones. Heading into the conference, Canada's position was largely based on the progress the corporation had made and how, as a result, the country deserved exclusive high-power wavelengths.

When the Conference opened on November 1, fourteen countries were present, which resulted in the first two weeks being spent in slowly progressing general discussions.¹³⁰ By the time a final agreement was signed on December 13, however, the Canadian delegation had managed to secure fifteen high power channels, well over the minimum requirements identified by MacKinnon.¹³¹ In the breakdown, Canada received seven channels on which it could use unlimited power, four channels for stations up to 50 kilowatts, and four channels for 'second-class' stations between 5 and 15 kilowatts with the right to increase to 50 kilowatts using

¹²⁹ K.A. MacKinnon, "Canada's Needs for the Havana Conference, November 1937: A Summary of the Immediate Needs of Canada as Regards Broadcast Channels in the Medium Wave Band," October 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 355 File 19-5.

¹³⁰ The Canadian delegation was headed by Laurent Beaudry, Assistant Under-Secretary of the Department of External Affairs. Commander C.P. Edwards, Chief of Air Services at the Department of Transport, was Canada's other official delegate to the conference. The Department of Transport was represented by Walter Rush, Controller of Radio, and engineer J.W. Bain. The Department of National Defence sent radio engineer Major W.L. Laurie. The CBC contingent included MacKinnon, Donald Manson, and Augustin Frigon

¹³¹ Canada also received thirty-three regional channels, six local channels, and there was a possibility of more Class B stations. C.P. Edwards, "Report to the Honourable C.D. Howe, Minister of Transport," n.d. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6-1.

directional antennae.¹³² The agreement also stipulated that each country must use the frequencies it had been granted within a reasonable period of time – with reasonable being determined as the five-year length of the agreement.¹³³ Apart from just securing the frequencies, the Canadian delegation, and in particular MacKinnon, was also pleased that the term ‘objectionable interference’ was officially defined for the first time. This meant that if Canadian stations suffered the same level of interference as they had throughout the past decade, it would be easier to resolve the situation.¹³⁴

While the agreement still needed to be ratified by the various countries, the fourth of which would validate the deal, the reaction in Canada was extremely positive as it was nearly a unanimous feeling that it represented a major development for Canadian broadcasting. The *Medicine Hat News* reported on December 28 that the agreement would go a long way to resolving the longstanding interference problems seen in the West and that it “will give Canada sufficient channels to care for all present and projected high-power stations using five kilowatts or more.”¹³⁵ The *Ottawa Citizen* lamented that it had taken so long for an agreement to be reached, but argued that “it is gratifying to have the assurance of Canada’s representatives at the Havana conference that the nations on this continent have at last found it possible to set up a more orderly control of the North American radio realm.”¹³⁶ The CAB was also optimistic about the agreement, expressing its happiness that “finally, after years of diplomatic pressure from the

¹³² C.P. Edwards, “Report to the Honourable C.D. Howe, Minister of Transport,” n.d. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6-1.

¹³³ North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement, Signed at Havana, Cuba, December 13, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 355 File 19-5.

¹³⁴ The agreement defined objectionable interference as: “the degree of interference produced when, at a specified boundary or field intensity contour with respect to the desired station, the field intensity of an undesired station (or the root-mean-square value of field intensities of two or more stations on the same frequency) exceeds for ten (10) per cent or more of the time the values hereinafter set forth in this Agreement.” ¹³⁴ North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement, Signed at Havana, Cuba, December 13, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 355 File 19-5.

¹³⁵ “Radio Interference,” *Medicine Hat News*, December 28, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 348 File Unknown.

¹³⁶ “For Order in the Radio Realm,” *Ottawa Evening Citizen*, December 28, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol.348 File Unknown.

United States and Canada, Mexico indicated her willingness to become a party to a new treaty for assignment of broadcast channels.”¹³⁷ G.C. Chandler, Chairman of the CAB Technical Committee and author of the association’s response to the treaty, went on to suggest that “the policy of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation be so framed as to permit all stations in Canada to take advantage of the full power permissible under the terms of the Havana Treaty for the benefit of Canadian listeners.”¹³⁸ Given the corporation’s precedent for consulting with private stations, the CAB could rightly expect that it would do the same with the Havana Agreement. Unfortunately for all Canadian broadcasters, however, securing the deal was the easiest part of the process and the following years would be filled with uncertainty as to when, or if, ratification would be secured.

Despite the optimism surrounding Canada’s acquisition of wavelengths, it may not have been as momentous an achievement as the corporation believed. This is partly because as early as 1929 Frederick Terman had developed a system synchronous broadcasting, which would allow multiple stations to broadcast on the same frequency without interfering with each other. As explained by Michael Socolow, this could be achieved by “precisely synchronizing the transmission of identical wavelengths by two or more broadcast transmitters.”¹³⁹ The system was not implemented in North America during the 1930s, however, and wavelengths remained a contested terrain. Socolow notes that one of the principal reasons for the failure to adopt synchronous broadcasting in this period was the powerful American networks’ ability to derail the system in order to preserve the status quo – which included the notion of frequency scarcity. He argues that frequency scarcity was “not simply an established, neutral, scientific fact: by

¹³⁷ G.C. Chandler, “Report of the Technical Committee of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters on the Havana Treaty in its Relation to the Canadian Broadcaster,” n.d. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Michael Socolow, “A Wavelength for Every Network: Synchronous Broadcasting and National Radio in the United States, 1926-1932,” *Technology and Culture* 49, no. 1 (2008): 89.

providing the scientific rationale for discriminatory action, it privileged proponents of the regulatory system as it developed.”¹⁴⁰

While Socolow is writing about the situation in the United States in the early 1930s – the issue of synchronous broadcasting was not a major issue in the second half of the decade – it should be noted that the CBC would have suffered under such a model. The corporation used the authority granted in the Broadcasting Act to claim high power wavelengths for itself while limiting the expansion of private stations. It could be argued that the CBC’s growth was possible in part due to the limitations placed on private stations. When Socolow argues that “synchronization threatened chaos for the carefully rationalized U.S. broadcasting marketplace,” it is possible to say the same for Canada.¹⁴¹ This is not to suggest that the CBC actively suppressed synchronous broadcasting – there is no evidence that such a scheme was ever proposed by private stations – but the popular impression of frequency scarcity greatly benefitted the corporation’s public relations efforts. Regardless of the technical realities, the CBC had a vested interest in maintaining the perception that there were limited frequencies available in North America and that, because of its early expansion, it had been able to secure some of those exclusively for Canada. While the latter part of that statement is true, in reality it may not have been the coup the presented by the CBC.

Unaware of the forthcoming delays on ratification, the corporation was excited about the possibilities that could result from the exclusive wavelengths. For as much as the Conference had created new opportunities, it was also an important statement of the corporation’s progress in integrating into the continental broadcasting structure. The Canadian delegation at the Conference was not made up entirely of CBC employees, but its arguments for high power

¹⁴⁰ Socolow, 93.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

channels rested entirely on the corporation's operations. Since private stations' power was restricted, the only possible usage for high power wavelengths in Canada at the time was through corporation stations. Therefore, when the delegation argued in favour of exclusive channels for Canada, it was arguing for exclusive channels for the CBC. That the delegation was so successful can be seen as a sign that the corporation had a positive reputation amongst its North American compatriots. Given how crowded North American wavelengths were, that delegates from other countries agreed to provide Canada with so many exclusive channels displays a confidence in the corporation's ability to capitalize on the opportunity. Since not sending a delegation to the Paris Inter-Continental Broadcasting Conference in early 1936, the perception of Canada by foreign broadcasters had greatly improved, which furthered the CBC's excitement about the future.

What furthered this feeling was that the high powered transmitters in Ontario and Quebec were nearly completed. Through the fall there had been several unforeseen delays at both sites. While the corporation was disappointed that the transmitters were not ready for the start of the fall season, there was a certain level of understanding over the delays as they could be used as a learning experience for future projects. As Augustin Frigon put it, "one must remember that these were the first stations of their kind in Canada and so long as there has not been any delay due to gross neglect on the part of anyone, we can very well be satisfied that the work has progressed as quickly as it could under the circumstances."¹⁴² The delay also presented an opportunity for the corporation to improve its wire connections. The contract signed with the wire line companies did not go into effect until October 1, 1937, and the corporation struggled with poor connections prior to its enactment, thus allowing for the introduction of a system for

¹⁴² Augustin Frigon to Gladstone Murray, October 12, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

network supervision.¹⁴³ During a meeting at the end of October, the Technical Committee on Networks received reports from Moncton and Vancouver describing the poor transmission, which resulted mostly from line cuts or other similar interference and indicated that stand-by network facilities were not available.¹⁴⁴ As a result, it was determined that the CBC would break up the national network into four groups, each of which would be under the supervision of a regional engineer who would communicate any problems to a regional representative of the wire line companies.¹⁴⁵ It was felt that this would simplify the process and allow for better quality service across the country.

This was particularly important as the new transmitters in Ontario and Quebec were ready in December. First was Verchères, which officially opened on December 11 with an hour-long broadcast at 8:00PM. In its press release announcing the opening, the CBC boasted that the station “will provide Quebec with a broadcast service second to none in Canada.”¹⁴⁶ Carrying the call letters CBF, the station’s inaugural program featured a philharmonic orchestra, a bilingual address and message of congratulations from Gladstone Murray, comments in English from C.D. Howe, and a talk in French from Ernest Lapointe. During his remarks, Howe congratulated the CBC for completing “the first considerable instalment of [its] plan to extend coverage of CBC Stations in Canada,” while at the same time “making excellent progress in improving its programmes.”¹⁴⁷ Two weeks later, CBL Toronto was ready to go on the air, with its inaugural broadcast taking on an added importance, however, as it was also the first broadcast in fourteen-hours of Christmas Day programming. The station’s opening would immediately precede the

¹⁴³ Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Board of Governors, August 5-8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹⁴⁴ G.W. Olive to L.A.B. Hutton, October 28, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 1141 File 4-37-1.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ CBC Press Release on Opening of CBF, December 8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 107 File 3-19-17.

¹⁴⁷ Inaugurations du Poste de Radiodiffusion CBF – Continuity, December 11, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 107 File 3-19-17.

address from the King as part of a schedule that included programs like *The Christmas Stocking* from Vancouver, *The Animals' Christmas* from Banff, and *Reindeer Christmas* from Toronto.¹⁴⁸ In his comments during the opening, Howe again commented on the corporation's improved programming while also highlighting that even though the station was based in Toronto, it "will draw on all artistic resources of the whole of Ontario."¹⁴⁹



Figure 2 Map showing coverage of new stations in Hornby, ON and Verchères, QC. March 16, 1938.

For the CBC, the opening of the new stations took on a greater significance than just expanding the network as it was a sign that it had started to escape the shadow of the CRBC and that Canadians were starting to accept the idea that a publicly-run broadcaster could be successful. On the eve of CBL's opening, the St. John, New Brunswick, *Telegraph-Journal*

¹⁴⁸ CBC Press Release on Opening of CBL, December 15, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 107 File 3-19-12.

¹⁴⁹ Opening CBL, December 25, 1937. LAC Audio Collection, C08533 (4).

reported that “the CBC is stiffening up this once spineless system” and “is elaborating a technique that is essentially Canadian, by enquiring into and adapting itself to purely Canadian conditions which differ considerably from those of either the Mother Country or the United States.”¹⁵⁰ The initial results showed that it had been successful in these efforts. Chief Engineer Gordon Olive reported in March 1938 that both new stations had quality operating records and that on average CBL could be heard by 63% of Ontarians while CBF could be heard by nearly 80% of Quebecers.¹⁵¹ With these results, there was a feeling that the corporation had demonstrated its utility while making substantial progress in the areas of programming, network expansion, and public relations. For as much as there may have been a cause for celebration, Murray cautioned against being self-congratulatory. At the Control Committee meeting on December 30, Murray said that the CBC “was still in an intermediate or transition stage” and while “it was realized that much ground had been gained...we are still in a precarious situation in that the work had gone beyond the capacity of present staff and equipment.”¹⁵²

Restraining any desire to rest on their laurels was good policy, but the corporation did have plenty of achievements on its 1937 resume. Going into the year it was clear that the rhetoric about improving Canadian broadcasting was not going to suffice and tangible results were needed. With the implementation of the new wire line contract, the completion of two new high-power transmitters, the agreement over frequency allocation, the creation of new broadcast regulations, and the improved cooperation of private stations and professional organizations, the corporation entered 1938 in a much better position than it had been a year earlier. There were tangible signs of progress, however, both in its domestic expansion and integration into North

¹⁵⁰ “Canadian Broadcasting,” *St. John Telegraph-Journal*, December 24, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 348 File Unknown.

¹⁵¹ G.W. Olive, Report on Operation of the 50kw Stations at Verchères (CBF) and Hornby (CBL)

¹⁵² Minutes of the Meeting of the Control Committee, December 30, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 15 File 14.

America's broadcasting environment. If the corporation's early months were marked by changing the culture of public broadcasting, the bulk of 1937 was about changing the structure of public broadcasting. But there was still plenty of work to be done as the year had shown that obstacles remained, including enforcing the regulations, dealing with accusations of censorship, and finding a way to complete the national network. This meant that going into 1938, the sense of urgency that had marked 1937 needed to remain throughout the entire organization.

Chapter Three: Cracks in the Shield

January 1, 1938 was a cold day in the nation's capital that saw just over six centimetres of snow fall. As the CBC's Ottawa employees struggled to get to the studio for the day's programs, the corporation itself prepared to face a new year that would be filled with similarly treacherous roads. For the most part, the CBC had taken advantage of its honeymoon period over the previous fourteen months and, to that point, had avoided any major controversies. While there had been some issues with the regulations and accusations of censorship, the corporation enjoyed a generally positive public image. But through 1938 things started to change as the CBC faced more questions than it ever had. The government was asking about its operations, private stations were asking about its use of commercial programs, and the public was asking about the radio licence fee. Where the CBC had previously been proactive in its planning and operations, it now had to be reactive to a country that was increasingly starting to question the national broadcaster's viability. The year presented new challenges to an organization that had, until that point, enjoyed relative autonomy in its operations. And while employees would frequently talk about the public service element of broadcasting, 1938 forced them to prove it to the country. Where 1937 focused on new transmitters and international agreements and 1939 brought unprecedented challenges, 1938 offered the CBC a much needed opportunity to address Canadian broadcasting's core issues.

The New Year brought with it a new occasion for the corporation to expand its international presence with the International Telecommunications Conference in Cairo, which was held every five years and presented an opportunity to revise the regulations governing radio around the world. For Canada, simply having a delegation at the conference was important as it would re-affirm its place as a major player in radio. The conference itself was expected to deal

mostly with radio requirements for naval and military purposes and the *Ottawa Morning Citizen* reported on December 30 that “what is done at Cairo is not thought likely to interfere with the Canadian situation.”¹ Despite this, the corporation felt that attendance was imperative as most of the other broadcast authorities in the world would be there and, as a result, it presented a unique opportunity to make new contacts.² Therefore, when the Canadian government officially approved the conference’s recommendations in September 1939, it was more symbolic than anything as it showed that Canada was an active member of the international broadcasting community.³

Having a representative at the conference was part of the corporation’s larger effort to integrate into the existing international broadcasting community. For the most part this was undertaken with an eye to the corporation’s efforts towards continental integration, but becoming an active participant outside of North America presented an opportunity for the CBC to learn from established broadcasters. Over time this led to program and personnel exchanges with national broadcasters in South Africa and Australia. When examining the corporation’s early growth, it is therefore important to remember that fostering productive relationships with international broadcasters represented a means through which the CBC could earn a reputation as a world-class organization. This attempt to gain further legitimacy on the international stage came with a great price, however, as the corporation had to do without the services of Assistant

¹ “Canadian Delegates Sail For Cairo Next Week,” *Ottawa Morning Citizen*, December 30, 1937. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 348 File Unknown

² Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, May 15-17, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040

³ One of the more interesting articles in the regulations was Article 12, Section 2.2, which stated: “The Administration of the country of reception decides whether or not to authorize the addresses designated by the sender to receive radiocommunications, and makes the necessary notification to the country of emission.” This is particularly noteworthy given the increasing use of propaganda out of Germany at this time. O.D Skelton to the Secretary of the Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union, September 2, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-7.

General Manager Augustin Frigon for the first four months of 1938.⁴ Sending Frigon was an interesting decision given that it was generally agreed that the Havana Conference was much more important than Cairo. And while the chance to network with other broadcasting authorities around the world did present a unique opportunity, it was likely a role that could have been filled by a less senior member of the staff.

While Frigon's normal responsibilities made him an integral part of the organization, his absence was particularly noticeable in the early months of 1938 because the CBC was preparing for a parliamentary committee to examine its operations. This was actually welcome news to Alan Plaunt, who had long felt that there needed to be a standing committee on broadcasting. Without such a committee, whenever members of the House of Commons had questions about the CBC, Minister of Transport C.D Howe would have to get the information from either Murray or Brockington before responding. Because of this, Plaunt felt that "the business of broadcasting should no more be subjected to these sorts of questions than the business of railroading, and unless the unfortunate precedent is reversed and a standing committee established, Murray will have to spend his whole time during parliamentary sessions in coaching the Minister on his replies."⁵

The committee was not overly concerned with this procedural matter, however, as it was much more focused on the radio licence fee, which the CBC wanted to increase from \$2 to \$2.50. Plaunt understood that "there is a great deal of justification in the reaction against the licence fee," and took the lead in trying to get ahead of any negative press created by the

⁴ "M. Frigon sera absent quatre mois," *Le Devoir*, January 7, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 348 File Unknown.

⁵ Alan Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, April 7, 1937. University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 2

decision.⁶ In January, Plaunt wrote Howe to let him know that he had met with various members of the newspaper and magazine organizations in Toronto. He said that after explaining the corporation's position regarding commercial revenues and the licence fee, the group unanimously supported the increase on the understanding that it would result in the CBC not needing as much commercial programming.⁷ Plaunt was also able to get the support of the United Farmers of Ontario, whose members said they would be willing to pay a licence fee up to \$6, "providing that they had assurance that there would be a considerable reduction in the amount of advertising included in the programs."⁸

Similar reports came in from around the country. J.W. Godfrey, a lawyer from Halifax, wrote to Plaunt to tell him that people on the East Coast concurred with the United Farmers of Ontario in being willing to pay an increased licence fee provided there be a reduction in commercial advertising. Godfrey went on to note that an increase in facilities was critical to maintaining that support, particularly because "the CBC can perform a great service by carrying Canada's message into the desolate areas."⁹ The Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* opined that "if increased revenue from licence fees means an earlier expansion of CBC facilities to Saskatchewan no one should mind paying the higher fee."¹⁰ The CBC also received letters from individual listeners who supported the increased fee, with one from St. Catharines, Ontario, saying that "I am a poor man in sympathy with your efforts" to spread the network to isolated parts of the country and "I do not mind paying an extra fifty cents so that these people will derive

⁶ Alan Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, February 7, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 6.

⁷ Alan Plaunt to C.D. Howe, January 11, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 5.

⁸ Herb Harman to Alan Plaunt, February 16, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 5 File 2.

⁹ J.W. Godfrey to Alan Plaunt, February 8, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 12.

¹⁰ A.H. Wells, "Along the Air Waves," Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, January 8, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

the same benefits and enjoyment which the people in more crowded centres have been enjoying for some years.”¹¹ A listener from Regina said that he would happily pay an increased fee for both his home set and his car set, arguing that “it is inconceivable that anyone should object to paying this very nominal fee, when the return so far exceeds the outlay.”¹²

Further helping the campaign was the completion of the new regional transmitters in Ontario and Quebec, which earned support in those provinces. Kenneth M. Bructon from Grenville, Quebec, even felt that the proposed increase was “too small a fee yet” and told the corporation to “increase it if necessary, but keep up your present excellent work, at any cost.”¹³ A listener in Toronto wrote that “while no increase in radio fees is popular, I feel that the improved reception over CBL is well worth the extra fifty cents.”¹⁴ In one of the more entertaining letters the CBC received, David Gray of Brockville, Ontario, wrote to express his appreciation for the corporation and to say that the uproar over the increased licence fee was, to his mind, “silly”:

Time and again my wife has said she would rather listen in to your program than go to the show. I don't believe she goes to the show once a month, but if she did not have your programs she would be at the show at least once a week, then you see the radio is a good money saver too. You can trust a Scot to see a good bargain and to get so fine programs through the CBC for \$2.00 is a bargain, why laddie, it's a gift.¹⁵

Through April 1938, the corporation received two-hundred-and-three letters supporting the increase. Interestingly, however, one-hundred-and-seventy-six of those letters came from Alberta, a province that was still waiting for improved service through an expanded network. Outlining this perspective, the Red Deer *Advocate* editorialized that the CBC had made great

¹¹ Douglas B. Bradfield to Gladstone Murray, February 6, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-16.

¹² G.W. Thomas to CBC, February 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-16.

¹³ Kenneth N. Bructon to R.P. Landry, January 27, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-16.

¹⁴ H.C. Jones to CBC, February 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-16.

¹⁵ David Gray to CBC, March 30, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-16.

progress and that “it has the support of the large majority of the people in this country, and they hope and expect that it will continue in its effort to provide the same satisfactory service to the people in the sparsely populated areas, that is now available in the more thickly settled parts,” which it said was “a service...that never would be given by any privately-owned radio system.”¹⁶ Support for the corporation in Alberta was further buoyed by the controversial broadcasts of Premier William Aberhart. ‘Bible Bill,’ as he was known, was outspoken in his Baptist beliefs and hosted a weekly radio show on Sunday nights. Rather than stick to theological issues, however, Aberhart often drifted into political commentary; during an August 1937 episode he told Prime Minister Mackenzie King to “leave Alberta alone” when discussing the Dominion Bank Act, adding that “if the federal government could hear the people of the West, and even many of the people of the East, they would hesitate in trying to booster up an antiquated system.”¹⁷ Because of this, the CBC would frequently receive complaints from Alberta listeners blaming the corporation for continuing to allow the program, with one writer arguing that it “cannot escape a large share of the responsibility and blame for our troubles in Alberta.”¹⁸ It is possible that a good deal of the support for the increased fee in Alberta resulted from people thinking that the CBC would not only complete a high power transmitter in the region, but would also be more forceful in applying its regulations to Aberhart’s program.¹⁹

Despite the letters of support for the increased licence fee, it was clear that across the country public sentiment was strongly opposed to the idea as 1,002 letters were received

¹⁶ “The Broadcasting Business,” *Red Deer Advocate*, February 16, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-16.

¹⁷ *Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute*, Originally Broadcast August 15, 1937. LAC Consultation Copy C-7273.

¹⁸ J. Boyd McBride to Ian Mackenzie, April 25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-9.

¹⁹ The regulations prohibited political addresses during religious programs. Aberhart was not the only one to violate the regulation, which resulted in a highly-publicized controversy early in 1939. See chapter 6.

protesting the increased fee.²⁰ In a letter from a Toronto listener, the CBC was informed that everything received from Canadian stations was “practically rubbish” and that “the English language is mutilated almost beyond recognition by the announcers,” while another called the programs “lousy.”²¹ A listener from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, agreed, asking “what do we get for our money? For entertainment Canadian programs are not to be compared with American.”²² In an editorial, the Kelowna *Courier* criticized the proposed increase on account of the fact that Canadians rarely have the opportunity to listen to first-class musicians, saying “that maintenance of interest is dependent largely upon variety of entertainment and that they [the CBC] are in danger of losing a large proportion of their listening public by continuing to fill the air with vapid banality.”²³ A listener from Montreal went further in his objection by calling the CBC’s programs amateurish and arguing that if the current staff was unable to produce world-class broadcasts then “they should be forced to resign, and make way for those who are capable of so doing.”²⁴ These complaints were particularly disappointing for the CBC given its efforts towards improving Canadian programming. That some listeners displayed such negativity to the programs in the face of the increased licence fee showed the corporation that there was plenty of work to be done in the area of program origination.

But it was not just the quality of programs that fostered resistance to the fee increase, as some Canadians saw it as a tax they could not afford. The municipal government of the County of York in Ontario passed a resolution in January “protesting the unjustified increase in the cost

²⁰ It should be noted, however, that the majority of these were sent directly to the Department of Transport. The CBC received 141 letters while C.D. Howe’s office reported 861 letters. There is no record of how many letters of support for the fee were sent to Howe, which may skew the numbers slightly. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²¹ Gordon Stewart to Gladstone Murray, January 22, 1938; Eric Adams to Department of Transport, February 3, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²² E.W. Burke to CBC, January 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²³ “Up Goes the Price of Radio Licences,” Kelowna *Courier*, January 27, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²⁴ Finley Campbell to Ottawa *Citizen*, January 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

of Radio licenses,” which “will be a real hardship not only upon the people of the County of York, but upon the entire population of the Dominion of Canada.”²⁵ Similarly, a listener from Meeting Creek, Alberta, complained that “I find it hard enough to scratch up the \$2.00 and I think the poor people are taxed enough.”²⁶ Other listeners complained that they could not pick up corporation stations and, therefore, gained nothing from paying the fee. A listener in Edmonton felt that he should not have to pay the same fee as those in other parts of the country who receive better service, saying that “this would appear to be yet another example of the discrimination being exercised by Eastern Canada against the West.”²⁷ In addition, some people objected to having to pay a fee for each individual radio set, instead of one per household, leading one listener from Ottawa to say that the corporation was “steal[ing] the joys and pleasures of our home.”²⁸ Perhaps one of the most common complaints, however, was that the corporation was not doing enough to collect the existing fee. There was a sense that if it was more vigilant in its enforcement of the fee, it would be able to sufficiently increase its revenues. As a listener from Barons, Alberta, wrote, “if you enforced even the \$2.00 fee you would more than make up what you will get by the raised licence from the ‘suckers’ who have been paying each year while others have never had a licence.”²⁹

It was not just listeners who were vocal in their opposition to the increased licence fee, however, as members of the opposition Conservative Party expressed their displeasure in the House of Commons. John Allmond March, MP for Hamilton West, Ontario, argued that the CBC aired far too much non-Canadian content and stifled the development of private stations all while benefiting from the licence fee, “which is an imposition and a nuisance tax that should be

²⁵ R.W. Phillips to Landry, January 26, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²⁶ D.L. Cantelon to CBC, January 26, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²⁷ H.B. Halloway to CBC February 12, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²⁸ Edwin Willis to CBC, March 10, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

²⁹ Mrs. A. Smith to CBC, February 14, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

withdrawn altogether.”³⁰ Howe defended the CBC against these attacks, saying that the complaints “are being made not because the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is a failure but because it is a success,” attributing the criticism to private stations who are unhappy that “the listening audience in Canada are tuning their dials to programs of the corporation.”³¹ Charles Cahan, Conservative member for St. Lawrence-St. George, Quebec, and long-time opponent of the CBC, challenged the government to be forthcoming with details of the national broadcaster’s operations. On Valentine’s Day he gave a speech arguing that since public money goes to the CBC, “surely we have the right to know what those who receive such money are doing with it.”³² David Spence, Conservative member for Parkdale, Ontario, was much more pointed in his criticism, arguing that the CBC had unnecessarily provoked its opponents by recommending the increase: “The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has many enemies in the country, and it is always irritating at any time for people to have to pay extra money for anything. My motto is, ‘Let sleeping dogs lie.’”³³ Spence’s argument was supported by the fact that the corporation was on its way to its second consecutive budget surplus. Given that it was not in dire financial straits while many Canadians across the country were, it was fair to wonder why the corporation was so determined to have the licence fee increased.

For its part the CBC understood that increasing the fee was going to be unpopular and, like with the regulations, tried to be proactive in publicizing the issue. The *McGill Daily*, where Gladstone Murray had worked as a student, printed a Canadian University Press article on

³⁰ John Allmond Marsh, February 7, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session, Eighteenth Parliament, 236.

³¹ C.D. Howe, February 8, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session, Eighteenth Parliament, 249.

³² Charles Hazlitt Cahan, February 14, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session, Eighteenth Parliament, 410.

³³ David Spence, March 4, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session, Eighteenth Parliament, 1057.

January 28 which outlined the General Manager's efforts to defend the CBC's policies, "which have recently resulted in much press criticism."³⁴ Chairman of the Board of Governors Leonard Brockington gave a *Chatting With the Listeners* talk over the national network on February 3 and addressed the controversy over the licence fee. He argued that even an increased licence fee would still be less than the fees in Austria, Australia, Czecho Slovakia, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, the Irish Free State, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and South Africa. He went on to assure listeners that any revenue from an increased fee would not be used to pay for past expenditures and instead should be seen as a necessary contribution towards "essential progress to new and necessary construction, to the rehabilitation of obsolete equipment, to the encouragement and improvement of Canadian sustaining programmes, to the establishment of musical organizations and to the encouragement of existing orchestras and to the ever-present task of contributing to Canadian unity by emphasizing the beauties, the variety and the resources of the Canadian scene."³⁵ Franks Peers argues that, along with Murray, Brockington was "skilled in the arts of public persuasion; and their talks over the air were effective expositions of the CBC's performance, purposes, and intentions."³⁶ Similarly, René Morin gave an address over the French network the same day, in which he discussed the new transmitter near Montreal and the additional costs of operating a high-power station.³⁷

Plaunt contributed to this effort by giving an address in Winnipeg where he assured the audience that while the Board of Governors did recommend an increased fee, members had no

³⁴ Gerald Clark, "Major Murray Outlines Present Radio Policy," *McGill Daily*, January 28, 1938. LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds MG 30 E186 Vol. 4 File Clippings.

³⁵ Leonard Brockington, *Chatting with the Listener*, Originally Broadcast, February 3, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 399 File 23-1-2.

³⁶ Frank Peers, *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 283.

³⁷ René Morin, *L'Oeuvre que la Société Radio-Canada est chargée d'accomplir, et ses moyens d'action*, Originally Broadcast February 3, 1938. RG 41 Vol. 399 File 23-1-2.

personal or financial stake in the matter as “all we desire is the steadfast and increasing progress of Canadian radio as a national enterprise under the direction of our successors, no less than ourselves.”³⁸ A week earlier in Ottawa, Plaunt had argued that the corporation’s policies had always been the same: “to create for Canada a broadcasting service really worthy of Canada, which means that it will be in the front rank of broadcasting services of the world.”³⁹ Within the organization there was optimism that these efforts had been successful in swaying the public. C.D. Howe wrote to Murray to express his belief that “despite the flood of protests which have come to my office, I still feel that we have the more solid section of the public with us” and that “time will soon dissolve our present difficulties.”⁴⁰ As it prepared for the hearings of the parliamentary committee, this level of confidence seemed to permeate among the corporation’s employees.

On February 24 Howe introduced a motion to appoint a committee “to consider the annual report of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and to review the policies of the corporation with special reference to revenues, expenditures and development.”⁴¹ The committee consisted of twenty-three members, seventeen of which were Liberals who were joined by four Conservatives, one member of the Social Credit Party, and CCF leader J.S. Woodsworth. With the committee established, there were some questions as to exactly what aspect of the corporation it should investigate. The *Guelph Daily Mercury* reprinted a *Financial Post* article on March 7 which argued that “the forthcoming enquiry should not be devoted solely to sharp-shooting but should look into the good work the CBC has done and is capable of doing. It should

³⁸ Alan Plaunt Address in Winnipeg, February 3, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 16 File 2.

³⁹ Alan Plaunt Address in Ottawa, January 27, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 16 File 2.

⁴⁰ C.D. Howe to Gladstone Murray, January 29, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 394 File 21-17.

⁴¹ C.D. Howe, February 24, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 758.

uncover the purpose and reasons behind the proposed increase in fee...It should not mislead by attempts to destroy the concept of national, independent radio for Canada.”⁴²

Over the course of the next two months the committee held seven meetings, heard witnesses like Leonard Brockington and René Morin, and conducted what it referred to as an exhaustive examination of the corporation’s operations. In its final report, which came in May, the committee found that the CBC’s “policies are well designed to carry out the purpose for which the Corporation was created,” adding that “with the resources at its disposal...the Corporation can give Canada satisfactory broadcasting service while at the same time enabling Canada to create programs worthy of exchange.”⁴³ The one area where the committee offered some gentle criticism was in coverage, saying that the corporation needed new transmitting facilities as “large areas of Canada, particularly in the Maritimes, the Prairies and British Columbia, receive somewhat scant and spasmodic service of CBC programs.”⁴⁴ For the corporation, the report was a major step forward in its public relations efforts. In its annual report, it argued that “through the medium of this committee the Corporation was in a position to meet criticism directed against its policies and operation and to make explanations of Corporation matters advisable or necessary in the public interest.”⁴⁵ As such, the CBC took the report as validation of its operations and policies and eagerly looked forward to completing the national network and continuing its work on improving program quality.

The significant Liberal presence on the committee does present some questions as to whether the corporation could be viewed as a Liberal organization. As previously noted, the

⁴² “National Body Needed for Radio,” *Guelph Daily Mercury*, March 7, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 300 File 14-1-37.

⁴³ Minutes and Final Report of the 1938 Parliamentary Committee on Radio, May 20, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 287 File 14-1-3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ CBC Annual Report 1937-1938. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

Board of Governors had multiple Liberals and, when combined with the members of the 1938 Committee, there is some doubt as to whether the corporation was a partisan organization. While the issue of partisanship can be raised with respect to the CBC's composition, it does not appear to have affected its operations. As will be discussed below, the corporation was eager to ensure that equal time was available to all political parties in elections and that broadcast time not be used for personal political views. In addition, the CBC had frequent confrontations with members of the Liberal party. For example, in early 1939 the corporation was developing *Reveil Rural*, a program for rural listeners that would be broadcast on the French network. Liberal MP Georges Bouchard called on the CBC to broadcast the program in the West, an idea with which Ernest Bushnell did not agree on the grounds that agricultural conditions differed in Western Canada. Bushnell was particularly upset, however, at the fact that Bouchard made his case just prior to the hearings of the 1939 parliamentary committee investigating radio, a committee of which he was a member. In an angry letter to Donald Manson, Bushnell wrote that he objected to "the fact that Bouchard usually waits until there is a Parliamentary Committee in the offing before he begins his blackmailing tactics" and that "if we are not strong enough to stand on our own feet without having to buy the support of the members of this committee by granting them every little favour then again in my opinion something is wrong."⁴⁶ Bushnell concluded his impassioned letter by stating that "I would not promise Mr. Bouchard a goddam thing."⁴⁷

Bushnell's defence of the corporation's autonomy is representative of how many employees felt on the question of government interference. The CBC cherished its legislative independence – in part because it understood the negative effects government interference had on the CRBC – and worked hard to maintain that distance. Of course when a close relationship

⁴⁶ Ernest Bushnell to Donald Manson, February 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 230 File 11-24-16.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

with Mackenzie King was beneficial in overcoming C.D. Howe's opposition, members of the Board of Governors were happy to exploit their personal relationships with the Prime Minister. They were cautious about reciprocating, however, when the government approached them out of the fear that the corporation would be seen as an extension of the Liberal party. This can be seen in the CBC's reaction to the National Film Board's establishment in 1939. In his memoir of the war years at the NFB, Graham McInnes, who had been working at the CBC in the 1930s, recalled a conversation with Donald Buchanan, who worked in the Programme Department, in which Buchanan explained that John Grierson was in Ottawa "trying to set up some kind of government film centre."⁴⁸ The perception of a "government film centre" was not well received by the corporation, which maintained its distance from the NFB. David Hogarth argues that this was in part the result of the CBC's resentment towards the NFB's style of documentaries, as the corporation rejected "what it saw to be the partisan and producer-oriented production traditions of the National Film Board."⁴⁹ Given that so many members of the corporation valued the legislative distance between the CBC and the government, such an ambivalent response to what they saw as a government-controlled institution is not surprising.⁵⁰

Despite not wanting to be viewed as a government institution, the CBC was pleased with the outcome of the Committee and hoped to capitalize on the positive report. The CBC released an information memorandum in April that not only outlined the corporation's history, but also

⁴⁸ Graham McInnes, *One Man's Documentary: A Memoir of the Early Years of the National Film Board*, edited by Gene Walz (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004), 15.

⁴⁹ David Hogarth, *Documentary Television in Canada: From National Public Service to Global Marketplace* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 24

⁵⁰ That ambivalence seems to have been reciprocated by the NFB. At no point during its 1939 meetings was the idea of fostering a cooperative relationship with the CBC discussed. In January 1940, Leonard Brockington, who had resigned from the CBC, was invited by the NFB to "act as an observer and special advisor to the Board, and in particular, associate himself with the creative projects being carried on by the Board" while also sitting in on the Board's meetings, but there was no expectation that his appointment would build relationships between the two organizations. LAC, National Film Board Fonds, RG 53 Microfilm Reel T12771. Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the National Film Board, 9 January 1940.

described its strategy for the future. It explained the CBC's plans to control a high power national network while private stations would supply local content, thus creating "a distinctive Canadian institution, developed in response to Canadian desires and needs...[that] can, in the words of the Honourable R.B. Bennett be 'a most effective instrument in nation building.'"⁵¹ For the corporation, nation-building took on many forms – from program origination to technical improvements, members of the CBC staff were conscious of the public service aspect of broadcasting. In order to fulfill its public service role, therefore, the corporation needed to be proactive in developing new technology. While high power stations would help in the short term, throughout the 1930s the technology of broadcasting was rapidly changing and it did not take long for state of the art equipment to become obsolete. And just as radio technology was improving another form of broadcasting was capturing the public's imagination – television.

Throughout the 1930s television had been a point of fascination for broadcasters and the public alike. Less than two months after its establishment, the CBC issued a report on its initial plans for the emerging medium. Written by J.A. Ouimet, at the time an operations engineer, the report outlined the technical developments in television while cautioning that it would take time before it would be profitable. At the same time, however, Ouimet was wary that Canada would technologically fall behind other countries, a problem which had already greatly inhibited the development of Canadian radio in the 1920s and 1930s. He argued that:

Unless the Corporation keeps in step with the rest of the world in television, by a gradual development of its own television organization and facilities, when the time comes for the establishment of a television service in this country it will be at the mercy of private foreign interests. It would be, indeed a costly proposition for the Canadian tax-payer to finance a one-sided deal with powerful American or English interests who would have exclusive control of the engineering skill as well as of the product Canada has to have.⁵²

⁵¹ CBC Information Memorandum, April 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 399 File 23-1.

⁵² J.A. Ouimet, "Memorandum on Television: The Importance of its Early Consideration by the CBC," December 29, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 403 File 23-1-4-1.

In essence, the CBC having to integrate into an existing continental broadcast structure can be seen as a product of this delay. Had Canada taken earlier action on building a national network, it could have grown along with the American and Mexican stations. Instead, Canada was slow to respond to radio and, as a result, the CBC had to earn a position in the already established North American framework, a difficult and time consuming task. Had Canada been more proactive in radio in the 1920s, the process of integrating into the continental system would likely have been easier, which the corporation hoped would happen with television.

In addition to worrying about foreign interests and maintaining a Canadian presence in television, the corporation also had to respond to a public that was eagerly anticipating the new technology. In June 1937 *The Gazette* in Montreal reported that television was ready for distribution in densely populated urban centres.⁵³ For the CBC however, the need to complete the radio network and give service to rural listeners trumped any desire to get involved in television. As K.A. MacKinnon argued in December 1938, “the CBC, which has not yet realized a national broadcast coverage, cannot very well justify spending listener’s fees collected from all parts of the country on a costly television service to a few selected cities.”⁵⁴ As a result, the official policy of the corporation was that television licences would be granted to private companies for experimental purposes, but television broadcasting would remain in the control of the CBC.⁵⁵

In 1939, Gladstone Murray, at the request of the Board of Governors, did solicit a quote on television equipment from the Canadian Marconi Company, emphasizing Montreal and

⁵³ “Television Ready for Urban Centres,” *The Gazette* (Montreal), June 17, 1937. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 22 File Press Clippings 1932-1966.

⁵⁴ K.A. MacKinnon to Donald Manson, December 13, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 403 File 23-1-4-1.

⁵⁵ The same policy was also in effect for facsimile broadcasting. Minutes of the Second Meeting of the CBC Technical Committee, December 29, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 82 File 3-11-11.

Toronto as possible locations for stations. The company estimated the cost for the equipment to build a station to be \$656,520.⁵⁶ Murray was non-committal after receiving the quote, as it was unclear how the corporation wanted to proceed. The Board of Governors did not seem eager to spend money on television when the national network had not yet been completed, but, as Murray wrote to the Chairman of Baird Television in London, “the Canadian people do not like their American cousins to secure undue advantage in any field of scientific development.”⁵⁷ The start of the war temporarily ended discussions about television, but by 1945 similar questions were being asked.⁵⁸ In January 1945, for instance, Augustin Frigon, by this time General Manager, put out a press release stating that “it would be some time before [television] would be ready for the public to the extent that the present system of network broadcasting is now available to almost every home in Canada.”⁵⁹ It was not until 1951 that CBC Television went on the air, but through its early flirtations with the emerging medium the corporation attempted to earn greater legitimacy with the Canadian public. Just as it had tried to be proactive with regulations and programming, the CBC’s relationship with television was part of a wider shift in the culture of public broadcasting where it needed to be seen as an innovator and leader in the industry. For Murray, providing Canadians with a world class broadcasting system went beyond just creating programs as the corporation needed to be completely up-to-date on new means of communication – even if they were still in the experimental stage.

⁵⁶ R.M. Brophy to Gladstone Murray, February 22, 1939. LAC RG 403 File 23-1-4-1.

⁵⁷ Gladstone Murray to Sir Henry Greer, February 15, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 403 File 23-1-4-1.

⁵⁸ In a 1940 Information Memorandum the CBC acknowledged that it was “fully alive to the desirability of providing for the Canadian public a television service as soon as the necessary expenditures come within the bounds of the practicable.” Part of that meant that the licence fee would again have to be raised to meet the financial requirements – although it was pointed out that Canada had a comparatively low licence fee. CBC Information Memorandum, February 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-3.

⁵⁹ CBC Press Release January 30, 1945. LAC RG 41 Vol. 403 File 23-1-4-1.

One area that was a more pressing concern for the CBC than television was its commercial operations. In March 1938 Commercial Manager Austin Weir submitted a report on the progress of the department. He pointed out that the corporation had received excellent co-operation from private stations regarding network programming and that “the effect of these network commercials in popularizing the Corporation among station owners and listeners especially in the West and Maritimes, is well-known.”⁶⁰ He also pointed out that revenues from spot advertising had increased on most CBC stations and that, in general, revenues from commercial programs were quite high. In Ottawa, for example, station CBO reported “steadily increasing” commercial revenues through 1938, showing an increase of over 52% from the year before.⁶¹ While the revenues helped maintain a balanced budget, there was an understanding within the corporation that too much commercial programming was actually harmful to the organization’s public image. The biggest danger was upsetting members of the press, some of whom felt as though the corporation was unfairly stealing advertising dollars from newspapers. In an internal memo, CBC employees were reminded that “the settled policy of the CBC is to reach a position in which it will be dependent only to a minor degree on sponsored programs” as it hoped “to carry out its duties in intimate alliance with the newspaper press and publishing industry of Canada.”⁶²

Maintaining that support proved to be a difficult task, however, as newspapers started to attack the CBC for its commercial policies. This was not particularly surprising as a lot of papers across the country had supported the increased licence fee, mostly because they felt it

⁶⁰ Report of the Commercial Manager, March 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

⁶¹ For the period November 1 1936 to March 1, 1937 the station earned \$7,877.04 in commercial revenues. The same four-month period ending March 1, 1938 saw that number rise to \$18,652.11. The estimated total for the fiscal year 1937-1938 was \$40,000, up from \$12,300 a year earlier. Report of CBO Ottawa, March 31, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

⁶² CBC – Attitude to the Press, n.d. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 15 File 1.

would reduce the number of commercials the CBC aired. Charles Edward Johnson, Social Credit MP for Bow River, Alberta, said in the House of Commons that during his discussions with publishers he was told that a one-dollar fee increase was ideal because “it would help the publishers as they wouldn’t have to compete with the CBC for ad dollars anymore.”⁶³ In a sign that the newspapers’ fears were justified, the Association of Canadian Advertisers was enthusiastic about its prospects over the CBC. During its annual meeting in December 1937, the Chairman of the Radio Committee said that “we have arrived at the beginning of a new era in radio broadcasting in Canada” as “the greatest of our difficulties are behind us.”⁶⁴ The numbers certainly supported that perspective, with gross billing on CBC commercial programming going from \$645,000 in the 1937-1938 fiscal year to \$1,597,000 in 1939-1940.⁶⁵ While the CRBC had aired commercial programs, the CBC’s revenues were unprecedented and created a host of new challenges for the corporation.

One such challenge was the use of commercials on Sundays. In March 1937, the Board of Governors had addressed the issue, but wanted to maintain a balance between maintaining revenues and the public desire to eliminate Sunday advertisements.⁶⁶ One of the main groups advocating for the elimination of these ads was the Lord’s Day Alliance, a group supported by Protestant Churches that fought the increasing secularization of Sundays. In January 1938 the group opposed a Sunday commercial game show on the grounds that it violated Section 6 of the Lord’s Day Act, which prohibited anyone “to engage in any public game or contest for gain, or

⁶³ Charles Edward Johnson, February 10, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 358-359.

⁶⁴ Report of the Annual Meeting of the Association of Canadian Advertisers, December 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 284 File 13-7.

⁶⁵ In 1938-1939 the gross billings were \$1,196,000. “CBC Commercial Radio – Past Present Potential,” 1970. LAC RG 41 Vol. 282 File 13-1.

⁶⁶ Minutes of the Third Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 8-11, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

for any prize reward, or to be present thereat.”⁶⁷ While the Deputy Minister of Justice felt the program in question did not violate the Act, the Lord’s Day Alliance was on the CBC’s radar as an influential organization it would need to appease. A year later when the Alliance complained about the sheer number of Sunday ads, Horace Stovin, supervisor of station relations, responded that the CBC “feel[s] your Executive Committee will be pleased to know that, through the co-operation of radio stations, Sunday advertising programmes have shown little increase, particularly when compared with the normal growth of the use of the radio medium.”⁶⁸

Not only was the CBC fielding complaints over when ads were being sent over the air, but also about where they were coming from. A lot of the CBC’s commercial programming came from American networks, which meant that listeners were subjected to plenty of American advertisements. For some, this called into question the entire reason for why the corporation existed. Douglas Gooderham Ross, Conservative MP for St. Paul’s, Ontario, asked “is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation making itself an agency for encouraging the very thing which it was created to discourage, that is, the extension of radio advertising, and particularly of advertising which does not originate in Canada?”⁶⁹ He continued by arguing that providing facilities to American advertisers “seems to be a serious misuse of public revenues and credit.”⁷⁰ What made the situation worse was the belief that American advertisers were actually being offered better rates than Canadian advertisers, prompting John Allward Marsh, Conservative MP for Hamilton West, Ontario, to accuse the corporation of “doing exactly what

⁶⁷ Gladstone Murray to W.S. Edwards, January 20, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 154 File 9-33.

⁶⁸ Horace Stovin to George G. Webber, April 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 154 File 9-33.

⁶⁹ Douglas Gooderham Ross, February 2, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Reports of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 118.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

it formerly would not permit the private station to do for the same purpose.”⁷¹ The accusations of hypocrisy were damaging, but the implicit message in these attacks was that the CBC was just like the CRBC. Critics of the CBC became more forceful in their claims that the corporation’s commercialization would “destroy the original intention of setting up a national Canadian radio and, through it, encouraging Canadian talent and artistry.”⁷² Perhaps Conservative MP for York South, Ontario, James Earl Lawson put it most succinctly when he objected “to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation prostituting the purposes for which it was created by statute and charging the Canadian listeners increased licence fees for doing it, while our United States cousins can listen to it all and pay not a cent.”⁷³

The CBC constantly struggled to find a balance between its need for commercial revenues and its requirement to produce Canadian content. In a 1940 information memorandum, it explained that accepting more advertising was necessary as “with increased revenues and the extension of network programs this type of advertising will accordingly be diminished.”⁷⁴ This was a difficult task, however, as, even with the licence fee increase, commercial revenues were critical to the corporation’s expansion plans. In a letter to C.D. Howe, Murray explained that “commercial revenue is now being obtained at a very satisfactory rate,” which would allow the CBC to afford further expansion.⁷⁵ Howe took this defence to the House of Commons to answer attacks from Conservative MPs, arguing that 87% of the CBC’s schedule consisted of sustaining

⁷¹ John Allward Marsh, February 7, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Reports of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 236.

⁷² “Mr. Howe and the New Radio Connection,” *The Evening-News Chronicle* (Port Arthur), January 19, 1938. LAC C.D. Howe Papers MG 27 III B20 Vol. 204 File Press Clippings (6).

⁷³ James Earl Lawson, February 8, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 264.

⁷⁴ CBC Information Memorandum February 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-3.

⁷⁵ Gladstone Murray to C.D. Howe, October 28, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 14 File 7.

programs and stressing that because of exchange agreements with the American networks “no single dollar of ours goes to pay for a program brought in from the United States.”⁷⁶

Regardless, the corporation heard the complaints and understood that it had to take some action in order to maintain the support of the press and listeners. It was a complicated matter however, and the CBC was extremely hesitant to limit its commercial revenues. When a proposal was made to limit time signal sponsorships to watches, for example, Frigon was weary because it would result in a \$5,000 loss of revenue, which “I do not believe that we can afford to refuse such an important sum and my suggestion is that for the time being, we do accept time signal sponsors other than watch companies.”⁷⁷ This type of wavering made it difficult for the Board of Governors to act on limiting commercials, but in the spring of 1939 a resolution was passed capping the corporation’s annual commercial revenues at \$500,000.⁷⁸ Even if the resolution came later than some people wanted, it was welcome news to listeners.

As the corporation struggled towards the resolution, however, it had started to place an increased emphasis on improving the quality of its programs. Through its regulatory role the CBC had been making recommendations to the Minister as to whether a station should have its licence renewed. In one evaluation from March 1938, the Board of Governors found that a station “was not rendering an adequate community service.”⁷⁹ If the CBC was going to hold other stations to this standard, it was important that it too meet that expectation. Airing American commercial programs, however, compromised its ability to do so as some supporters viewed the programs as a violation of the corporation’s mandate because they were not of a

⁷⁶ C.D. Howe, February 8, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 248.

⁷⁷ Augustin Frigon to E.A. Weir, May 31, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 75 File 3-2.

⁷⁸ Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the Finance Committee April 25, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 T3043.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 22, 24-25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

high quality. J.F. Garrett, a long-time supporter of the Canadian Radio League, was consistent in his opposition to American programs, writing Plaunt in September 1936 to discuss the importance of developing quality Canadian programs as “specific listening habits must...be developed if we are to successfully get away from the terrible banalities that now go on the air as broadcast entertainment.”⁸⁰

In order to change those habits and have Canadians listen to Canadian programs, the CBC went to work on improving its program schedule. The first step was to address the language being used on the air – a task that fell to W.H. (Steve) Brodie. Brodie, the announcing coach for the CBC, was enlisted to improve not only announcers’ pronunciation and diction, but also to address the issue of vocabulary. In his ‘The Art and Business of Broadcasting’ address on February 1, Brodie argued that public standards were improving in all aspects of life, including speech. He cautioned stations that “the day is not far distant, when careless and faulty articulation, bad pronunciation, and a poor choice of words will be regarded as social errors, as bad as any of the numerous things which are held up to our abhorrence by books of etiquette and advertisements in the magazines.”⁸¹ This emphasis came directly from Gladstone Murray, who wrote that during his time at the BBC he was constantly advocating for improvements in announcing.⁸² While programs were to be “free from any marked local dialect,” – which would limit a program’s accessibility to listeners outside the originating location – the corporation did not want to completely eliminate “wide regional” dialects from the air.⁸³ Instead, reducing grammatical and pronunciation mistakes was part of improving the quality of the announcers,

⁸⁰ J.F. Garrett to Alan Plaunt, September 19, 1936. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 10.

⁸¹ W.H. Brodie, “The Art and Business of Broadcasting,” February 1, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 51 File 2-3-6-7-3.

⁸² Gladstone Murray, Undated Autobiography. LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds MG 30 E186 Vol. 2 File W.E.G. Autobiography.

⁸³ Handbook for Announcers, 1938. LAC RG 41 51 File 2-3-6-7-2.

which was intended to show Canadians how the corporation was working to improve broadcast standards. It was something that listeners did not have to be told – they would simply notice as they listened to their radios. For the corporation, it was seen as a relatively simple improvement that would be greatly appreciated by the audience.

As much as listeners may have wanted improved standards of language and pronunciation, improving the programs meant improving the content. The first step in this process was to reduce dependency on network programs from either the United States or Britain and start to produce more original material. For the month of July 1938, the CBC produced 1,474 programs over 541 hours, an increase of over 500 programs and 200 hours from the same month a year earlier.⁸⁴ While exchange programs from the United States also increased, the sheer number of programs aired meant that the corporation was producing more programs than ever before.⁸⁵ As such, the CBC was eager for listeners to know exactly which programs were corporation originations, resulting in the addition of a network identification call to all CBC programs.⁸⁶ Another benefit to the change was that the constant reference would make the public more aware of the corporation. During the program conference in August, Murray lamented the fact that “public opinion is not as acutely aware of the CBC as it should be. That is one of the tasks we have to face.”⁸⁷ Given the negative press it had already faced, anything that could create a positive impression with Canadians was highly valued by the CBC.

Including the identification helped listeners recognize corporation programs, but what they really wanted was to hear the best programs available, whether they were variety, music, or

⁸⁴ Programme Statistics Comparative Statement for July 1937 and July 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 166 File 11-6.

⁸⁵ Exchange programs from the United States accounted for 15% of the CBC’s schedule, up from 12.37% in 1937.

⁸⁶ Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 22, 24-25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

⁸⁷ Report of the General Supervisor of Programmes on the Proceedings of the Programme Conference Held Toronto, August 8th and 9th 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 850 File PG1-13.

debate. One of the critical areas designed to achieve this was the Talks Department, which was responsible for all speeches, debates, and informational programming over the network. These programs made up 9.4% of the network schedule during the 1937-1938 fiscal year, up from 3.5% the year before. For 1938, however, there was a new focus on the Talks Department as a critical component of the plan to both originate more programming and improve the overall quality of the network's offerings.⁸⁸ The program conference in August had "stressed the vital importance of making all CBC presentations unquestionably authoritative in content."⁸⁹ With that in mind, the Talks Department was given the task of producing an hour-long discussion program on Wednesday nights at 10PM for the upcoming season. It was decided that the first thirteen weeks would feature *Ventures in Citizenship*⁹⁰ from Winnipeg, followed by ten weeks of *Labour Relations*, which would be produced with the assistance of the Workers' Education Association of Canada, and the season would conclude with *Education and Life*.⁹¹ The schedule also featured *Here and There*, an opinion program featuring different speakers each week, regular broadcasts from Graham Spry in London, and various panels featuring academics talking about current events.⁹² The department also produced talks from the Minister of Mines and Resources Thomas Crerar, which in 1938 included "Canada's Forest Estate," "The Rehabilitation of our Indian Wards," and "The Development of Canada's Oil Resources."⁹³

⁸⁸ 1936-1937 Annual Programme Report; 1937-1938 Annual Programme Report, LAC RG 41 Vol. 526 File 11-5-8-3.

⁸⁹ Report of the General Supervisor of Programmes on the Proceedings of the Programme Conference Held Toronto, August 8th and 9th 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 850 File PG1-13.

⁹⁰ The *Ventures in Citizenship* broadcast of November 9, 1938 was notable because it celebrated Jewish contributions to Canadian life and aired the same night as Nazi German launched Kristallnacht, which was a vicious attack on Jews. See: Peter Neary, "The CBC 'Ventures in Citizenship' Broadcast of 9 November 1938," *Canadian Jewish Studies* 10 (2002): 109-122.

⁹¹ D.W. Buchanan to Gladstone Murray, November 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 165 File 11-2-3.

⁹² D.W. Buchanan to Gladstone Murray, December 1, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 165 File 11-2-3.

⁹³ Thomas Alexander Crerar, March 27, 1939. Dominion of Canada Report of Debates House of Commons; Fourth Session Eighteenth Parliament, 2281-2282.

One of the more popular talks programs created in 1938 was *National Forum*. D.W. Buchanan, who had previously worked at *Saturday Night* magazine, developed the program through the summer using the template of *Whither Democracy*, a popular discussion program from the previous season. In a letter to H.C. Grant, an economics professor from the University of Manitoba, Buchanan explained that *National Forum* would be a sustaining program airing on Sunday nights and featuring discussions on issues of national importance by speakers from across the country.⁹⁴ The initial response from potential speakers was very positive, with B.K. Sandwell, editor of *Saturday Night*, saying that he had been declining speaking engagements recently but “the invitation for the opening broadcast of the National Forum tempts me too much.”⁹⁵ The response from the press was also positive as the Canadian Press requested copies of the scripts in advance so that Monday morning newspapers could have a story on the broadcast from the night before.⁹⁶ Through the fall of 1938 speakers included Liberal MP J.C. Turgeon and former United Farmers of Alberta MP E.J. Garland discussing immigration and colonization, Senator Lendrum McMeans and publisher Bernard Harrison discussing amendments to Canada’s divorce laws, and former Alberta cabinet minister and member of the famous five Dr. Irene Parlby and Madame Pierre Casgrain discussing the position of women in Canada.⁹⁷

While the program was popular, it, like all talks programs, risked being accused of partisanship and propaganda. Following an episode on ‘The Canadian Nation’ featuring Nova Scotia Premier Angus MacDonald and Regina lawyer Murdock A. MacPherson, a listener wrote to say that he was “fed up with your Pink ‘forum’” in which “your three musketeers last

⁹⁴ D.C. Buchanan to H.C. Grant, August 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 185 File 11-18-4.

⁹⁵ B.K. Sandwell to D.C. Buchanan, August 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 185 File 11-18-4.

⁹⁶ D.C. Buchanan to W.R. Plewman, October 4, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 185 File 11-18-4.

⁹⁷ List of Topics for the National Forum, LAC RG 41 Vol. 185 File 11-18-4.

Sunday, had their subject matter cooked to meet your specifications, so after a Pecksniffian [sic] argument, interlarded with plenty of lofty criticism of Great Britain, they lovingly embraced each other and turned their longing eyes to Moscow...it must have been very gratifying to Tim Buck.”⁹⁸ While strong, this type of criticism was uncommon for the program and it continued through a successful first season. The program was popular enough to be renewed for a second, but plans were delayed with the start of the war in September 1939.⁹⁹ *National Forum* is just one example of the Talks Department’s success through 1938, which was critical for the corporation to overcome the negativity created by the increased licence fee and commercial programs.

The one advantage that talks had over other genres was that it did not have to develop talent in the same way. University professors and politicians tended to be good public speakers and could easily adapt their speaking styles to radio. For musicians and actors, however, the transition was much more difficult. As a result, the Talks Department had an easier time increasing its originations through 1938. The 1938-1939 Annual Programme Report noted that talks represented 30.8% of the CBC schedule, an increase of over 300% from the previous year.¹⁰⁰ While this speaks to the success of the Talks Department in improving its output, it is also a sign of the difficulties other departments were having finding adequate talent. To address these challenges, Edgar Stone set out in the summer of 1938 to determine how the corporation could support the development of actors, producers, and writers for broadcasting. In his report to Murray, Stone argued that a major problem with Canadian radio was that it did not have full-time performers, thus depriving the country of a star system. He noted that in Canada it was

⁹⁸ Charles A. Galgrath to CBC, February 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 185 File 11-18-4.

⁹⁹ The program eventually returned in the spring of 1940, with the first broadcast airing on May 8. D.C. Buchanan to C.E. L’Ami and D.C. McArthur, April 19, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 185 File 11-18-4.

¹⁰⁰ 1938-1939 Annual Program Report. LAC RG 41 Vol. 526 File 11-5-8-3.

common “to enlist players from the ranks of people in other vocations, encouraging them to retain their present mode of earning a livelihood and treating broadcasting acting as a paying hobby.”¹⁰¹ By using part-time performers, the corporation also suffered from the inability to adequately promote upcoming programs. As a result, Stone recommended the development of a workshop outlining the practical requirements for both commercial and sustaining programs, saying “the sole object of such an organization would be to develop the art without the hazard of the time element so prevalent in the average production.”¹⁰² While members of the program department agreed with the assessment, the cost involved in hiring full-time performers was a major impediment to implementing the scheme. Ernest Bushnell, for one, questioned the wisdom of incurring the extra expense involved, arguing that “we cannot expand in all directions at the same time” and that “it is my feeling that our resources both financial and personnel will be taxed to the limit for next year.”¹⁰³

Despite the limitations, the CBC was able to find some immediate success with developing talent – in particular with female commentators. Elizabeth Long, one of the CBC’s earliest female employees, noted that “in the early days of radio, both in Canada and the United States, daily women commentators were found to be an instant success.”¹⁰⁴ Long started with the CBC in August 1938 and recalled how early on she had a conversation with Traffic Manager E.W. Jackson, who drew a diagram showing how a women’s voice did not carry as far as a man’s voice when it hit a microphone. She wrote in her memoirs that shortly after that conversation Board of Governors member Nellie McClung gave an address introducing “some new gadget” that would help the clarity of higher tones, which would “also improve the

¹⁰¹ Edgar Stone to Gladstone Murray, July 29, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 851 File PG1-15.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ernest Bushnell to Donald Manson, November 19, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 851 File PG1-15.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Long, Undated Speech on Women’s Broadcasting. University of Waterloo Archives and Special Collections, Elizabeth Long Collection File 15 – Speeches, Scripts, etc by E. Long.

broadcast quality of women's voices."¹⁰⁵ With that improvement in place, Long took on the task of organizing programs for women. She understood that soap operas were popular with Canadian women, but there were not a lot of female speakers on those programs, which she felt was important. There was likely some scepticism from her male colleagues, but Long believed that women's voices were critical in developing successful programs. That belief was cemented by an audition where Mattie Rotenberg and Margaret MacKenzie interviewed each other about their families:

We were all fascinated. The women had suddenly come to life. Their voices, their language had changed. Somehow any two women meeting on any remote jungle path, or on a frozen Arctic shore might pause to exchange the same information in that same warm voice... I never knew whether Donald Buchanan scheduled the two speakers in his political forum, but that day I learned that woman-to-woman language was wanted for women's radio programs.¹⁰⁶

This was not completely foreign to the corporation, as in the spring it had aired a talk from England by Lady Aberdeen, which the National Council of Women responded to by saying that they were "greatly indebted to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for making this broadcast possible and [we] hope that we may be sufficiently useful in the future to cause the CBC to regard the money as well spent."¹⁰⁷ With that, the corporation was eager to feature more women on the national network and looked to the east coast to find one of the region's most popular programs.

Mary Grannan was a thirty-six year old former teacher who had been working for CFNB Fredericton.¹⁰⁸ In 1937 she submitted a script she had written for her local sketch program, *Aggravating Agatha*, to R.T. Bowman for consideration. While the script was rejected, Bowman,

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Long, Unpublished Memoirs. LAC RG 41 Vol. 405 File 23-1-6.

¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Long, Unpublished Memoirs. LAC RG 41 Vol. 405 File 23-1-6.

¹⁰⁷ Mrs. G.O. Spencer to R.T. Bowman, April 16, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 178 File 11-18-2.

¹⁰⁸ "Mary Grannan Created Serial Just Mary," *Toronto Star*, January 4, 1975. LAC RG 41 Vol. 276 File 11-42-

knowing her education background, informed her that “there is a strong movement to get more and better children’s programs on our network.”¹⁰⁹ Bowman was optimistic about her chances of creating a top quality program, writing to regional representative Frank Willis that “she seems to be bright and ambitious – so much so, that I will be smothered with her letters unless she deals with you in the future. For heaven’s sake, give Miss Grannan the best possible chance to show what she can do!”¹¹⁰ That is exactly what she did. Over the course of the next year, Grannan developed *Just Mary*, a children’s program in Fredericton. The program was extremely well received, with one positive review coming from Elizabeth Sterling Haynes, the Supervisor of Creative Literature and Director of Dramatics for New Brunswick, who wrote the CBC to support Grannan’s request for a spot on the national schedule by saying that “I have listened to radio announcers, story tellers, and play makers, for the last five years and I have never heard one that appealed to me in subject matter and in manner as much as Miss Grannan.”¹¹¹ The corporation did not immediately add it to the schedule, but Grannan was unfazed and continued to produce the program. Theodore Corday, an instructor of dramatics at the University of Alberta, was in New Brunswick judging school festivals and had seen students dramatize a *Just Mary* story. He wrote that “I can say with delight that I have never seen better work than Miss Grannan’s.”¹¹²

Grannan was granted an official audition with the corporation in June and was well received at the CBC offices, but the program did not become a regular feature on the national network until 1939. Once it did, however, it quickly became popular, with one executive saying that “*Just Mary* is in a class by herself as a story-teller for young children. Her stories are

¹⁰⁹ R.T. Bowman to Mary Grannan June 12, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 276 File 11-42-9-4.

¹¹⁰ R.T. Bowman to Frank Willis, June 12, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 276 File 11-42-9-4.

¹¹¹ Elizabeth Sterling Haynes to ‘Radio Commission,’ December 16, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 276 File 11-42-9-4.

¹¹² Theodore Corday Reference Letter for Grannan, May 31, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 276 File 11-42-9-4.

original.”¹¹³ The series eventually became so popular that the corporation published the show’s stories in a book. While it was available in bookstores, the CBC decided to sell it directly to listeners, which led to vigorous complaining from retailers. Ottawa West MP George McIlraith wrote to Minister of War J.T. Thorson on the matter, saying that “it was never intended that the Corporation should engage in retail business when these books are a quite profitable part of the retail book selling business and that it is unfair for the Corporation to compete in the business with them.”¹¹⁴ While it took some time, Mary Grannan became one of the most popular individuals on the national network and showed that women were a valuable resource. In addition, with the corporation struggling to develop new on-air talent, people like Grannan showed that by mining existing local stations the CBC could find top quality artists.

It should be noted, however, that when it came to women, the opportunities at the CBC were rather limited. Despite the on-air success of Mary Grannan and Elizabeth Long, female announcers were generally restricted to children’s and women’s programming. A rather vague term, women’s programming typically consisted of discussions of domestic issues like cleaning and cooking, clothing, and gossip. Even when women were included in other broadcasts, they were restricted to these topics. For example, the 1939 Royal Tour included female commentators, but only to comment on the Queen’s outfits. This same attitude remained through the 1950s, when, as Robyn Urback notes, “the boys covered politics; the gals gave clothing reports.”¹¹⁵ Writing about the 1960s, Barbara Freeman describes the difficulties women had in obtaining jobs in ‘hard news,’ as “the women who worked in broadcasting and the press in English Canada in the 1960s were a minority operated mainly in a segregated environment

¹¹³ H.W. Morrison to Walter Anderson, February 21, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 276 File 11-42-9-4.

¹¹⁴ George J. McIlraith to J.T. Thorson, November 11, 1941. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-10.

¹¹⁵ Robyn Urback, “Sweet Talk, Tough Broad,” *Ryerson Review of Journalism*, Spring 2010. Available online. <http://www.rrj.ca/m8436/>.

producing programs and articles for ‘women’s’ radio and television shows.”¹¹⁶ This situation had long existed in broadcasting and, as a result, a female perspective was rarely heard behind the scenes during the corporation’s early years. The CBC’s March 14, 1940 list of employees includes only two women – Long and Grannan – in the Program Division at Toronto and they were both restricted to women’s and children’s programming respectively.¹¹⁷ Despite the fact that it was still looking for new and innovative programs, the CBC did not actively recruit women for its regular schedule.

With the national success of *Just Mary* a year away, the corporation was still looking for a major coup in the area of program origination through the fall of 1938. By airing a series of eleven Shakespeare productions, the CBC got exactly what it needed.¹¹⁸ Roger Lee Jackson has argued that the series was the only CBC dramatic production of note in the period as “the most important contribution the CBC was making was in the area of music and talks.”¹¹⁹ While the corporation did produce the plays itself, it brought in noted New York director Charles Warburton to assist Rupert Lucas, who as head of the CBC Drama Department was ultimately responsible for the broadcasts.¹²⁰ In the days leading up to the first broadcast on October 9, Murray expressed his optimism that the series would be extremely successful, going so far as to suggest that a similar scheme be prepared for the French network.¹²¹ That optimism was justified as not only did the CBC receive plenty of positive feedback about the broadcasts, but

¹¹⁶ Barbara Freeman, *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women’s Issues in English Canada, 1966-1971* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 42. Also see: Barbara Freeman, *Beyond Bylines: Media Workers and Women’s Rights in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

¹¹⁷ “Establishment By Location,” March 14, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 488 File 2-3-3-3.

¹¹⁸ The eleven shows were: *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Henry the Eighth*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, and *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. CBC Annual Report 1938-1939. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

¹¹⁹ Roger Lee Jackson, “An Historical and Analytical Study of the Origin, Development and Impact of the Dramatic,” PhD dissertation, Wayne State University, 1966, 58.

¹²⁰ CBC Annual Report 1938-1939. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

¹²¹ Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, October 3-4, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

the process of casting the production had also “brought to light a good deal of useful new talent.”¹²²

It was important for the CBC to take advantage of the influx of new talent to improve its roster of performers. The early returns were quite positive as, in addition to the success of the Shakespeare series, Betty Taylor, an actress who regularly appeared in the CBC radio serial *Miss Trent's Children*, won first place in the Dominion Drama Festival in April 1939.¹²³ With this type of talent, the corporation hoped “to be able to rely more and more on Canadian authors for suitable scripts for presentation over the national network.”¹²⁴ While the programs did not atone for the corporation’s use of American commercials, they were something that the organization could point to as an improvement over the CRBC and a tangible sign that it was actively trying to address the issue of program quality. People like Murray and Brockington could ‘chat with the listeners’ all they wanted, but the only way the corporation could begin to convince people that the licence fee increase was worthwhile was by providing top quality programming. This had not been the case before 1938, and despite the success of the Talks Department and the Shakespeare series, was not the case entering 1939. Because of its efforts on program origination, however, the corporation was in a much stronger position than it ever had been. For the first time the CBC was producing material that, while perhaps not superior to American programs, was drawing Canadian listeners.

It is important to note that determining the quality of the corporation’s programs compared to its American counterparts was subjective. Like with all forms of entertainment, individuals have different responses when consuming the same thing. C.D. Howe pointed out

¹²² CBC Annual Report 1938-1939. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

¹²³ CBC Press Release, “First Place Dominion Drama Festival Awarded Betty Taylor of the CBC,” April 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 858 File PG3-4.

¹²⁴ CBC Annual Report 1938-1939. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

that in his home he and his two sons enjoyed sports programming, his wife preferred operatic and symphonic concerts and his daughters were partial to vaudeville.¹²⁵ What further complicated matters was that there was no system through which stations could determine audience size. In a 1940 summary of its market data, the corporation noted that the amount of mail received about a certain program was generally used as the statistical marker for the show's popularity. This was not sufficient, however, as "the CBC has long realized the need for an objective method whereby sponsors and advertising agencies might ascertain the listening audiences of broadcasting stations comprising National and Regional networks."¹²⁶

Throughout the 1930s there had been some efforts to determine ratings, but most were methodologically flawed. In 1940, the Elliot-Hayes Rating System was the first continuous radio survey and operated on the coincidental telephone technique, where a random number would be called and asked questions about listening habits.¹²⁷ The Canadian Association of Broadcasters adopted the ballot method, where ballots were mailed indiscriminately in a listening area for listeners to answer and return. The system began in 1943 and the CAB felt it was a great improvement over other methods of measuring audience size. The CAB's Committee on Research was so confident in the scheme that it felt as though "every person engaged in the radio industry in this country will live to look upon the time when this plan was inaugurated, as one of the pioneering achievements in radio history."¹²⁸ The inability to

¹²⁵ C.D. Howe, February 8, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 249.

¹²⁶ CBC Coverage and Market Data of Regional and National Networks, August 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 170 File 11-15.

¹²⁷ Questions included: Were you listening to the radio just now? To what station were you listening? What program is coming over the station? What advertiser puts on that program? The service made approximately 400 calls per hour. Only Montreal and Toronto were included when the program first launched. Elliot-Hayes Ratings, September-December 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 493 File 11-15-5.

¹²⁸ Interim Report Committee on Research, Canadian Association of Broadcasters, February 12, 1943. LAC CAB MG 28 I363 1986-0419 Vol. 20 File 5-2G – Surveys, Early Examples of

scientifically measure audience size represented a major obstacle for not only the corporation, but for all stations as the industry struggled to determine who was listening to its programs.

In addition to using listener mail as a barometer of a program's popularity, the audience size and enthusiasm for radio artists who gave live performances could help gauge the public's response to certain shows. In 1938 it was generally accepted that the most popular variety program produced by the CBC was *The Happy Gang*. Letters stating that "if there is one CBC Program that is looked forward to, in the Maritimes, and that is building up an enormous amount of goodwill for the Corporation, it is this same 'Happy Gang'" and that sending photos of the group to "shut-ins and people in lonely places...is a good move in public relations" were clear signs that the program was popular.¹²⁹ The show also received a significant amount of fan mail – 1,757 pieces in October 1938, 2,028 pieces in November 1938, and 2,468 pieces in December 1938.¹³⁰ And while these were good indicators of the program's popularity, perhaps the biggest sign came when the group performed live in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario, in the summer of 1939. J.G. Hyland of CJIC reported that not only did large crowds come to the group's two shows, but "as they left on the train, a huge crowd saw them off, which included, among others, Mayor [John] McMeekin."¹³¹ This type of reaction demonstrated that *The Happy Gang* had achieved what the CBC was striving for: a loyal audience. The efforts to improve program origination throughout 1938 were done with goal of changing listeners' habits to have their first instinct be to tune to the CBC. Programs that could elicit loyalty and enthusiasm like *The Happy Gang* were a major step towards that goal.

¹²⁹ L.A. McDonald to Gladstone Murray, April 26, 1938; Peter Ayles to C.E Styles April 1, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-1.

¹³⁰ J.R. Radford to Ernest Bushnell, January 18, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-1.

¹³¹ J.G. Hyland to George Taggart, August 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-1.

The expansion of the Program Department through 1938 did lead to some difficulties, however, as the corporation did not have enough space to house everyone. In February, a problem arose in Montreal where a commercial program was booked but there was not enough studio space, forcing the local station manager to pay for another studio.¹³² Similar problems existed in Toronto, where corporation staff and artists had quickly outgrown the available studio space. At the Board of Governors meeting in March, consideration was given to leasing new facilities in both cities, but no firm decision was made. In fact, it was not until the December 18 meeting of the Finance Committee where leasing new studio space was agreed upon at an annual cost of \$50,000 in both Toronto and Montreal.¹³³ At the same time, the Board of Governors approved plans to establish a new 5Kw station in Montreal to improve CBM, the station inherited from the CRBC.¹³⁴ This came on the heels of the corporation's purchase of CRCK Quebec City in August 1937.¹³⁵ The CBC also finalized an agreement with the CPR and CNR for teletype service between Montreal, Ottawa, and Toronto.¹³⁶ Capping off the investment in facilities, the CBC purchased a second mobile unit for the Maritimes and Quebec.¹³⁷

This investment was primarily motivated by a desire to improve the corporation's facilities, but it had a secondary benefit of countering the negativity created by the increased licence fee and the use of American commercial programs. As Plaunt, Brockington, and Murray

¹³² E.A. Weir to Donald Manson, February 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 103 File 3-18-12.

¹³³ Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Finance Committee, December 18, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

¹³⁴ Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, December 19-20, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹³⁵ The corporation had been paying the station \$17,000 to carry its programs. The lease with the Marconi Company allowed the CBC to purchase the station for \$5,500 and it was determined that the operating costs would be the same as the lease agreement, so the Finance Committee approved the purchase. Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Finance Committee, March 21, 1937. RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

¹³⁶ CPR/CNR-CBC Teletype Contract, October 1, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 91 File 3-12-12.

¹³⁷ The Mobile Unit was being used in Ontario to broadcast special events. J.A. Ouimet to W.C. Little December 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 86 File 3-12-2.

crossed the country to talk to listeners they could point to these investments and improvements as signs that the CBC was actively serving its listeners. Even if they were confronted with criticism that these investments were reserved primarily for Ontario and Quebec, they could point to the early implementation of the plan to build new high-power transmitters in the Maritimes and Prairies as signs that the national network would eventually reach all Canadians. The *Montreal Herald* was enthusiastic about the investment in that city's studios, telling readers that not only were the corporation's Montreal facilities the best in the country but they were also comparable to the best studios in the United States.¹³⁸ It would be difficult for the CBC to overcome the negativity over the licence fee and use of American commercial programs, but it hoped that Canadians would respond to, what it felt, were quality programs and improved facilities.

At the same time as the CBC was investing in its network facilities, the International Broadcasting Union (IBU) was searching for a country to host its next World Concert. Starting in 1936 the union broadcast semi-annual concerts for distribution throughout its fifty-five nation membership. For its fall 1938 concert the IBU selected Canada to host and produce the broadcast. While the corporation had provided national coverage of the Conservative party's leadership convention in July, the concert represented a major coup for Canadian broadcasting.¹³⁹ In a press release announcing the concert, the CBC said that the selection was based on the corporation's progress over the previous year and the high standard of its

¹³⁸ "New CBC Studios Here are Finest in the Dominion," *Montreal Herald*, November 10, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

¹³⁹ The Conservative Convention featured the retirement of R.B Bennett and the election of Robert Manion as leader. The CBC aired special news bulletins during the first two days as well as a live update as soon as the election was completed. Bennett's retirement speech was also covered. Horace Stovin to Donald Manson, June 25, 1938; Ernest Bushnell to Donald Manson, June 28, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 928 File 19-12.

programs.¹⁴⁰ It was seen as a major publicity opportunity for the CBC, which boasted that “it will be heard ...by upwards of 100 million listeners” as “it will be mid-afternoon in Nova Scotia, getting close to tea-time, while the lunch-hour will be just approaching in British Columbia...whereas the ocean waves will be washing the beaches of Hawaii, still empty, because in this sun-kissed paradise it will be breakfast-time on a quiet Sunday morning.”¹⁴¹ As such, the corporation wanted to feature artists from across the country; acts such as Ernest Seitz, a renowned concert pianist from Toronto, the Alouette Quartet from Quebec, the Lunenburg Choir from Nova Scotia, local Prairie orchestras featuring old time music, and “the sound of a giant tree being felled by a crew of Canadian lumberjacks and the songs they sing while they work” were selected.¹⁴²

Despite the world-wide nature of the broadcast, the half-hour concert on October 23 did not require new equipment – it simply forced the corporation to make good use of their updated network.¹⁴³ For the corporation’s engineers, the concert was not overly different from a regular national broadcast as the typical network facilities were used.¹⁴⁴ Because of this, the concert served as a major opportunity for the CBC to show off, both internationally and domestically. And based upon the response from other networks, the corporation was successful. Fred Weber of Mutual Broadcasting System congratulated Murray on the “excellent program” while C.J.A. Moses of the Australian Broadcasting Commission stressed “how widely the concert was

¹⁴⁰ CBC Press Release, “UIR Invitation Interpreted as a High Honour to CBC,” October 3, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 362 File 19-22-14.

¹⁴¹ It was also noted that in Australia, where the broadcast would be live in the middle of the night, a recorded version would be played the next day. CBC Press Release, “CBC Will Encircle Globe in Less Than A Seventh of a Second,” October 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 362 File 19-22-14.

¹⁴² Charles Jennings to IBU, September 26, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 362 File 19-22-14.

¹⁴³ CBC Press Release, “New Notes on the Fifth World Concert,” October 6, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 362 File 19-22-14.

¹⁴⁴ The distribution to other countries also followed a typical procedure as the corporation was used to sending programs to the United States. Transmitting globally was a new challenge, but the IBU was available to assist with those arrangements.

appreciated here.”¹⁴⁵ Perhaps the best compliment came from John Seebach of WOR New York, who wrote that it “was a splendid demonstration of the resources at the command of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and of the manner in which they are being used.”¹⁴⁶

In addition, similar to its efforts during the Havana Conference a year earlier, the CBC used the IBU concert as an opportunity to further its international efforts and integrate itself into the North American broadcasting structure. The worldwide attention the program brought to its efforts provided the corporation with greater authority when dealing with American networks on program exchange or Mexican stations on wavelength interference. The CBC could promote its network and advertise its growth to other networks, but the success of the concert demonstrated its ability to produce and, perhaps just as importantly, distribute high quality programs. The respect earned internationally could then be used to improve its operations domestically through increased program exchanges, more access to clear channels, and improved facilities. That the CBC continued to assert itself internationally meant that Canadian listeners received better service. The concert’s success served as validation for the CBC that the investment in its network had paid off and that it now had the facilities to be considered a world class broadcaster.

This had not been the case two years earlier when it took over from the CRBC. As such the CBC could point to the concert when faced with criticism over the increased licence fee, too many commercials, or incomplete coverage, and say that it had made great strides in improving Canada’s broadcast situation. This would not completely satisfy all its critics, but international recognition was a major benefit in the struggle to achieve domestic legitimacy. The corporation could feel satisfied with how it addressed these issues, but they only represented half of its toil

¹⁴⁵ Fred Weber to Gladstone Murray, October 24, 1938; C.J.A. Moses to Gladstone Murray, December 7, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 362 File 19-22-14.

¹⁴⁶ John F. Seebach to Gladstone Murray, October 25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 362 File 19-22-14.

through 1938. For as much as the CBC accomplished and overcame with the parliamentary committee, licence fee, commercialization, and program origination, it had yet to tackle the issues that had constantly dominated the national discussion.

Chapter Four: Substance Over Style

An oft-cited quirky fact about Canada is that if you stand in Halifax, Nova Scotia, you are closer to London, England than you are to Victoria, British Columbia. This highlights a critical factor that fundamentally shaped the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's early operations. Canada's geography features mountains, plains, shields, ice caps, and lakes spread out over 6,000 kilometres and bordered by three oceans. Harold Innis was one of the first historians to highlight the importance geography played in Canada's early development with his staples thesis. In discussing the challenges faced by traders as they transported fur over increasingly long distances, he argued that "the waterways of the beaver area were of primary importance and occupied a vital position in the economic development of northern North America."¹ Just as the nation's geography shaped its economy, the sheer size of the country meant that the CBC needed to address regional distinctions with its programming while also struggling to overcome the technical difficulties presented by Canada's topographic and environmental diversity. Where discussions over the licence fee or broadcast regulations were necessary to the day-to-day operations of the radio industry and had parallels in other countries, the geographic realities facing the CBC were unique to Canada and brought unprecedented challenges to the corporation. Just as the physical geography presented obstacles, so too did the country's human geography, as local concerns did not always correspond to the corporation's national priorities. From catering programs to regional tastes, ensuring coverage in rural areas, and addressing linguistic equality, the CBC had to confront these long-standing Canadian tensions if it hoped to establish itself as a truly national institution. It is not that Canadians expected the CBC to completely resolve these

¹ Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History, Revised Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 6.

issues, but it was expected it would contribute to national unity without disrupting the service that listeners wanted from the national broadcaster.

Given the sheer size of the country, it was important for the corporation to not appear as though it was simply catering to major urban centres like Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. In fact, part of the motivation for holding Board of Governors meetings in places like Regina and Quebec City came from “experience demonstrat[ing] the value of holding occasional meetings in various parts of Canada.”² Ensuring that each region had a voice in corporation matters was critical to the long-term success of public broadcasting in Canada, but in its earliest days having the Board travel to different cities was the extent to which the CBC could regionalize its operations. The CBC had regional directors for the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, and British Columbia, but before the new transmitters were completed their tasks largely centred on making recommendations on programs and dealing with local private stations. With the Verchères and Hornby transmitters completed in December 1937, however, the CBC slowly started to diversify its regional operations. One of the first steps in this process was transferring six members of the production staff from Ottawa to Toronto, which the *Ottawa Citizen* noted was “part of an experimental plan, in which Toronto will become one of the chief production centres of the corporation.”³ There were hopes of further diversifying its production centres but part of the decision to start in southern Ontario was based on facilities and a belief that, given the access to artists in a larger music and theatre community, it was easier to have Toronto as a principal production centre than Ottawa, but it did mark a shift in CBC operations where tasks that had

² CBC Annual Report, 1937-1938. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

³ “Transfer Some CBC Staff From Here to Toronto,” *Ottawa Citizen*, March 30, 1938. University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 18 File 10.

been handled by the central office in the nation's capital started to be outsourced to the various regions.

While the corporation wanted to ensure equitable regional representation, it also felt that regionalization could improve day-to-day operations. Over the course of 1938, for example, the CBC reorganized the Publicity Department into the Press and Information Service. One of the major emphases of the reorganization was to have press releases regionalized so that they could be written specifically for a local audience. It was felt that national press releases were not effective in grabbing readers' attention, so regional representatives were added in British Columbia and the Maritimes to go along with the representatives in the Prairies and at the central office in Ottawa.⁴ These representatives were responsible for the preparation and distribution of publicity information on CBC programs that would appeal to local audiences. For the Press and Information Service, this started the process that eventually led to the summer 1939 decision to stop printing national program schedules in favour of local or regional schedules.⁵ In his 'Chatting with Listeners' broadcast of August 17, Gladstone Murray highlighted the corporation's efforts to diversify its operations as it planned to construct new regional transmitters. He stressed that "we are expanding, developing and adapting our organization so that the artistic resources and the aspirations of the Maritimes and the Prairies may be worthily reflected in their own regions, throughout Canada, to the Empire, the United States, and the

⁴ The corporation hoped to add representatives for Quebec and Ontario, but it was felt that for the time being press releases for these regions could be handled by the central office. CBC Annual Report, 1938-1939. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

⁵ S.A. Blangsted, Memorandum to Press and Information Services, August 29, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 351 File 17-2.

world at large.”⁶ This policy of decentralization became so engrained that, as it related to programming and engineering, it was included in the CBC Constitution in the early 1940s.⁷

The one area of operations where the push to regionalization did not apply, however, was finances. As previously noted, Treasurer Harry Baldwin had hired treasurer’s cashiers for each region in order to ease the burden of issuing cheques on the head office in Ottawa. At a meeting in September 1937, Baldwin reinforced the idea that the cashiers were representatives of the central office and informed the group that Murray had “indicated his wish that the Treasurer should extend his control of expenditure at production centres so as to include the planning and putting into effect such methods and records as are directly related to expenditure,” which meant that a new system of standardized forms and methods would be used to complete payroll.⁸ The staff was reminded that their main responsibility was to control expenditures and that “they must do everything possible to facilitate the bringing of accounts to payment by acting as a liaison between production centres and head office.”⁹ The corporation was satisfied with the cashiers as their work contributed to the projected \$400,000 surplus for the 1938-39 fiscal year.¹⁰ While this went against the general policy of regionalization, the corporation understood that for certain operations, it was critical to its long-term viability to maintain a strong central presence in Ottawa.

⁶ Gladstone Murray, *Chatting With Listeners*, Originally Broadcast August 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 399 File 23-1-2.

⁷ The Constitution stated: “While the national headquarters of Programme Division is in Toronto, the Corporation’s policy of decentralization is carried out in the five main programme regions and production centres. These are Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies, and British Columbia, with production centres at Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver respectively. The Quebec region is developed to a larger scale due to the fact that production at Montreal has to be done in two languages as Quebec is bilingual.” It also made mention of the Engineering Service having its head office in Montreal with regional engineers for each of the five regions. CBC Constitution circa 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-3.

⁸ Meeting of the Treasurer’s Cashiers, September 13, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 130 File 6-6.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Finance Committee, March 21, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

Another area of the corporation's operation that stayed under central control was the expansion of the national network. As Murray noted in his summer broadcast, the CBC was eager to capitalize on the talents of artists across the country, but for sceptical listeners in the still underserved areas of the country this would not suffice – if they were forced to pay the licence fee they wanted to be able to pick up CBC programs. This was critical because a lack of service proved to be a major factor in the downfall of the CRBC. Joseph-Arthur Bradette, Liberal MP for Cochrane, Ontario, had voted for the bill establishing the CRBC in 1932 “because I believed then and believe now that great national service should belong to the people,” but by 1936 had changed his opinion as “now under nationalization of the radio – and that service will be extended to everyone – the people in northern Ontario and Quebec, although they have to pay \$2 a year for a licence, are even yet not getting the service to which we are absolutely entitled.”¹¹ To avoid the same fate of losing supporters, the CBC needed to make tangible progress on expanding its network to include rural and isolated communities. The transmitters in Ontario and Quebec were signs of progress that generated positive publicity and helped at the Havana Conference, but they had not addressed a major problem that had long plagued Canadian public broadcasting.

While the CBC had already highlighted the Maritimes and Prairies as priorities for expansion, British Columbia, which presented its own unique challenges, had not received much attention from the corporation. After Ontario and Quebec, British Columbia had the highest number of radio licences in the country, but the province's topography meant that complete coverage was particularly difficult.¹² A 1937 report on coverage in the province found that the

¹¹ Joseph-Arthur Bradette, February 24, 1936. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; First Session – Eighteenth Parliament, 458.

¹² For the 1937-38 Fiscal Year, British Columbians purchased 100,251 of the nation's 1,103,821 licences. The mountainous terrain of the province interferes with the distribution of radio signals. For example, a station of

corporation was connected to stations in Kelowna, Kamloops, Trail, Vancouver, and Chilliwack, but it could not provide quality service to, among other centres, Prince Rupert.¹³ The report concluded that it was “a downright shame that Prince Rupert, the gateway to the vast territory of Northern British Columbia with a population counting into the tens of thousands, should be forgotten and neglected in such a vitally important matter as proper and adequate radio facilities.”¹⁴ Murray noted that, as a native British Columbian, he sympathized with the report, but felt as though the increased population served by extending corporation programs to Prince Rupert would not be worth the additional expenditure.¹⁵ Instead, the corporation granted the local station an exception to the regulations by permitting it to air recorded transcriptions between the hours of 7:30PM and 11:00PM.¹⁶

When the issue of Prince Rupert again came up in the spring of 1938, it was pointed out that the city had 628 licensed radio sets and it would cost \$20,500 to extend CBC service to the local station, which worked out to over \$28 more per set than service in comparable cities.¹⁷ The corporation’s position started to soften, however, as Horace Stovin visited the city in the summer of 1939 and concluded that “due to its isolated position it seems to me that [local station] CFRP enjoys a unique commercial opportunity, advertisers being assured of an undivided audience, an audience thirsting for contact with the outside world.”¹⁸ Despite this recommendation, it was not

similar power will get wider distribution in the Prairies than in the interior of British Columbia. This remains an obstacle as the CBC has more stations in BC than any other province. C.D. Howe, March 27, 1939. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons, Fourth Session Eighteenth Parliament, 2281.

¹³ Hugo Kraupner, “Recommendations for the Improvement of Radio Reception in Prince Rupert and Vicinity,” ca. 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 104 File 3-18-25.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Gladstone Murray to J.C. Gilker, March 20, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 104 File 3-18-25.

¹⁶ Gladstone Murray to C.H. Insulander, October 14, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 104 File 3-18-25.

¹⁷ Horace Stovin used Sault Ste. Marie (3,230 licences at a cost of \$13,018, 81) and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, (3,126 licences at a cost of \$12,729.60) as comparables. Horace Stovin to R.P. Landry, April 14, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 104 File 3-18-25.

¹⁸ Horace Stovin to Gladstone Murray, August 22, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 104 File 3-18-25.

until 1942 that the corporation inaugurated service to the city.¹⁹ The delay in extending service to Prince Rupert highlighted a weakness in the corporation's early operations. Under Gladstone Murray and Harry Baldwin, the CBC was so concerned with maintaining a surplus that other areas of operation were neglected. Citizens of Prince Rupert were required to pay a licence fee, but the corporation was not willing to accept the expenditure of extending its service to the city. This led to accusations that the CBC's primary concern was not providing adequate nation-wide service, but rather profiting from a tax on listeners. The Kamloops *Sentinel* reported in October 1938 that the city's Board of Trade "believes there should be equality of broadcasting service throughout the dominion, irrespective of whether some areas contribute more to the CBC through licences, than others."²⁰ Such complaints were completely warranted and became louder in 1939 as the corporation's unwillingness to expand to Prince Rupert – and other isolated communities – compromised its legitimacy in the region and led listeners to question the sincerity of claims that its only priority was serving the Canadian people.

A similar situation was developing in Windsor, Ontario, as the corporation debated the advisability of operating a station in the south-western Ontario city. The CBC inherited CRCW Windsor from the CRBC, but because the city was well served by private stations, particularly those across the river in Detroit, Michigan, it was felt that the corporation would be better served by closing the station and saving the annual \$30,000 it cost to operate. Further complicating matters, Peter Ayles, who at the time was serving as manager of CRCW, felt that if the network schedule was expanded to twelve or eighteen hours he would have to hire more employees, which meant an increase in the station's expenditures.²¹ Despite including the station in its 1937 re-branding efforts by changing the call letters to CBW, the CBC did not want to incur any

¹⁹ Ernest Bushnell to J.S. Thomson, December 5, 1942. LAC RG 41 Vol. 104 File 3-18-25.

²⁰ "Trade Board's Views on Radio," Kamloops *Sentinel*, October 7, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

²¹ Peter Ayles Memorandum, July 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 487 File 2-3-3.

further expenses and the Board of Governors passed a resolution in November 1937 empowering Murray “to negotiate with station CKLW in Windsor and contingent upon satisfactory arrangements on the lines indicated by the Board, to arrange for the abandonment of station CBW.”²² Despite the fact that the corporation had made arrangements for CKLW to carry its programs, the Windsor community was not pleased with the decision to close CBW. One listener called it “a great pity that in a border area such as this there should be practically no Canadian broadcasts available,” and blasted the idea of using CKLW because it “is a mere subsidiary of an American company, planted on Canadian soil for the furtherance of high pressure American selling.”²³ Another listener stressed CBW’s importance by arguing that “a border community needs a Canadian station and its influence even more than an inland town.”²⁴

The complaints did not just come from Canadian listeners, however, as people in Detroit also lamented the loss of the station. A reverend from the Detroit-based Lutheran Charities, which produced the CBW program *Family Altar on the Air*, pleaded with the CBC to think of the “literally millions” of listeners on the American side who relied on CBW as “the only connecting radio link with the exceptionally high type Canadian broadcasts and resulting friendly relationships with our Canadian brethren.”²⁵ Many of the letters received from Detroit mentioned how they were particularly disappointed by the loss of the *Lutheran Gospel Hour*, which prompted one listener to write soon after the station closed that “we are already missing you.”²⁶ While these complaints from Americans had no effect on the corporation’s approach to the station, they do highlight the station’s popularity and reach. Even though Lutherans would be

²² Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, November 16-18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

²³ John A. Willis to CBC, February 10, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5.

²⁴ W.L.F. Willis to CBC, February 12, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5.

²⁵ Reverend C.F. Shaffnit to CBW, February 4, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5.

²⁶ Elizabeth Herbon to CBW, February 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5.

more inclined to listen to a program like the *Lutheran Gospel Hour*, finding any American audience for a Canadian show was seen as a positive development for Canadian broadcasting. If the station was able to attract American listeners away from American programs it is evidence of the overall improvement in programming on Canadian radio through the 1930s. The CBC wanted to be able to compete with American programming and the lamentations by Detroit listeners at the loss of CBW showed that it had started to achieve that goal. The reaction of Detroit listeners also speaks to the continental integration associated with early North American radio. While separated by a border, Windsor and Detroit represented a single radio market. At a micro level, this was similar to the wider North American broadcasting structure, as decisions on one side of the border affected coverage on the other side and, in order to be successful, American and Canadian stations had to coordinate in order to provide listeners with the best possible service. The closing of CBW, however, was not seen by many listeners as a positive development.

What further upset people in the city was that while they were losing their station, the licence fee was increasing. Local principal E.M. Gibson argued that “surely the CBC will not expect radio listeners in this Windsor area to pay license fees this year after losing our outlet for CBC programmes” and wondered “if Ottawa realized that Windsor is a city of more than a hundred thousand [people] and is part of an area of more than two million.”²⁷ Another listener ridiculed the rationale behind the decision by saying that “our fee is raised, and what we receive for it is completely done away with – to economize! I wish my business could be run that way!”²⁸ Local resident J.R. Conn echoed the Aird Report when he wrote that “As a Canadian I want to live with Canada. I want to hear their musical abilities and talents from our great

²⁷ E.M. Gibson to CBC, February 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5.

²⁸ H.W. Biggar to CBC, February 27, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5

Dominion.”²⁹ Closing CBW was a poor decision not only because of the ill-will created in Windsor, but also because of the possibility that the situation could be used by the corporation’s opponents in discrediting public radio. The CBC had been so aggressive in promoting its network expansion in an effort to garner positive publicity that closing a station while still reporting surpluses and lobbying for an increased licence fee was, at best, unwise.

The complaints continued into 1939, at which point the Board of Governors approved \$40,000 for the erection of a low-power station for Windsor.³⁰ When the station was not completed in October, however, a listener asked “don’t you think it is nearly time that that august body, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation awoke to the fact that the city of Windsor is in the Dominion of Canada?”³¹ Despite these complaints, when the Windsor Council of Women passed a resolution in November requesting a new station for the city, the CBC received a series of letters arguing that such an action was unnecessary. The complaints centred on the fact that some listeners believed CKLW was providing adequate service and, perhaps more importantly, that “this is a very poor time to spend money on luxuries. Why not devote time and money to further strengthen our War purposes?”³² The corporation agreed with this assessment and the station was not built; the Board resolved in 1940 that “inasmuch as it was intended to proceed for the present at least with the establishment of a CBC station in the vicinity of Windsor and for the purpose of effecting economies, it was agreed that such of the Corporation’s activities as could be dispensed with at that point be withdrawn, including cancellation of the lease for the existing studio.”³³

²⁹ J.R. Conn to CBC, November 10, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5.

³⁰ Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, April 25, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

³¹ F.H. Bowan to CBC, October 18, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-5.

³² Mrs. H.R. Casgain to ‘Canadian Broadcasting Commission,’ November 4, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-4.

³³ Minutes of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Finance Committee, June 27, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

While listeners in Windsor were able to get CBC programs on CKLW, the situation mirrored Prince Rupert, as the corporation consciously chose to reduce or eliminate service. Within the context of annually reporting surpluses and increasing the licence fee in the midst of the Great Depression, this was a bad decision. Canadians who rebelled against the CRBC did so in part because it did not provide adequate national service and, despite its many efforts to distinguish itself from its predecessor, the CBC was following the same path with respect to Windsor and Prince Rupert.

The situations in these cities were representative of how residents in smaller communities across the country felt about the corporation's coverage. In March 1938 a petition signed by 1,451 residents of Flin Flon, Manitoba, who "are unable to get any program emanating from the CBC network, and we feel that we are being deprived of the benefits of a National Institution," was sent to Murray.³⁴ Similarly, at its meeting in March the Board of Governors heard a plea from Vincent-Joseph Pottier, Liberal MP for Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, to have local station CJLS added to the basic network.³⁵ For its part, the CBC understood the urgency in these areas to be included in the network and agreed to add CJLS at an annual cost of \$12,700.³⁶ This fit into the corporation's overall policy of adding stations to the network whenever it was feasible. Between 1936 and 1939 the network expanded from twenty-three basic stations and thirty-one supplementary stations to thirty-eight basic and twenty-four supplementary.³⁷ While this

³⁴ J.E. Sturley to Alan Plaunt, March 24, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 2 File 7.

³⁵ Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 22, 24-25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

³⁶ It was only to be a temporary arrangement as the completion of the Maritime regional transmitter would eliminate the need to have CJLS as part of the network. Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the Board of Governors, March 22, 24-25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

³⁷ Comparison of National Network, November 2, 1936-August 16, 1939, August 17, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 148 File 9-13.

expansion helped the corporation attract new listeners and garner positive publicity, closures and lack of coverage in other areas compromised this progress.

Gladstone Murray understood the damage to the CBC's reputation from its lack of complete national coverage, but pleaded with listeners to try to understand the corporation's situation. In a November 1938 speech he told the audience that "broadcasting is now accepted as part of the normal amenities of civilization; indeed, not to have access to some broadcasting service is rightly felt to be a denial of something nearly as elementary as fresh water," but Canada was handicapped by a population density of 2.99 per square mile, which, when compared to Britain's 490.74 per square mile, meant that the CBC could only provide broadcasting service if it was prudent in its expansion policies.³⁸ For the CBC, and in particular someone like Alan Plaunt, the long-term survival of a national system was more important than short-term network expansion to communities like Windsor. This is not to say that they did not prioritize expansion, in fact it was the exact opposite. But to achieve the ultimate goal of national coverage, the CBC felt it first needed to complete the regional transmitters while also maintaining strict financial control. This is why including a station like CJLS Yarmouth, which did not represent a major financial commitment and could be eliminated from the network once the Maritime regional transmitter was complete, was added to the network while CFPR Prince Rupert, which represented a significant and long-term expenditure, was not. It was at best a risky decision, but CBC administrators felt it was necessary to ensure the corporation's long-term survival, which they believed was critical to national life. As Douglas M. McDonald would later write, "with a nation so large, a population so small, and a culture so diverse, broadcasting is one

³⁸ This line of argument was used to justify not only limiting the extensions to the network but also the use of commercial programs. Gladstone Murray, "Some Aspects of Broadcasting," November 29, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 466 File 31-1.

of the keystones of our existence and must place Canadian goals above all others; it is a tool of unity, a showplace of our culture, and a source of nationhood.”³⁹

One area of programming that the CBC hoped would enhance its place as ‘a source of nationhood’ was education. Broadcasting educational material was not a new idea as the Aird Commission had stressed the educational potential of radio in recommending a national system. The main problem for the corporation was that since radio had been placed under federal jurisdiction, it was difficult to inaugurate educational programs as education remained a provincial issue.⁴⁰ In the early 1930s the Saskatchewan government had developed a series of broadcasts for ninth and tenth graders on a variety of school subjects, including French, Latin, science, geography, and history.⁴¹ Parents, teachers, and students reported that the series had been useful, but “owing to crop failure and resultant curtailment of activities” it was cancelled.⁴² The positive reaction from the Saskatchewan series demonstrated the utility of educational broadcasts and other provincial boards were eager to take part. In November 1937, the Board of Governors was informed that the Ontario Department of Education was ready to take action on educational programs and Murray responded by stressing that it was the corporation’s responsibility to ensure that, from a technical perspective, the material was presented properly. The Board further agreed to volunteer its facilities to provincial authorities for educational programs.⁴³ Murray was conscious of how a federal institution involving itself in education could be dangerous and warned that “great care must be exercised to avoid giving the impression that

³⁹ Douglas M. McDonald, “A History of Broadcast Regulation in Canada,” Unpublished Thesis, Osgoode Law School. Submitted April 7, 1967.

⁴⁰ For broadcasters, educational programs at the time were associated with the provincial school curriculum and in some cases were expected to supplement regular instruction.

⁴¹ E.A. Pickering, “Report on School Broadcasting in Canada, 1939,” June 2, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 268 File 11-42-1-2.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, November 16-18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

the CBC as a federal organization contemplates doing anything that might impinge on the educational authority of the provinces. We shall have to move in consultation with provincial educational departments.”⁴⁴

E.A. Corbett of the Canadian Association for Adult Education suggested that one way in which the corporation could promote the development of these types of programs would be by printing a booklet outlining general principles for educational programming. He felt this “would be extremely useful to those interested in this work and would perhaps guard against haphazard attempts by private stations.”⁴⁵ By the end of 1937, Alan Plaunt was soliciting the assistance of university faculty in developing a framework for educational programming, informing University of Toronto history professor Frank Underhill that “we are now in a position to offer adequate facilities in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia and we hope before long to be able to offer them in the Maritimes and Prairies.”⁴⁶ The corporation did not want to provide the content of the programs, but rather help provincial Boards of Education with their production. The optimism that the programs could be successful was helped by the fact that similar features had received positive feedback in the United States. A January 1937 article in the *Christian Science Monitor* outlined the American Office of Education’s progress in developing programs for radio. The story quoted Commissioner of Education J.W. Studebaker as saying that “we are discovering new methods of making educational radio programs successful” and, with the cooperation of NBC and CBS, they were receiving an average of 5,000 fan letters each week.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Gladstone Murray to D.E. Blankert, November 22, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 265 File 4-42-3.

⁴⁵ E.A. Corbett to Alan Plaunt, May 7, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 2 File 2.

⁴⁶ Alan Plaunt to F.H. Underhill, December 17, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 8 File 4.

⁴⁷ “Teachers for Radio Education,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 2, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 265 File 2-42-3.

British Columbia was the first province to inaugurate educational broadcasts with any level of regularity. Through the spring of 1938 the provincial Board of Education had developed a series of experimental broadcasts that aired between 9:30 AM and 10:00 AM, with 170 schools registered for the service. The episodes varied in their focus, but the Board of Education was careful to ensure that there was a level of continuity throughout the series as “the whole aim... was to present each broadcast with the minimum of adornment, but with emphasis on the clearness and completeness of the plot, dialogue and sound.”⁴⁸ The corporation was pleased with the early results from the west coast and hoped that it could lead to more educational programming across the country. After reading the report from British Columbia, D.W Buchanan wrote Murray to express his belief that some of the programs, in particular the one focusing on science, could be of great use across the country and that perhaps the corporation should consider airing one on the national network.⁴⁹

The corporation remained sceptical of a national educational broadcast, but was encouraged by provincial bodies’ excitement over the possibility of regional service. The Alberta Board of Education inaugurated a service on November 15, 1938 and by the summer of 1939 it was estimated that between 150 and 200 schools had installed receivers in classrooms.⁵⁰ Manitoba had had provincial education programs since the mid-1920s, but the structure was re-organized in 1937 and had since been reaching an estimated audience of 5,500 school children.⁵¹ Starting in 1937, Nova Scotia produced a weekly two-hour program featuring material supplementary to classroom work as well as a daily fifteen-minute lesson based on the provincial

⁴⁸ J.R. Finley, “The Part of Production in School Broadcasts,” May 9, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 860 File PG 4-1-8.

⁴⁹ D.W. Buchanan to Gladstone Murray, May 13, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 860 File PG 4-1-8.

⁵⁰ H.C. Newland to Gladstone Murray, October 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 860 File PG 4-1-7-1; E.A Pickering, “Report on School Broadcasting in Canada, 1939,” June 2, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 269 File 11-42-1-2.

⁵¹ Edward A. Pickering, “Report on School Broadcasting in Canada, 1939,” June 2, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 268 File 11-42-1-2.

curriculum.⁵² In summarizing these developments, Murray's assistant, Edward Pickering, concluded that "the most important contribution to be made by school broadcasting in Canada is to the smaller and less prosperous communities, which are in some cases completely isolated except by radio, and in most cases are without the advantages of the wealthier urban schools in the way of libraries, scientific apparatus, and the general urban atmosphere of plays and concerts."⁵³ Given that it was the smaller communities across the country that suffered from the lack of complete national coverage, providing the facilities for regional educational programs helped address concerns that the CBC was too focused on urban listeners.

The initial success of provincial educational broadcasts also pushed the CBC to investigate the possibility of increasing its regional programming to take advantage of distinct tastes across the country. The corporation did not need to look very far to understand the significance of regional programming as it had inherited the popular *Northern Messenger* service from the CRBC, one of the few Commission series the CBC had continued. First started in 1933, *Northern Messenger* was a weekly program that sent personal messages to people living in the North during the winter months.⁵⁴ The initial purpose of the series was to provide a link between the North and the rest of the country during the time of year when mail service was limited. Despite the fact that all messages had to be personal in nature and intended for a specific individual in the North, the initial reviews of the program were quite positive. Following the first episode in 1933, the *Halifax Mail* wrote that "all radio fans are advised to take advantage of this

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Messages had to be brief and addressed to a specific individual. For example, a message from a 1946 broadcast read: "To Mr. and Mrs. S. Dodds, Port Harrison from Dad and Mum – Mr. Tweedle called again, showed slides of trip and wedding – also invited neighbours and friends in, pictures worth seeing – go bowling every Tuesday night and enjoy it very much – Love." *CBC Northern Messenger Service*, Originally broadcast October 28, 1946. LAC Audio Collection, A1 2002-04-0001.

opportunity to hear something really novel in radio broadcasting.”⁵⁵ The CRBC continued the service throughout its existence and was pleased when it received letters from appreciative listeners, such as one missionary from Fort Simpson, Northwest Territories, who wrote that “we were always pleased when we could tune in one of [your] programmes.”⁵⁶

When the CBC took over from the CRBC in 1936 the corporation maintained the service, which continued to be a popular feature. In November 1938, when rumours of the program’s cancellation started to swirl, Charles Counsell, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, wrote Murray to plead for the service’s continuation. He argued that the missionaries, fur traders, and RCMP officers at Bathurst Inlet were without postal service and therefore relied on the radio messages. Counsell also pointed out that people in the North paid the licence fee and that “the Friday night broadcasts have become a social event of increasing importance and the meeting of the white people in a settlement, at least once a week, helps to relieve the isolation and makes for good fellowship. You will appreciate that these qualities are very desirable in setting an example to the Eskimo and Indian population.”⁵⁷ In his response, Murray did not address the racial tone to the letter, pointing out that the “governing principle of this service is that the messages may be sent to any point in the Canadian north not receiving regular air mail service,” and thanked Counsell for his “very kind words in appreciation of the work of the CBC.”⁵⁸ There is no evidence that the corporation viewed the northern service through the same ‘civilizing’ lens as did Counsell, but it did appreciate that people in the North were listening. The many positive endorsements of the program allowed it to continue as a staple of the corporation’s winter service until the 1960s, although it was briefly cancelled in late 1939 because of the Second

⁵⁵ “Send Cheery Messages to Folk in North,” *Halifax Mail*, December 13, 1933. LAC RG 41 Vol. 128 File 5-1.

⁵⁶ Franblin Clarke to CRBC, November 7, 1935. LAC RG 41 Vol. 128 File 5-1.

⁵⁷ Charles Counsell to Gladstone Murray, November 2, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 128 File 5-1.

⁵⁸ Gladstone Murray to Charles Counsell, December 6, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 128 File 5-1.

World War. While the program may not have been creative in its style, its popularity was a sign to the corporation that regional programming could form a significant and popular component of its schedule.

In an effort to truly understand regional tastes, William E. Ward conducted a survey of western programs in the summer of 1937 and found that people in the West had different listening habits in the winter when compared to the summer, but all year the 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM period maintained a high rural audience.⁵⁹ This was not unique to Canada, however, as Louise Benjamin notes that as programming evolved in the United States, features for farmers and their families “aired over the noon hour, when farmers came in for their midday meals.”⁶⁰ As such, it was felt that the corporation needed to use this period to create a program specifically for rural Canadians. This was not a new idea, however, as in 1936 Conservative MP Gordon Graydon pressed Minister of Agriculture James Gardiner about using radio for agricultural purposes, an idea which Gardiner felt was “worthy of consideration.”⁶¹ When the corporation started to seriously pursue the idea in early 1938, the Community Extension Service of Pickering College in Newmarket, Ontario, cautioned that such programs would have to include criticisms and points of view directly from rural Canadians to overcome the “difficulties faced by urban people in drafting programmes for rural people.”⁶² In an effort to address this, the CBC enlisted the help of the Federal Department of Agriculture in developing a program.

⁵⁹ The peak periods for western rural listeners in the summer were 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM and 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM whereas in the winter the periods were 6:30 AM to 9:00 AM, 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM and 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM. William E. Ward, “Survey on Western Programmes,” August 16, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 338 File 14-4-6.

⁶⁰ Louise M. Benjamin, *The NBC Advisory Council and Radio Programming, 1926-1945* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 7.

⁶¹ James Gardiner, February 28, 1936. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; First Session – Eighteenth Parliament, 660.

⁶² Leonard Harmin to Alan Plaunt, March 10, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 2 File 14.

In February, Gladstone Murray announced that the CBC was going to inaugurate the *Farm Home Hour* weekdays at noon as “a half-hour designed and produced for the farmer, the grain grower and the ranchmen throughout the Dominion.”⁶³ The program was first aired in April in Quebec under the title *Reveil Rural* and quickly became a popular item with farmers. Similar programs were then developed for the other four CBC regions and, by the summer of 1939, each region featured a farm broadcast daily between noon and 1:00 PM.⁶⁴ The programs included market prices, weather, news, and a short dramatic series featuring the struggles of a rural family. By 1941 the corporation was so proud of the programs that it claimed:

A few short years ago many an outland farm community was, in reality, a thousand miles from the city. Today, the geography is unchanged, but the distance between city and the farthest reaches of country has been bridged by national radio. For the first time in the history of Canada the far-flung fringes of Canadian agriculture have been brought into daily touch with the latest developments in farming in the oldest communities. Not only have people moved closer together, but each day a nation of farm and city listeners is unified by national radio.”⁶⁵

This may have been rather hyperbolic, but the corporation was earnest in its attempts to create programs with which regional listeners could identify. The programs continued to grow and developed into ‘must-listens’ for many families. Allan and Patricia Smith of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, recalled an occasion in the 1970s when their daughter’s boyfriend came to visit and sat nervously in the kitchen while the family listened to the radio. As he began to speak, he was quickly interrupted and told to be quiet so that the program could be heard. Asking for their daughter’s hand in marriage would have to wait until after *Farm Radio Forum*.⁶⁶ While this level of success may have had to wait until after the Second World War, the programs represent the

⁶³ Gladstone Murray to W.C. Borrett, February 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 226 File 11-24-4.

⁶⁴ *CBC Agriculture Five Years of Achievement*, 1941. LAC RG 41 Vol. 230 File 11-24-16.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Interview conducted June 9, 2013.

corporation's proactive approach to understanding the country's regional diversity in order to build its audience.

In addition to identifying the noon hour as a good period for rural programs, Ward's report also noted that he had received several requests for women's features and felt that "a capable student of womens' [sic] needs and desires could develop many of these items into a service of National feminine interest."⁶⁷ As previously discussed, Elizabeth Long had been tasked with improving the state of women's programming, but Ward had identified a critical element in the CBC's on-going struggle to improve its programs. If the corporation could develop regional programs, it would have a deeper and more diverse pool of talent for national programs. It was this type of strategy that eventually led to the *Just Mary* series being added to the national network schedule. But it was not only the children's program that found national success, but also a variety program that had originally been intended for a western audience.

Mart Kenney and His Western Gentlemen was a series featuring live performances of Mart Kenney's dance band from Waterton Lakes, Alberta. The program was first developed by CJOE Lethbridge and picked up by the CRBC in 1934, quickly becoming a fixture on the commission's schedule. Commission employees felt as though the program represented one of their better features, as Ernest Bushnell, in his capacity as CRBC supervisor of programs for Ontario and Western Canada, wrote in 1935 that, despite a recent "ninety percent performance ... very few of the dance bands from the east in my opinion can even closely approximate [Kenney]."⁶⁸ The CBC inherited the program and Mart Kenney's orchestra remained a popular feature on the network. In the fall of 1936, American network MBS started to air the series and in early 1937 Kenney was honoured by the British Columbia Institute of Journalists for his

⁶⁷ William E. Ward, "Survey on Western Programmes," August 16, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 338 File 14-4-6.

⁶⁸ Ernest Bushnell to Horace Stovin, November 21, 1935. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-4.

service to Western Canada.⁶⁹ Kenney's reputation as a top performer led to a major broadcast in November 1938 that aired simultaneously on the CBC national network, the BBC, and NBC's Blue Network.⁷⁰

Following the broadcast, J.C.S. Macgregor, director of Empire Service for the BBC, expressed his appreciation for the "admirably presented" program while Kenney reported that he had received "a bunch of very nice letters from the Old Country" complementing the performance.⁷¹ What was significant about *Mart Kenney and His Western Gentleman*, however, was not just that it was a popular feature, but that its origins were in small-town Alberta and it had been created for a western audience. Over time, however, the band's talent allowed it to appeal to a wide cross-section of Canadians, with a listener from Toronto writing in April 1939 that the group was "without doubt one of the finest dance orchestras we are privileged to hear in North America."⁷² Even though the show was inherited from the CRBC, it was evidence that with the right artists, regional programs could eventually be popular national – or even international – features. As such, regional programs were increasingly looked upon not only to satisfy local tastes, but also as possible additions to the national program schedule.

Given that local programs could eventually lead to national exposure, regional production centres and small local stations were eager to make the corporation aware of their offerings. The Annual Program Report for the 1937-1938 fiscal year showed that Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver produced approximately 63% of the corporation's programs.⁷³ This disproportionate

⁶⁹ Ernest Bushnell telegram to J.R. Radford, October 3, 1936; Horace Stovin telegram to Ernest Bushnell, February 23, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-4.

⁷⁰ Charles Jennings to Felix Greene, October 12, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-4.

⁷¹ J.C.S. Mcgregor to Ernest Bushnell, November 17, 1938; Mart Kenney to George Taggart, January 18, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-4.

⁷² M.F. Welsh to CBC, April 5, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 211 File 11-20-4.

⁷³ Montreal – 28.5%; Toronto – 18.9%; Vancouver – 15.6%. Annual Program Report, 1937-1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 526 File 11-5-8-3.

program distribution did not sit well with smaller communities, some of whom felt it was a conscious decision by the CBC to exclude their artists from the network. For example, in the summer of 1938, Paul Reading of the Calgary Symphony Orchestra wrote Gladstone Murray to inquire about the corporation's interest in airing concerts during the upcoming season, arguing that "Calgary has shown signs of developing into a musical centre of some importance with the symphony orchestra as its principal organization."⁷⁴ Murray responded by noting that the CBC already had arrangements with symphonies in Toronto and Montreal and, as such, a similar broadcast from Calgary would not be necessary. The decision brought a stream of protest from the city, with the secretary of the Board of Trade writing C.D. Howe to complain that:

it does not seem just or reasonable that a Canadian national organization, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, under the control of the Dominion Government should confine its program patronage to musicians who live in the four largest Canadian cities and refuse to employ the services of other equally talented citizens who happen to live in Calgary, and who in these days are finding it difficult to obtain employment.⁷⁵

Similar letters were sent by the local branches of the Canadian Legion and Rotary Club, the mayor, the city clerk, the Canadian Concert Association of Calgary, and the Calgary Women's Musical Club.⁷⁶ This was not the first time that the city had raised questions about the use of their symphony, as the *Calgary Albertan* reported in October 1937 that the local music club was "protesting that despite the fact that Calgary has a first class symphony orchestra and many other

⁷⁴ Paul Reading to Gladstone Murray, June 14, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 869 File PG3-4-2.

⁷⁵ J.A. Hanna to C.D. Howe, July 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 869 File PG6-4-2.

⁷⁶ J.W. Russell to 'Canadian Broadcasting Commission,' July 8, 1938; D.C. Howland to Murray, October 4, 1938; A. Davison to Gladstone Murray, June 29, 1938; J.M. Miller to Gladstone Murray, August 9, 1939; H.A. Howard to William Lyon Mackenzie King, October 7, 1938; Beatrice K. Pegler to William Lyon Mackenzie King, October 15, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 860 File PG3-4-2.

musicians of outstanding character, no musical programs are being presented over the network of the CBC from this city.”⁷⁷

The claims that local musicians in smaller centres were out of work at a disproportionate rate because of the corporation’s policies was a potentially damaging accusation. When examining the records of the Canadian Federation of Musicians, it appears as though there may have been a case to that effect. The Montreal local reported in June 1939 that of its twenty-five total members, none were in arrears or unemployed.⁷⁸ That same month, however, the Saskatoon local reported that of its twenty members, eleven were unemployed.⁷⁹ In Vancouver, May 1939 showed thirty-three of forty-one members unemployed, but between June and December all those members had found work.⁸⁰ While some people outside Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver took this as evidence of the corporation’s neglect in diversifying its offerings, the corporation maintained the position that its sole goal was to air the best possible talent.

In responding to the accusations, George Taggart, who at the time worked in the Program Department in Ottawa, visited Calgary in November 1938 to investigate the possibility of using the Calgary Symphony Orchestra. He reported that the CBC policy was generally misunderstood in the city and explained that the corporation’s decisions on programming were based solely on merit and that “there was a natural tendency towards centralizing of programs, which was not caused by the CBC but rather by the potential talent supply in various areas.”⁸¹ Despite this, Taggart recommended a series of four broadcasts by the Calgary Symphony Orchestra as a means of placating the city, saying that “I very much regret the necessity of giving

⁷⁷ “CBC Policy Under Fire at Musical Club, Eby-Bedford Piano Team Score Success,” *Calgary Albertan*, October 13, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

⁷⁸ Canadian Federation of Musicians, Local 11, Monthly Report May-June, 1939. LAC MG 28 I103 Vol. 79.

⁷⁹ Canadian Federation of Musicians, Local 4. Monthly Report June 1939. LAC MG 28 I103 Vol. 79.

⁸⁰ Canadian Federation of Musicians, Local 1. Monthly Reports, May-December 1939. LAC MG 28 I103 Vol. 79.

⁸¹ George Taggart to Gladstone Murray, November 16, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 860 File PG3-4-2.

all these broadcasts to the Calgary Symphony Orchestra as the orchestra does not justify it.”⁸²

Despite the lamentation that the group did not meet the corporation’s standards, Murray was pleased that the orchestra would be included on the network as he was rather sincere in his desire to incorporate material from across the country, writing that “right across the Prairies the varied population is an enormous asset to the resources of broadcasting and this aspect will become more nearly adequate.”⁸³

One of the ways the corporation tried to capitalize on that asset was to improve the way in which it recruited talent across the country. Early on the CBC established Regional Advisory Councils which were designed to facilitate communication between regional production centres and the central office while also “secur[ing] some competent individual listener reaction to programmes.”⁸⁴ In addition, the CBC instituted Regional Adjudicating Committees to help facilitate auditions in order to take advantage of the regional talent across the country. One of the first to suggest such a scheme was Frank Willis, regional director for the Maritimes, who in 1937 lamented how difficult it was to discover new talent in the region “until such time as a committee of competent musical authorities sit in judgment on their heterogeneous array of talent.”⁸⁵ Of the five regions, the West was probably the most active, with the principal committee operating out of Winnipeg and assisting boards in Calgary, Regina, Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw. The CBC was pleased with the early results, as C.R. Delafield, who worked in the Program Department, noted that “much talent [has] been discovered which could not fairly be brought to our attention in any other way.”⁸⁶ The main group in Winnipeg, which Murray complemented as

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gladstone Murray, Undated Autobiography. LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds, MG 28 E186 Vol. 2 File Murray, W.E.G. Autobiography.

⁸⁴ CBC Constitution, ca. 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-3.

⁸⁵ Frank Willis to Gladstone Murray, June 28, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 489 File 30-19.

⁸⁶ C.R. Delafield to G.W. Richardson, February 11, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 489 File 3 30-19.

being “excellent,” consisted of organist Ronald Gibson, music critic Lillian Scarth, and choral expert John McTaggart.⁸⁷ Even though the group’s existence did not eliminate complaints of regional bias, it was another step in the corporation’s long process of trying to overcome Canada’s long-standing regional divides.

With this increased interest in regional artists and programs, there were questions over whether it would be possible to establish regional networks so the CBC could capitalize on the distinct tastes of audiences across the country. This had long been an interesting possibility for not only the corporation itself, but also for advertisers. In January 1937, D.H. Copeland of the Associated Broadcasting Company wrote Bushnell to ask whether “regional chains [are] practicable? That is, suppose it were desired to present Maritime programs, key station at Halifax; Quebec programs, key station at Montreal; Ontario programs, key station at Toronto, Mid West programs, key station at Winnipeg or Calgary; and British Columbia programs, key station at Vancouver, – could this be arranged...?”⁸⁸ While the answer to that question was yes, the CBC wanted to reserve the use of regional networks for items that were only of interest to a particular area. For example, in January 1939, the consecration service for Anglican Bishop William Moorhead was held in Fredericton and Canon W.E. Fuller asked that the CBC air the event because it “will be of great interest to the people of the whole province as the diocese of Fredericton includes the entire area and the bishops of Fredericton have always played an important part in the life of New Brunswick.”⁸⁹ Given the local nature of the event, the corporation broadcast the service live on a network of Maritime stations.⁹⁰ From all accounts the broadcast was well received and in responding to a letter of appreciation Murray stressed that “it

⁸⁷ D.W. Claringbull to Gladstone Murray, November 7, 1938; Gladstone Murray to D.W. Claringbull, November 10, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 489 File 30-19.

⁸⁸ D.H. Copeland to Ernest Bushnell, January 19, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-2-13-2.

⁸⁹ W.E. Fuller to Gladstone Murray January 6, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 749 File 18-16-2-62.

⁹⁰ T.O. Wiklund to W.O. Findlay, January 11, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 749 File 18-16-2-62.

is a pleasure for the Corporation to assist in broadcasts of this nature.”⁹¹ Murray’s satisfaction with the broadcast likely stemmed from the fact that it demonstrated the corporation’s ability, despite being a national institution, to respond to regional requirements and continue to earn the goodwill of listeners.

While maintaining a regional presence was critical for the corporation, linguistic tensions represented a potentially lethal problem for the young broadcaster. The CRBC had been plagued by language in its four years – in one case Chairman Hector Charlesworth met with members of the Ku Klux Klan in Saskatchewan to quell outrage over the commission’s use of French on national programs – and the corporation believed similar vitriol would damage its efforts to distinguish itself from the commission. At the same time, however, it needed to serve the francophone community – both in and out of Quebec. In fact, C.D. Howe felt Canada’s language situation was actually an advantage for Canadian radio. In a December 1937 speech in Boston, Howe told the crowd that since “about two-fifths of our population [is] French origin... we can thus bring to the radio distinctive music of French Canada as well as English-speaking Canada.”⁹² This was an early emphasis for the corporation as its first annual report stressed that “to improve the relations between Canadians who speak French and those who speak English, is a fundamental policy of the Corporation” and to do so plans needed to be on the basis of “cordial and generous relations between the two great mother races.”⁹³ One of the strategies used to achieve this was to include both a French and English sign-off at the end of all programs, regardless of language.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Gladstone Murray to C.E. Hatheway, February 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 749 File 18-16-2-62.

⁹² C.D. Howe, Speech delivered in Boston, MA, December 15, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 16 File 3.

⁹³ CBC Annual Report, 1936-1937. LAC MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

⁹⁴ The sign-off was “Ici Radio Canada – This is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.” CBC Internal Memorandum No. 49, January 12, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

The corporation was optimistic that this would help facilitate positive relations between French and English Canadians, but just as the CRBC had discovered, this was an extremely difficult task. Complaints frequently found their way to CBC stations as some English Canadians were upset that they had to hear French – even if only in programs’ sign-off – over the air. A listener from Hamilton, Ontario argued that “this is an English speaking country” and because of the French-language announcements “we must be the laughing stock of other countries [that] happen to listen-in.”⁹⁵ Another listener felt that “there are no more French Canadians in this country than there are German Canadians or English Canadians or Norwegian” and therefore the French-language announcements are “just a lot of political chicanery and nonsense kept alive for the sole reason of benefiting certain political groups and religious parasites who live off the masses like the Communist dictators they pretend to hate so much.”⁹⁶ Murray responded to these xenophobic expressions by noting that “tolerance and fair play are fundamental ingredients of the British tradition and our attitude towards all minorities including the French-speaking is designed to the best of our ability to be in harmony with this tradition, not of course outraging the legitimate sensibilities of the majority.”⁹⁷ Despite the fact that this attitude enraged some English Canadian listeners, it received plaudits from French Canadians like Ernest Lapointe, who appreciated the corporation’s “efforts to bring about a better understanding of French culture by all Canadians,” which “is necessary to make a better and bigger Canada.”⁹⁸

For the CBC, however, uniting the languages required keeping them apart in order to avoid further tension. Conscious of the backlash the CRBC received, the CBC did not want to air a significant number of French-language talks programs on the national network, which

⁹⁵ W.E. Godard to Gladstone Murray, June 13, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-6.

⁹⁶ R.E. Long to Gladstone Murray, October 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-6.

⁹⁷ Gladstone Murray to R.E. Long, October 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-6.

⁹⁸ Ernest Lapointe to Gladstone Murray, December 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 107 File 3-19-17.

conflicted with the corporation's genuine desire to serve Francophone listeners. This was one of the reasons why completing the regional transmitter near Montreal was such a priority in 1937 as it could be used to anchor a French-language network for Quebec. For English-language commercial programs, CBM and CBF Montreal carried the broadcasts live, but CBF would cut in with French translations of the commercial continuities while also feeding the signal to CBV Quebec City, CBJ Chicoutimi, CJBR Rimouski, and CHNC New Carlisle, thus allowing "French-speaking listeners [to] receive the commercial message in their native tongue."⁹⁹ This procedure was used primarily for music as the programs themselves were accessible to audiences of both languages. When it was determined that a program was not acceptable to a French audience – as was usually the case for dramatic presentations – a substitute program produced by the CBC aired on the French network. Preserving the French network was so important to the CBC that in December 1938 the Board of Governors agreed to pay CHNC New Carlisle \$1,500 a year to continue to be a part of the network, this despite the fact that in March the Finance Committee resolved that payments to the station would be discontinued.¹⁰⁰

It should be noted that the French network was not viewed as a separate entity from the rest of the organization. There were, in fact, regional networks across the country that advertisers could book for commercial programs – for instance the British Columbia network could be booked for programs that would air after the national network had gone off the air. When discussing the CBC in its early years, therefore, this includes the French network. One of the reasons for why there was not a clear separation between French and English is because stations

⁹⁹ CBC Coverage and Market Data of Regional and National Networks, August 1940. RG 41 Vol. 170 File 11-15.

¹⁰⁰ The resolution included a condition that if the cessation of payments would effectively close the station, the CBC would reconsider. Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Finance Committee, March 21, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043; Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the Board of Governors, December 19-20, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

on the French network were included in the national network. Only in situations where it was determined that a predominantly francophone audience would not appreciate a certain program – the vast majority of talks programs fell into this category – was a substitute program aired on the French network. Given that over 50% of the corporation’s schedule was music, a majority of the time the CBC operated a single network and the entire country received the same program. Where the French network proved beneficial was in offering French-language talks programs to Quebec audiences while also providing an additional outlet for French Canadian artists and performers.

With the French network in place, the CBC, just as it had in other regions, went to work trying to determine the tastes of listeners. In a 1941 brochure it reported that the tastes of French Canadians “are somewhat different from those of English speaking Canadians” and that an investigation found that listeners in French Canada preferred news, quiz shows, serial dramas, French Chansonettes, and variety programs.¹⁰¹ As the corporation continued to develop those types of programs, Frigon used an August 1938 address to praise the French network schedule, which included musical programs *Refrains en vogue* and *Ici l’on chante*, talks programs like *La revue des livres* and *Conferences sur l’histoire*, and current-events programs like *L’Heure dominicale* and *chronique sportive*. Frigon also pointed out that during the previous season the CBC spent an average of \$3,500 a week on artists and musicians in Quebec and argued that “c’est là une contribution à la vie artistique de notre province qui, certes, n’est pas négligeable.”¹⁰² For Murray, the development of these programs was part of Quebec’s larger evolution towards becoming “essential to the development of national broadcasting in Canada.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ CBC French Network, *Five Years of Achievement*, 1941. LAC RG 41 Vol. 397 File 22-8.

¹⁰² Augustin Frigon, “Entre Nous,” Originally broadcast August 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 472 File 31-9.

¹⁰³ Gladstone Murray, *Unpublished Autobiography*, n.d. LAC MG 30 E186 Vol. 2 File Murray, W.E.G. Autobiography.

Even with this emphasis, however, the split between French and English was not even at the CBC. In late 1937, an internal report noted that nearly three-quarters of corporation salaries were paid to English-speaking employees.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, a significant portion of Canada's francophone community did not benefit from the French network as it only operated in Quebec. This meant that francophone communities in other parts of the country had to go without CBC programs in their first language. This was a concern for the CBC as it wanted to provide service to these communities, but technical limitations prevented the transmission of a significant number of French-language programs. Similar to its failure to serve Prince Rupert, however, the corporation was unimaginative in its approach to French-language programs outside of Quebec. For instance, a 1941 suggestion that the corporation air French-language programs over CFAC Calgary was dismissed because "the French-speaking population is a very small minority" and it would "seem no advantage to schedule French language programs."¹⁰⁵ While this 'small minority' could still listen to the corporation's musical offerings, they did not have access to spoken-word programs in their first language.

Further highlighting the corporation's failure to implement alternatives was that it already produced French-language programs for the French network. Given the annual surpluses, the CBC could have used those funds to book time on local stations outside Quebec to air French-language programs. Whether local francophone actors were hired to read scripts, perhaps the easiest alternative, or if recordings of select programs were sent to stations, logistically more difficult, the CBC had options to provide more French-language content to francophone listeners across the country. The reluctance to air French-language programs, in particular talks, over the

¹⁰⁴ English speakers were paid \$386,400 (73.48% of salaries) compared to \$139,430 (26.52%) for French speakers. Percentage of Salaries Paid to English speaking and French speaking employees of the CBC as of November 15, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 489 File 2-3-3-10.

¹⁰⁵ Station CFAC to J.R. Radford, April 14, 1941. RG 41 Vol. 125 File 4.

national network is understandable given the vitriolic reaction to the CRBC's French-language programming. That does not mean, however, that Francophone – and Anglophone – listeners outside Quebec who wanted to hear French-language material should have been deprived of that option. Like its approach to Prince Rupert and Windsor, however, the CBC prioritized its finances over providing service.¹⁰⁶

This was not welcome news to Francophone communities outside Quebec, however, which would be unable to receive French-language programming over the CBC. These communities had lobbied for French-language programming since the Aird Commission travelled the country in 1929 seeking public opinion on Canada's radio situation. In one letter to the Commission, the French-Canadian Association of Alberta argued that “in order to indicate the bilingual characteristic of the Canadian nation and the equal rights of the French and English in the Dominion, the announcing of each number on the programmes should be made in English and French.”¹⁰⁷ The Association d'éducation des Canadiens français du Manitoba went further in calling for “un programme de français par semaine.”¹⁰⁸

Prior to airing French programs nationally, the CRBC received similar letters calling for nationwide French-language programming, particularly from listeners in the West. In early February 1933, the Association d'éducation des Canadiens français du Manitoba, with the support of the Manitoba French-language newspaper *La Liberté*, wrote to the CRBC calling for French programming because “depuis Halifax et Charlottetown jusqu'aux Montagnes Rocheuses, il est des groupes compacts et nombreux de Canadiens dont le français est la langue

¹⁰⁶ A short wave antenna with a directional beam was eventually installed at Verchères to provide French language service to the West, but French language programs on the national network were at a premium. CBC Annual Report 1941-1942. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 4.

¹⁰⁷ French-Canadian Association of Alberta to Donald Manson, February 20, 1929. LAC RG 42 Vol. 1077, File 227-6-3.

¹⁰⁸ Association d'Education Des canadiens-français du Manitoba to Donald Manson, June 13, 1929. LAC RG 42, Vol. 1077, 227-8-3.

maternelle.”¹⁰⁹ Later that month the Saskatchewan branch of the Association catholique franco-canadienne complained to the Commission that a recent concert series had been broadcast entirely in English and called it “infiniment regrettable de constater que jusqu’ici pas un seul mot de français n’a été prononcé aux concerts de la Commission.”¹¹⁰

With the CBC putting an end to national French-language programs, similar complaints arrived from Francophone listeners in the West. Marcel Martel discusses Saskatchewan Francophone leadership calling on the CBC to establish two national networks – one in each language – as early as 1937.¹¹¹ He goes on to note that the disappointment over the corporation’s failure to increase French-language offerings in the West after the Prairie transmitter opened in July 1939 led to the Association canadienne-française d’Alberta, the Association catholique franco-canadienne de la Saskatchewan, and the Association d’éducation des Canadiens français du Manitoba to join forces in a campaign calling on the CBC to serve Francophone listeners in the region.¹¹² The corporation did not receive a voluminous number of complaints from French Canadians in Quebec, however, which could be the result of the transformation of French Canadian nationalism in this period. Martel argues that as early as the end of the Second World War Quebec nationalists changed the way they defined themselves in the national community: “no longer were they a minority community in Canada – now they were were a French majority in the new national territory.”¹¹³ This transformation not only contributed to an emerging

¹⁰⁹L’Association d’Education des Canadiens-français du Manitoba to Hector Charlesworth, February 8, 1933. Saskatchewan Archives Board, R 128, No. 75.

¹¹⁰L’Association Catholique Franco-Canadienne to Hector Charlesworth, February 25, 1933. Saskatchewan Archives Board, R 128, No. 75.

¹¹¹ Marcel Martel, *Le Deuil D’Un Pays Imaginé: Rêves, Luttés et Déroute du Canada Français* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997), 51.

¹¹² Martel, *Le Deuil D’Un Pays Imaginé*, 51-55.

¹¹³ Marcel Martel, “‘Hors du Québec, point de salut!’ Francophone Minorities and Quebec Nationalism, 1945-1969,” in *Nation, Ideas, Identities: Essays in Honour of Ramsey Cook*, edited by Michael D. Behiels and Marcel Martel (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000), 137-138.

Québécois identity, but also “led to the abandonment of francophones outside Quebec.”¹¹⁴ And, as will be discussed, the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 forced a re-prioritization of operations in which anything not war related was shelved.¹¹⁵

While it is possible to analyze the CBC’s decision to avoid national French-language programs from the perspective of its impact on wider linguistic relations in Canada, it should be noted that Francophone listeners were not the only ‘isolated’ Canadians to whom the corporation consciously chose not to provide service as residents of communities like Prince George were also unable to hear corporation programs. The CBC’s failure to provide national French-language service prior to the Second World War was not the product of an administrative ambivalence to Francophone listeners outside Quebec, but rather was a ramification of the CBC’s miserly financial policies.¹¹⁶ Despite surpluses and increased licence fees, the CBC was reluctant to spend money to serve certain smaller communities. The CBC believed that national coverage would be achieved through major capital investments for long term expansion, but that did not provide solace to Canadians who suffered from that policy in the 1930s. Given the corporation’s focus on public relations and the CRBC’s experience, the CBC’s decision not to air French-language programs nationally can be understood as a pragmatic evaluation of its audience. But that it was unimaginative and unwilling to experiment with alternative means of

¹¹⁴ Martel, “Hors du Québec,” 138.

¹¹⁵ In a January 1939 letter Murray did note that they had received some criticism from Francophones in Quebec, but that it was limited to the quality of the programs – in particular with respect to the dialect being used and the use of French artists. With respect to the latter, Murray pointed out that French artists were used because of “a scarcity of artistic material in French-Canada.” He added that the corporation hoped to “nourish and nurse” French Canadian artists so as to have them included in the schedule more frequently. LAC Gladstone Murray to J.M. Beaudet, January 11, 1939. RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-6.

¹¹⁶ While outside the realm of this study, the long term impact of this as it relates to Canadian dualism should be studied. Greg Marc Nielsen touches on this issue when he identifies the paradox of the CBC being charged with representing a singular national voice despite the country’s diversity. He goes on to note: “Deux sociétés qui possèdent les mêmes symboles et institutions, mais qui en tirent chacune une expérience et une identité différentes, découvriront inévitablement un jour une altérité qui refusera de partager le même organisme.” Greg Marc Nielsen, *Le Canada de Radio Canada : Sociologie Critique et Dialogisme Culturel* (Toronto : Éditions du Gref, 1994), 10-11.

providing service to Francophone communities outside Quebec is arguably the biggest failure of its first three years.

An area in which the corporation was much more successful, however, was in its sports coverage. Like *Northern Messenger*, the CBC inherited a tradition of sports broadcasts, particularly hockey, from the CRBC. One of the first arrangements the Commission made in 1933 was to secure weekly Saturday night hockey broadcasts under the sponsorship of General Motors.¹¹⁷ Despite General Motors' involvement, wire rates prohibited the establishment of a complete national network, thus limiting the potential audience size while also antagonizing thousands of hockey fans who could not listen to the games. When the corporation took over in the fall of 1936, therefore, restructuring the wire line contract took on an added significance as it would help increase the distribution of hockey games. In fact, residents of Kirkland Lake, Ontario, filed a petition in October 1936 with ten pages of signatures requesting "your consideration into [the] question of lower leased wire rates in order to induce sponsors to have games broadcast from our local station (CJKL)."¹¹⁸ The *Vernon News* reported that "Hockey Fans are Enraged" while the *Kelowna Courier* and *Penticton Herald* asked "Where are the Hockey Broadcasts?"¹¹⁹ Imperial Oil took over the primary sponsorship that season, and while the increased distribution did not happen fast enough for a lot of fans, the corporation did extend its hockey coverage in its early years.

While the NHL was the primary focus for the national network, the country's appetite to hear live hockey broadcasts meant that the corporation could expand its offerings to include

¹¹⁷ The commission had hoped that the series could be inaugurated without sponsorship so it was determined that General Motors would have naming rights but that no advertising was included in the broadcast itself. C.M. Pasmore to Arthur Steel, September 8, 1933. LAC RG 41 Vol. 219 File 11-22-2-2.

¹¹⁸ Petition from Kirkland Lake to CBC, November 9, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 219 File 11-22-2-2.

¹¹⁹ "Hockey Fans are Enraged," *Vernon News*, November 12, 1936; "Where are the Hockey Broadcasts?" *Kelowna Courier*, November 12, 1936; "Where are the Hockey Broadcasts?" *Penticton Herald*, November 12, 1936.

other national competitions. In the spring of 1938, the CBC purchased the rights to the Eastern, Western, and national finals of the Allan Cup, which is awarded annually to Canada's top amateur senior men's team.¹²⁰ While it was generally regarded as secondary to the Stanley Cup, the Allan Cup was an extremely popular event. When the CRBC did not air the semi-finals in 1935, for example, a listener from Sturgis, Saskatchewan, complained that "eighty-five per cent, at least, of radio fans in Saskatchewan and Canada are interested in hockey" and, as "Canada's national game," he wondered "why can Canada not have these games broadcast?"¹²¹ By airing both the NHL and the Allan Cup, the corporation held the rights to two of the country's most popular features. Securing these programmes was so important that when network commercial rates slightly increased in February, Commercial Manager Austin Weir was quick to point out that they would not limit the season's hockey broadcasts.¹²² Hockey continued to be a major staple of the CBC, so much so that during the Second World War games were recorded and re-broadcast in England for Canadian troops.¹²³

The success of the hockey broadcasts showed that sports were an asset that needed to be further pursued. In December 1937, the CBC aired the Toronto Argonaut Football Club's final game on the national network despite the loss of the sponsor. The team was upset because it did not generate any commercial revenue from the game, but since the sponsor dealt directly with the team the CBC had no control over the matter. In attempting to resolve the situation, Murray suggested to team President T.H.C. Allison that "we might save Canadian Football Clubs and ourselves a great deal of grief and the feeling of insecurity next year, if the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Argonaut Football Club could come to some agreement

¹²⁰ Horace Stovin Memorandum, March 23, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 214 File 11-22.

¹²¹ H.S. Fraser to CRBC, April 4, 1935. LAC RG 41 Vol. 218 File 11-22-2.

¹²² CBC Internal Memorandum, February 19, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

¹²³ Commercial Division Annual Report, 1942-1943. LAC RG 41 Vol. 49 File 2-3-5.

regarding the broadcasting of football matches.”¹²⁴ After some negotiation, the corporation agreed to individual deals with each of the Big Four (Montreal Cubs, Ottawa Rough Riders, Toronto Argonauts, and Hamilton Tigers) to broadcast their games.¹²⁵

In addition to the games, famed announcer Reg Grant hosted a daily fifteen-minute program from the practice field in Montreal during the season in order to build excitement. Foster Hewitt, famous for his work on hockey broadcasts, was hired to announce games from Toronto, which on one occasion proved to be quite hazardous. Hewitt broadcast from a specially constructed booth on the roof of Varsity Stadium and during a particularly windy game in October 1938, the “gray coffin was blown right across the roof of the grandstand, and only a mad dash on the part of CBC Special Events engineers...prevented it from being blown into Devenshire Place.”¹²⁶ Despite the risks, the football broadcasts were well received, but on occasion Hewitt did raise the ire of some listeners. For example, following a game between the Argonauts and Rough Riders, an Ottawa fan complained that Hewitt was biased towards Toronto and “continually lagged behind the play and many plays were entirely ignored” as “a game that should have been thrilling to listeners was rendered a drab affair because of Hewitt’s laxity at the microphone.”¹²⁷ This was a minority opinion, however, and the corporation’s football broadcasts remained popular. When the second half of a game between Toronto and Ottawa was interrupted on the Calgary station by an opera performance, one listener complained that “these [games] only happen once in twelve months whereas you can give us opera any old time at all.”¹²⁸ This success was gratifying for the corporation and following the Grey Cup game between Winnipeg

¹²⁴ Gladstone Murray to T.H.C. Allison, December 8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 220 File 11-22-5.

¹²⁵ Toronto received \$1,200; Montreal received \$1,000; Ottawa received \$850; Hamilton received \$750. R.T. Bowman to W.E. Powell, September 8, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 220 File 11-22-5.

¹²⁶ Devenshire Place was the street that bordered Varsity Stadium to the west. R.T. Bowman, Untitled Article, *Radio News Monthly*, December 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

¹²⁷ ‘A Football Fan’ to CBC, October 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 220 File 11-22-5.

¹²⁸ C.G. Swain to Gladstone Murray, November 27, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 220 File 11-22-5.

and Toronto, Murray congratulated the staff as “competent critical opinion agrees with me on supreme excellence football broadcast Saturday.”¹²⁹

Already with rights to two of the country’s biggest sports properties, the corporation continued to expand and diversify its offerings. In September 1938 it secured broadcasts of schooner races between the Bluenose of Halifax and the Gertrude L. Thebaud of Massachusetts. The broadcasts were produced in cooperation with NBC and were advertised as “an actual sound pick-up from both vessels and two-way conversations between the Bluenose skipper, Angus Walters, and the Thebaud skipper, Ben Pine, will be made while both vessels are racing.”¹³⁰ A year later serious consideration was given to airing the national lacrosse championship, although logistical problems prevented a broadcast.¹³¹ This commitment to sports was part of the corporation’s wider effort to improve its programs, which also included a focus on talks, drama, and music. What was unique about sports, however, was that engineers and announcers got further experience with live, remote broadcasts. As will be seen, the corporation wanted to broadcast live from special events across the country and airing sports provided useful experience. Not only were audiences appreciative of the chance to listen to hockey games on Saturday nights, but the corporation also greatly benefited from its sports coverage.

As the CBC used its sports initiative to try to overcome regional differences, it also had to address perhaps the biggest obstacle facing Canadian broadcasting: American networks. As previously mentioned, the corporation received numerous complaints about its insistence on airing American commercial programs. From the CBC’s perspective, airing these programs was important not only to maintain commercial revenues and satisfy listeners’ tastes, but also to serve as an opportunity to improve on its relationships with the three American networks. When the

¹²⁹ Gladstone Murray telegram to R.T. Bowman, December 12, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 220 File 11-22-5.

¹³⁰ CBC Press Release, September 20, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 749 File 18-16-2-73.

¹³¹ Ernest Bushnell to Gladstone Murray, October 20, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 878 File PG 7-17.

Aird Commission visited New York in 1927, they were taken aback by an NBC statement that it planned to give Canada complete coverage. Charles Bowman wrote that “it intrigued me to see the effect of this generous answer on my colleagues. A loyal knight of the British connection, Sir John became thoughtful when I later commented, ‘Canada could become dependent upon the United States for radio broadcasting, as we are on films from Hollywood.’”¹³² Given that the CBC administration consisted of many individuals who strongly supported the final report, it is not surprising that the corporation pursued a policy that they believed would prevent American domination of the airwaves. As a result, the corporation’s policy was to maintain positive relations with the American networks. The strategy was that if NBC, CBS, and MBS saw the CBC not as a competitor but a compatriot, there would be less intrusion into Canadian markets.

For years Alan Plaunt understood that for any national network to succeed in Canada, it would have to allow for some American programming. As a result, he believed that securing and maintaining positive relationships with the American networks was essential in order to have access to the top American programs. Following a luncheon in January 1938, NBC President Lennox R. Lohr wrote to thank Plaunt for his hospitality and noted that “I believe that, to a large measure, radio will be the medium of expression of the culture and work of Canada, not only to its own people but to its neighbors across the border.”¹³³ Only five months earlier, the CBC had made a deal which gave NBC exclusivity on CBL Toronto and CBM Montreal. For the corporation, the arrangement meant that it could air NBC content while at the same time “the priority of Canadian interests and CBC control [were] fully safeguarded.”¹³⁴ A similar situation

¹³² Charles Bowman, *Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman* (Sidney, BC: Gray’s Publishing, 1966), 124-125.

¹³³ Lennox R. Lohr to Alan Plaunt, January 20, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 2 File 21.

¹³⁴ CBC Arrangements with Outside Broadcasters, submitted to the Board of Governors at its Seventh Meeting, March 22, 24-25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

arose in October 1938 when CBC outlets in Toronto and Montreal could not carry the New York Philharmonic from CBS because private stations in each city had agreements with the network to distribute its programs. Murray recommended that the stations be informed that the corporation would henceforth be the exclusive distributor of CBS programs in Toronto and Montreal. In making the suggestion, Murray noted that it was not his desire to disturb the distribution of CBS features into Canada; he simply felt that, similar to the agreement with NBC, the CBC had the right to reserve the programs for itself.¹³⁵

Maintaining this control served multiple purposes as not only did it provide the corporation with popular programs to fill its schedule, but it also presented an opportunity to connect with producers in the United States to help improve its own programs. In the spring of 1940 Edgar Stone conducted a production survey at CBS and NBC as a way “to take advantage of the practical experience of these organizations in suggesting any changes or formulating any new methods of operation within the scope of the province of the CBC.”¹³⁶ Occasionally this led to problems, however, as the regulations governing broadcasting in Canada were different from those in the United States. In October 1937 Austin Weir and Ernest Bushnell travelled to New York to outline the CBC regulations with NBC executives, who, when confronted with the regulation prohibiting price mentions, “remarked that this would not be easy to deal with, as competition sometimes compelled them to carry price mention[s] in the United States.”¹³⁷ Despite the potential problems, American programming on the CBC increased from 13.7% of

¹³⁵ Minutes of the Eighth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, October 3-4, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹³⁶ Edgar Stone, “Report on Commercial Production Survey at NBC and CBS,” April 18, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 286 File 13-12.

¹³⁷ E.A. Weir to Gladstone Murray, October 25, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 102 File 3-18-6.

programs in 1937-38 to 16.9% in 1938-39 – an increase largely attributed to the need to fill the expanded schedule.¹³⁸

The other major benefit for the corporation was that its arrangements with the American networks meant that it had the opportunity to have its programs aired in the United States.¹³⁹ In a 1963 interview, Bob Bowman recalled that the CBC's relationships with the American networks were reciprocal, as "we didn't want to take all these programs from American networks without sending something back in return."¹⁴⁰ Of the three networks, he felt that MBS was the most eager to air corporation material as it was "almost as hard up as we were for programs."¹⁴¹ The corporation was particularly proud of its programs that aired in the United States and frequently mentioned them in efforts to publicize improvements to its schedule. If it was generally accepted that the top programs were produced in the United States, the CBC felt that its own programs being broadcast on American networks was validation of their quality. In his *Chatting with the Listeners* address in August 1938, Murray highlighted the "growing appetite" for Canadian programs in the United States, which he called gratifying because "the balance of obligation has been weighed against us in the past."¹⁴² While boastful, the statement was not inaccurate as the

¹³⁸ The corporation was also producing more original material over the period, but it could not expand its program operations quickly enough to meet the demands of the increased number of broadcast hours. As a result, more American material was required to fill the schedule. 1937-1938 Annual Programme Report; 1938-1939 Annual Programme Report. LAC RG 41 Vol. 526 File 11-5-8-3.

¹³⁹ The historiography of radio in the United States tends to overlook Canada's contribution to American broadcasting. In several recent studies, the terms 'Canada' or 'Canadian Broadcasting Corporation' do not appear in the index nor is there any extensive discussion of specific Canadian programs that became popular features in the United States. Louise M. Benjamin, *The NBC Advisory Council and Radio Programming, 1926-1945* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), Jim Cox, *American Radio Networks: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2009), Susan Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), Anthony Rudel, *Hello, Everybody! The Dawn of American Radio* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2008).

¹⁴⁰ R.T. Bowman Interview, November 7, 1963. LAC RG 41 Vol. 401 File 23-1-3-1.

¹⁴¹ R.T. Bowman Interview, November 7, 1963. LAC RG 41 Vol. 401 File 23-1-3-1.

¹⁴² Gladstone Murray, *Chatting with the Listener*, originally broadcast August 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 399 File 23-1-2.

amount of programming was substantial. Including programs sent to the BBC, 765 programs accounting for approximately 310 hours produced by the CBC aired internationally during the 1938-39 fiscal year.¹⁴³

These agreements combined with the Havana Agreement as the major accomplishments of the corporation's efforts towards continental integration. By actively pursuing a continentalist policy the CBC was able to include popular programs in its schedule while also challenging the established narrative of Canadian-American cultural exchange being entirely one-sided. The CBC had successfully integrated into the existing North American broadcasting structure and earned a place as a peer of the more powerful American networks. The recognition allowed the corporation to pursue its network expansion, program development, and financial management without fears of extensive interference from foreign stations. As a result, the corporation was put in a position to fulfill its nationalist goals of providing a Canadian voice over Canadian radios. The CBC was able to ensure Canadian control of airwaves through its policy of continental integration and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with American stations.

It is important to note, however, that it was not only American networks with whom the CBC tried to maintain positive relations. Murray was proactive in using his connections at the BBC to help the corporation – which came as a surprise to some in London. Simon Potter notes that Felix Greene worried in 1936 that Murray's appointment would “scupper any chance of future cooperation between the BBC and the CBC,” but was pleased when “Murray proved willing to forgive and forget, and even to treat Greene (who he knew had intrigued against him) as a confidant and ally.”¹⁴⁴ When Plaunt planned a trip to England in the fall of 1936, Murray arranged for him to meet with J.C.S. Macgregor, the BBC's head of the Empire Department, and

¹⁴³ CBC Annual Report 1938-1939. LAC MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

¹⁴⁴ Simon J. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84.

Malcolm Frost, who was responsible for BBC publicity releases in Canada.¹⁴⁵ Plaunt was cautioned, however, to keep quiet about the CBC's tendency to record commentators from Britain, which "is in violation of some agreement they [the BBC] have with their artists."¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Frank Willis spent four months in Australia with the Australian Broadcasting Company (ABC) in 1938 while John Cairns, a senior dramatic producer for ABC, worked at the CBC. The corporation believed that this type of arrangement provided a great opportunity to exchange programs and ideas, as "those officials of the CBC who go abroad become Canadian ambassadors of goodwill, charged with the duty of interpreting Canadian life, habits and ideals to the peoples of other countries."¹⁴⁷ This can be seen as part of the corporation's evolution into an internationally recognized broadcaster, something the CRBC never achieved. By proactively seeking out relationships with foreign networks and organizations, the CBC earned a level of prestige and legitimacy that the CRBC had not. While listeners' primary concern likely remained on the programs they heard each night, international recognition was a critical element of the corporation's development through its early years.

There was a certain irony in how international acclaim could help address long-standing domestic issues, but as the corporation worked through 1938 it proved quite useful. For Gladstone Murray and his staff, overcoming problems associated with regionalism, language, and American influence was critical in transforming the CBC from a fledgling broadcaster to a national institution. These same issues had been critical in the CRBC's downfall and, as such, needed to be addressed by the corporation. While there was no expectation that it could resolve tensions that pre-dated the Dominion, there was an expectation that it manage those tensions so

¹⁴⁵ Gladstone Murray to Alan Plaunt, September 7, 1936, UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, September 7, 1936.

¹⁴⁶ E.A. Weir to Gladstone Murray, September 1, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 15 File 1.

¹⁴⁷ CBC Annual Report 1938-1939. LAC MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

that they would not detract from its mandate. The way in which this happened, however, was dripping in irony: separate Canada's linguistic and regional groups in order to bring them together through radio while at the same time using American networks to build national pride. The strategy may have been unorthodox, but it did help prevent the CBC from suffering the same fate as the CRBC.

This is part of what made 1938 a landmark year for the CBC. While the year did not have the milestone of a new transmitter or an international treaty, it did see signs of progress in the corporation's day-to-day operations. From the regionalization of programming to the increased use of the French network to the greater distribution on American networks, the CBC confronted Canada's human and physical geography in an effort to reach as wide an audience as possible. When coupled with the success of the parliamentary review, improvements in programming, and further continental integration, the CBC could point to 1938 as a year with more substance than style. It was not always successful – the failure to provide French-language programs to Francophone communities outside Quebec is particularly noteworthy – the corporation did make significant strides in diversifying its operations. Addressing some of the core issues confronting national broadcasting would not bring the same headlines and praise as some of its previous efforts, but they were just as important in securing its long-term survival. As the corporation broadcast its thirteen hour 1938 Christmas Day schedule, little did it know that those steps would be instrumental in ensuring its success over the next twelve months, which was arguably the most important year in its history.

Chapter Five: Controversy and Scandal

When Canadians visited newsstands in the first week of January 1939, they were greeted by a *Time* magazine cover featuring a cartoon of Adolf Hitler playing the organ. The famed selection of Hitler as Man of the Year for 1938 – which *Time* stressed was based, for better or worse, on his influential role in world affairs – was part of a growing concern over the possibility of war in Europe. From the Munich Crisis in September to Kristallnacht in November, the world was growing increasingly apprehensive about Hitler's aggressive behaviour. Their concerns filtered into the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and started to influence, albeit indirectly, its day-to-day operations. The corporation had combined with the BBC to present coverage of the Munich Crisis and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's declaration of 'Peace in our Time,' but as it entered 1939 the CBC believed it needed to be in a better position to respond to a potential European crisis. While network expansion and improvement continued to be prioritized, this also meant that certain domestic issues took on greater significance. Through the winter and early spring of 1939, the corporation addressed concerns over censorship, frequency allocation to private stations, and publicity. In doing so, the CBC sought to maintain its domestic authority while at the same time it working on new transmitters for the Prairies and Maritimes and strengthening its relationship with the Canadian Press. While these issues were given greater emphasis, in part, because of the events in Europe and the need to be prepared in case of war, addressing these concerns was not without its problems. 1939 is often cited as a transformative year for the CBC, primarily because of the major events later in the year, but that transformation from an emerging national broadcaster to a vital national institution started with months of controversy and consternation. The early months of 1939 were rocky for the CBC and filled with questions over its role in Canadian life.

As the calendar turned to 1939, the corporation received what could be considered a major endorsement with the establishment of the Newfoundland Broadcasting Corporation. Jeff Webb notes that when the idea of a government broadcaster was first discussed in Newfoundland, “copies of the *CBC Act* and CBC regulations as well as a copy of the charter of the BBC” were circulated by J.H. Penson, commissioner of finance, to the committee tasked with drafting a broadcasting policy, as “clearly, the ground was set for Newfoundlanders to take the hint and recommend a state-owned system.”¹⁴⁸ The new body was largely modelled on the CBC and had a Board of Governors, raised revenue through licence fees, and maintained regulatory authority over programming. And just as was the case with the CBC, the Newfoundland Broadcasting Act of 1939 pointed out that the service “should be developed and exploited to the best advantage in the national interest.”¹⁴⁹ According to Webb, the similarity was intentional as parts of the “CBC Act” were copied verbatim in Newfoundland, which “saved the effort that might have gone into reinventing the wheel, but it meant that the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the Canadian legislation were replicated.”¹⁵⁰ That the Newfoundland system was based on the CBC was not surprising as the colony’s government had long been in touch with corporation officials about various policies and procedures. For example, in September 1937, Secretary of the Newfoundland Department of Posts and Telegraphs C.D. Frazer wrote to Murray to “ask your advice with reference to the question of free speech over Government Radio stations and the use of those stations for the broadcasting of political and other matters of contentious issue.”¹⁵¹ Frazer appeared grateful for Murray’s help as less than a month before the

¹⁴⁸ Jeff Webb, *The Voice of Newfoundland: A Social History of the Broadcasting Corporation of Newfoundland, 1939-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 34

¹⁴⁹ Newfoundland Broadcasting Act, January 27, 1939. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 405 File 23-1-7.

¹⁵⁰ Webb, 34.

¹⁵¹ C.D. Frazer to Gladstone Murray, September 29, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 1138 File GM1-30-4.

bill's passing, he again wrote the General Manager to say that "our organization will be much smaller in its scope than the one you have so successfully established in Canada and I feel that there is much that we can learn from you in our new venture."¹⁵²

Even though the CBC was not overly active in the establishment of the Newfoundland system, its participation can be seen as part of its efforts towards continental integration in broadcasting. The creation of a new national broadcaster in North America meant greater congestion of wavelengths and the potential for further interference of signals. Just as it had done with the American networks, the CBC wanted to ensure a productive, congenial relationship with broadcast authorities in Newfoundland in order to prevent any disruption of its own service. Similarly, there was hope that the corporation could benefit from the development of new programs. Murray informed Frazer that the corporation's cooperation "is not unselfish because I know that the considerable unexplored artistic resources of what I still prefer to regard as the oldest dominion of the commonwealth will enrich our broadcasting services by exchange."¹⁵³ That exchange started early as the CBC aired the Newfoundland Broadcasting Corporation's inaugural broadcast on March 13 and in the process established a collegial relationship between the two organizations. Overall though, there was not a lot of early program exchange between the systems as the "CBC provided advice and programming to the smaller corporation, but did not regularly rebroadcast programming that originated in St. John's."¹⁵⁴ It was through consultations that the CBC built its relationship with Newfoundland as the corporation provided assistance on issues such as drafting regulations in the summer of 1939 and Board of Governors by-laws in 1943. The Voice of Newfoundland, as it came to be known, maintained a strong presence through the next decade, ultimately playing a significant role in the process that brought

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Gladstone Murray to C.D. Frazer, December 22, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 1138 File GM1-30-4.

¹⁵⁴ Webb, 54.

the colony into Confederation. And while the listeners of Newfoundland greatly benefited from its establishment, so too did the CBC. The corporation could claim that the establishment of a similar system in Newfoundland served as validation of its own success. If another broadcaster used it as a model, the CBC argued, then clearly Canada had one of the best broadcasting systems in the world. Just as it had with the American networks, the corporation used its relationship with Newfoundland and its continued push towards continental integration as means of promoting the growth of Canadian broadcasting.

This boost to the corporation's ego was welcome at Ottawa headquarters as accusations of censorship again started to surround the CBC. Tim Buck, leader of the Communist Party of Canada, had made allegations that the CBC was unfairly censoring him in 1937 and similar accusations had been lobbied against the corporation throughout its tenure. In part because of the increasing tension in Europe, however, they became more frequent in the early part of 1939. For its part, the CBC had long stressed that it did not support any form of censorship. In a November 1938 speech, Murray allowed that regulations were in place preventing obscene language and abusive comments on race, creed, or religion, but "beyond this restriction, there is the freest expression of opinion, it being arranged, of course, to provide a platform for all main points of view on problems of acute controversy."¹⁵⁵ C.D. Howe addressed the issue in the House of Commons by stressing the fact that "there is nothing in [the Broadcasting Act] which governs in any way the subject matter which may be broadcast over the stations of the corporation or any other broadcasting station."¹⁵⁶ Despite this insistence, not everyone believed the corporation was committed to freedom of speech. In the November 19, 1938 edition of *The Nation*, the American current affairs magazine reported that negotiations were taking place to give the government

¹⁵⁵ Gladstone Murray, "Some Aspects of Broadcasting," November 29, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 466 File 31-1.

¹⁵⁶ C.D. Howe, May 10, 1938. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Third Session Eighteenth Parliament, 2758.

further control of news in Canada. Saying that the discussions included the Canadian Press, the Canadian Newspaper Publishers' Association, and the CBC, *The Nation* cautioned its readers that "the agreement, which would parallel radio control in fascist nations, would give the government authority not only over news broadcasts but over all other commentators."¹⁵⁷

The article came about a week after the CBC had initially denied U.S. Representative Warren G. Magnusson's request to give a speech over CBR Vancouver in support of the controversial Alaskan Highway project. British Columbia regional representative Ira Dilworth explained the decision to Murray by stating that "the political nature of the topic, the fact that I understand Prime Minister King is at present not enthusiastic about the Alaska Road project and the connection of the speech with the private residence of a large Vancouver contractor, seemed to make our position clear."¹⁵⁸ The address was eventually moved to the Hotel Vancouver and, with an agreement to transmit the program to NBC, the CBC reversed its decision. Dilworth was concerned that the decision was made because of the political sympathies of British Columbia Premier Thomas Patullo and the possibility that "CBR is being used by the Congressman as a means of getting an agreement with NBC which will give a general distribution of what may be his own political views."¹⁵⁹ While there does not appear to have been any major fallout from the broadcast, the incident shows how the corporation was nervous about political material. The CBC simply saw itself as being cautious and ensuring that everything was in order before approving a broadcast, but publications like *The Nation* saw a tyrannical force enforcing government censorship.

¹⁵⁷ Carlton McNaught to Alan Plaunt, November 23, 1938. University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 3 File 5.

¹⁵⁸ Ira Dilworth to Gladstone Murray, November 12, 1938. LAC RG 41 746 File 18-16-1-44.

¹⁵⁹ Ira Dilworth to Donald Manson, November 18, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 746 File 18-16-1-44.

One of the areas of programming that proved to be most contentious in this regard was religion. The corporation had long been concerned that radio would be used as a forum to condemn religion and religious beliefs, which was why during its second meeting the Board of Governors passed a resolution stating that “no broadcast may contain an attack on any religious faith, creed, or sect.”¹⁶⁰ In an effort to ensure that nothing of the sort was included in any broadcast, the corporation convened an advisory council on religious programming in the summer of 1938. Members included representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Church of England, the Baptist Church, and the United Church.¹⁶¹ During the meeting Murray lamented the fact that the CBC had not been able to air as many religious programs as it wanted to through its first two years, yet he remained optimistic that the new fall season would bring with it new opportunities for religious material. For Murray, anything would have been an improvement as during its first full season 0.7% of the corporation’s schedule featured religious programs.¹⁶² In order to increase that number the committee ultimately agreed that two half-hour periods would be reserved on the national network each Sunday – one to be shared by the Protestant Churches and one for the Catholic Church.¹⁶³

What was particularly interesting about this meeting, however, was that one of the representatives of the Catholic Church was Charles Lanphier. In the fall of 1936 Lanphier, who

¹⁶⁰ The same rule was included in the broadcasting regulations passed a year later, but the Board felt it was an important measure that needed to be passed immediately. Minutes of the Second Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, December 17-19, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹⁶¹ The Christian Science organization was concerned that it had been overlooked for inclusion in the committee and was worried that it would not receive any of the time reserved for Protestant denominations. The CBC initially tried to assuage the group’s concerns by pointing out that the committee’s composition was modelled on a similar body in the United States and was open to change, while the policy was in place to ensure that the claims of all religious groups would be satisfied.

¹⁶² 1937-1938 CBC Annual Programme Report. LAC RG 41 Vol. 526 File 11-5-8-3.

¹⁶³ The meeting served as a preliminary gathering of what would later become the CBC Religious Advisory Committee. Minutes of a Meeting Concerning Religious Broadcasting, July 5, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 909 File PG11-1.

was serving as the head of the Radio League of St. Michael's, had been involved in a well-publicized controversy with Presbyterian Minister and head of the Presbyterian Radio League Morris Zeidman. Throughout the fall the two used their respective programs to spar over an Ontario bill on providing provincial funding for separate schools. On his program, Zeidman attacked the proposal by referring to Catholics as “a section of people who believe that they alone possess the truth, and all others are in error” while calling the Church “a Hierarchy...out for world-conquest.”¹⁶⁴ Lanphier responded two weeks later on the *Catholic Hour* by saying that “never in the history of this province during this generation has every crude weapon of the cheapest politics been used to arouse bitter racial and religious strife for the purpose of political gain” and that “such an exhibition of mockery and brotherly love that Christianity is supposed to engender can beget nothing but disgust and leave raw the outraged feelings of many of our good and sincere citizens of every denomination.”¹⁶⁵ Lanphier claimed that he was not responding directly to Zeidman – and that in fact he had not heard Zeidman's broadcast – but a clear line in the sand had been drawn between the two.

It should be noted that this was not just a problem in Canada, as American networks also struggled with political material finding its way into religious programs. Louise Benjamin outlines how NBC's Advisory Council dealt with Father Charles Coughlin, whose supposed religious program frustrated executives who “sought to present programming most audience members would perceive as enlightening and instructive, and any contentiousness within shows only brought them headaches.”¹⁶⁶ NBC had an ally in the matter with the National Association of

¹⁶⁴ Reverend Morris Ziedman, Script of Broadcast on CFRB Toronto, originally broadcast November 29, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 40 File 2-2-8-2.

¹⁶⁵ Charles Lanphier, *The Catholic Hour*, originally broadcast December 6, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 40 File 2-2-8-2.

¹⁶⁶ Louise M. Benjamin, *The NBC Advisory Council and Radio Programming, 1926-1945* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 64.

Broadcasters, which adopted a code stressing that “programs should be based upon sound social concepts and presented with a superior degree of craftsmanship; that these programs should reflect respect for parents, adult authority, law and order, clean living, high morals, fair play and honourable behaviour.”¹⁶⁷ Without a similar ally in Canada, the CBC was left to mediate the Lanphier-Zeidman dispute itself.

A year later the two would disagree over developments in the Spanish Civil War, a disagreement which again led to complaints that each man had resorted to attacks on the other’s religion. In his broadcast on October 24, 1937, Lanphier and his guest discussed the role of the “secular press” in spreading propaganda about the war because it did not report that Spanish citizens were nearly 100% behind Nationalist leader Francisco Franco, particular his volunteer army which was “happy, singing, joking, enthusiastic and disdainful of the Reds.”¹⁶⁸ After Zeidman countered the claims on his program, the two were forced to meet with the Board of Governors to defend their respective broadcasts. Both Lanphier and Zeidman claimed that they were not responding to each other on their programs and argued that their comments did not meet the standard of being abusive to any religious denomination. After some deliberation, the Board concluded that the mixing of religion and international controversy was unfortunate if it led to internal strife in Canada.¹⁶⁹ With that, the matter was deemed to be resolved and Chairman Leonard Brockington travelled to Toronto to meet with representatives of both denominations. One of the reasons why further action was not taken was because of the implementation of the

¹⁶⁷ “The Code of the National Association of Broadcasters,” Adopted at 17th Annual Convention of the NAB, July 11, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 343 File 15-4.

¹⁶⁸ Charles Lanphier, *The Catholic Hour*, originally broadcast October 24, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 40 File 2-2-8-2.

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors November 16-18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

new regulations which was hoped would re-enforce the existing prohibition against religious attacks.

For Lanphier, the controversy with Zeidman did not damage his popularity as he and the *Catholic Hour* remained a fixture on the Sunday schedule. On New Year's Day 1939, however, Lanphier again found himself at the centre of a major scandal – this time because of his comments regarding the Toronto municipal election. The election was scheduled for Monday January 2 and Lanphier used the *Catholic Hour* the day before to discuss the Communist party. Opening the broadcast by saying it was “the most important ever delivered over the air under the auspices of the Radio League of St. Michael,” Lanphier went to great lengths to discredit the party. From calling their efforts propaganda from Moscow to questioning their commitment to the community, Lanphier pleaded with listeners to vote against the Communist party: “Even if you have to be carried to the polls, let us give Red Russia a thunderous response. In the name of God that you adore and love, and in the name of British democracy, I ask all people to, in the name of justice and truth: Do your duty.”¹⁷⁰

While the broadcast may not have attacked another religion, it did violate the regulation prohibiting commentary on an election within forty-eight hours of the polls opening. The regulation was partly motivated by the 1935 election and the controversy associated with the Mr. Sage broadcasts, but throughout the process of drafting the regulations there remained some question as to whether similar controls on political programming were required for municipal elections. G.M Geldert of CKCO argued that, unlike federal and provincial elections, municipal campaigns were short and “it has been conceded by the various candidates in municipal elections...that only on the Saturday evening immediately preceding such elections is it possible

¹⁷⁰ Charles Lanphier, *The Catholic Hour*, originally broadcast January 1, 1939. As re-printed in the *Toronto Daily Star*, “Priest Claims City Reds ‘Power House,’” January 3, 1939.

to get the public really interested in issues.”¹⁷¹ Henry Gooderham of CKCL Toronto felt that campaign broadcasts should be allowed until 7:30 PM the night before a municipal election.¹⁷² He argued that it would be a mistake “to make any regulation that would prescribe the proportion of time that any station should be capable of getting as much revenue out of this type of business as possible.”¹⁷³ It was further believed that a forty-eight hour ban on political programming would be unfair since newspapers did not have a similar regulation and, as such, community stations would lose much needed revenue to the local press.

Despite these protestations, the CBC maintained its position with respect to the limit on campaign broadcasts. Part of that commitment came from the experience of the October 1937 Ontario provincial election, which saw Liberal Mitchell Hepburn win a strong majority, but in the process there was a sense that listeners had grown increasingly tired of the constant political programs. Four days before the election, the Niagara Falls *Review* editorialized that “politics on the air has reached the nauseous stage and the quicker the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation puts some sort of limit on it, the better it will be.”¹⁷⁴ The Timmins *Porcupine* agreed, arguing that “the present contest has shown that election addresses on the air soon become a bore. Radio owners complain about their time and patience being wasted by poor speakers who do no more than chew over what has already been said before.”¹⁷⁵ It should be noted that the virtual unanimity of the press was partly the result of the newspaper industry being concerned that radio addresses had negatively affected their revenue. As such, there was an element of self-interest in supporting limitations on political programs. Despite this, there was little doubt in the

¹⁷¹ G.M. Geldert to Gladstone Murray, November 23, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

¹⁷² Unless the election was on a Monday, in which case the cut off would be 7:30 PM on the Saturday night. Gooderham agreed that Sunday should be free from political broadcasts.

¹⁷³ Henry S. Gooderham to Gladstone Murray, January 18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 146 File 9-11.

¹⁷⁴ “Politicians Monopolizing the Air Waves,” Niagara Falls *Review*, October 2, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 348 File Unknown.

¹⁷⁵ “Untitled Article,” Timmins *Porcupine*, October 4, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 348 File Unknown.

broadcasting industry – and in particular at the CBC – that listeners were fatigued from the constant political programs.

Therefore, when the Board of Governors met in November 1937, the issue of campaign programs was discussed and “as a possible solution it was suggested that in future political broadcasting over CBC stations and networks might be limited to statements from party leaders.”¹⁷⁶ In a December 1937 memorandum to private stations, Murray noted that while there were no major controversies over the content of the programs, their volume meant that “there was so much repetition of argument that the public became surfeited and indifferent.”¹⁷⁷ Murray went on to outline a proposal by which parties would be granted equal time during campaigns and restrictions would be put into place on the number of hours devoted to political programming prior to an election. The scheme would not officially be put into place until 1939, but it was clear that the CBC wanted to ensure that radio, while available for campaigning, did not become the exclusive domain of politicians in the period leading to an election. For the corporation, the goal was to maintain freedom of the air while preventing wealthy individuals from monopolizing air time for their own views.

This meant that when Charles Lanphier took to the air on January 1, 1939, not only did he violate a broadcasting regulation, but he violated one that had been a priority for the CBC. Listeners also appeared to be sensitive to the regulations as the public backlash against Lanphier was quick. Hours after the broadcast, Mrs. Pearl Rogers wrote to the CBC to identify “a flagrant breach of the laws governing the use of radio stations.”¹⁷⁸ Another listener argued that “today’s broadcast by Father Lanphier is one of the most alarming incidents that has probably ever

¹⁷⁶ Sixth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, November 16-18, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹⁷⁷ Gladstone Murray Memorandum to Private Stations, December 2, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 257 File 10-40-1-7.

¹⁷⁸ Mrs. Pearl Rogers to CBC, January 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-1.

happened in Canadian broadcasting.”¹⁷⁹ Members of the Protestant clergy also wrote to express their disapproval of the broadcast, with G.M. Chidley, a Minister in the United Church, objecting “to the air of our country being polluted by the kind of vituperative denunciation and slander engaged in by this speaker.”¹⁸⁰ It is possible some of the complaints were motivated by anti-Catholicism – one listener referred to the Catholic Church as a “politico-religious” organization and another suggested that in the future “such programs” be confined “to Quebec unless you wish to ferment religious hate in [Ontario]” – but the overwhelming majority were directed at Lanphier’s conduct and violation of the regulations.¹⁸¹ That similar complaints were not lodged against the corporation’s other Catholic programs suggested that listeners’ anger with Lanphier was primarily the result of his violation of the regulations and not his religious beliefs. This outrage from listeners as well as the clear breach of the regulation put the corporation in a difficult position as it had a history of leniency with respect to violations. In this case, however, the Board of Governors ultimately decided that strong action was needed and Lanphier was suspended from the air.

In the press release announcing the suspension, it was stressed that “this action is taken, not because of the nature of Father Lanphier’s political partisanship, but because of the violation of the Broadcasting Act.”¹⁸² Lanphier’s past controversies, which had led to the “condition that he confined himself to items of a purely ecclesiastical nature, avoiding politics, national and international, and controversial theories in economics,” were also taken into account.¹⁸³ The strong action by the CBC did result in some positive feedback from listeners in Toronto, with

¹⁷⁹ Grover Livingston to CBC, January 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-1.

¹⁸⁰ G.M. Chidley to Gladstone Murray, January 4, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-1.

¹⁸¹ R.E. Long to Gladstone Murray, January 1, 1939; Letter from resident of Toronto to Leonard Brockington, January 4, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-1.

¹⁸² United Press Release, January 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

A.D. Schatz from the Canadian Legion writing that “I have spoken to a large number of Ex-Servicemen who, without exception condemned the broadcast of a ‘foul blow, below the belt’, and approved of your action in this matter.”¹⁸⁴ Another listener praised the decision by stating that “all fair-minded people appreciate your efforts to keep free speech on our Canadian air,” while another referred to the suspension as “courageous.”¹⁸⁵ Suspending Lanphier may not have completely erased the memory of the corporation’s lax enforcement of the regulations to that point, but it was a sign that major violations would be penalized. It is also interesting to note that Alan Plaunt felt that the ability to suspend a speaker was important to ensure regulatory compliance, as he had complained to Murray about an early draft of the regulations by pointing out that “there is...nothing in the regulations to make it clear that in the event of a breach of the regulations, the Corporation will have the right to shut the person off the air.”¹⁸⁶

Maintaining this control was important as it was not only Lanphier who was challenging the corporation’s regulations. In the early months of 1939, George McCullagh, editor of *The Globe & Mail*, had been denied air time for a broadcast. The CBC cited its policy of not selling time to individuals to broadcast commentaries as the reason for denying the request, with Murray informing outraged listeners that “round tables, talks, discussions, and networks” have been provided for controversial subjects while “facilities have been provided on a sustaining basis for organizations such as the Canadian Association of Adult Education and the Workers’ Educational Association.”¹⁸⁷ There was some support for this position, with a listener from

¹⁸⁴ A.D. Schatz to Gladstone Murray, January 6, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-1.

¹⁸⁵ R.C. Sabiston to Gladstone Murray, January 7, 1939; W.J. Sutherland to Gladstone Murray, January 13, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-1.

¹⁸⁶ Alan Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, June 1, 1937. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 3.

¹⁸⁷ The policy was the result of a fear that wealthy individuals would monopolize airtime and, as such, controversial matters would not receive a balanced presentation. The corporation believed that by organizing roundtables and discussions it could ensure that listeners were not exposed exclusively to partisan speakers. Gladstone Murray to J. Ross Taylor, January 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

Toronto arguing that “a licensed radio owner has the right to assume he will not be at the mercy of anyone with money enough to buy time, unless topics are discussed in the nature of a forum.”¹⁸⁸ Another listener went further in her support of the decision by stating that “your stand in the present instance leads us to hope that in the future, the rules controlling broadcasting will be applied to individuals and parties in an impartial manner.”¹⁸⁹

Not all listeners felt this way, however, as the corporation received plenty of complaints claiming that it was stifling free speech. R.J. Macdonald, a listener from Saskatoon, complained that the treatment of McCullagh was not unlike Hitler’s control of radio in Germany and suggested that Murray “devote your genius and time to a scrutiny and suppression of the pronounced vulgarities which CBC has permitted and is permitting over its network – something quite humiliating to people of any degree of culture.”¹⁹⁰ A listener from Stratford told Murray that “the sooner that you and your crowd get the grand bounce, the better it will be for the citizens of Canada – and if you feel like you act, we certainly don’t want you in Canada.”¹⁹¹ Some people were so irate that they raised the issue with Minister of Transport C.D. Howe, with one man complaining that “Murray’s explanation is lame and illogical and only adds to his error in the first place.”¹⁹² George H. Mitchell from Thornbury, Ontario, was so upset that he wrote to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King to argue “that you should immediately ask for Mr. Howe’s resignation as Minister in charge of Broadcasting, or be yourself responsible for his actions.”¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ M.C. Towers to ‘Radio Commission,’ January 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

¹⁸⁹ Mrs. J.W. Stewart to Gladstone Murray, January 18, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

¹⁹⁰ R.J. Macdonald to Gladstone Murray, January 28, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

¹⁹¹ George E. Herron to Gladstone Murray, January 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

¹⁹² Newton Smale to C.D. Howe, January 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

¹⁹³ George H. Mitchell to William Lyon Mackenzie King, January 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

One of the major complaints from listeners was not only that McCullagh had been rejected in his application for air time, but also that the CBC allowed broadcasts from the Communist Party of Canada. A listener from Oshawa, Ontario, wrote that “if free speech is to be denied to any one, start with the Communists who are undermining the finest country in the world with their damnable propaganda.”¹⁹⁴ A similar argument was presented in the House of Commons by Leader of the Opposition R.J. Manion, who objected to the corporation’s allowance of Communist commentaries:

I have no objection to socialists, but my objection to communists being allowed to speak over the radio is that the fundamental principle and the whole doctrine of communism is revolution. They believe in world revolution; they believe in upsetting governments not by evolution, not by ballot but by the bullet. Yet Tim Buck or some other communist may have the privilege of speaking over the radio – and this was not denied by Mr. Gladstone Murray – in order to air his views, while George McCullagh, a business man, may not do so.¹⁹⁵

Mackenzie King responded by stressing that the CBC was an independent body and argued that “neither the government nor any member of the government had any knowledge that an application had been made to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation by the publisher of one of Toronto’s leading newspapers, nor had any member of the government any knowledge that such an application had been refused.”¹⁹⁶

While Mackenzie King was right to point to the corporation’s independence from the government, he was clearly shifting criticism directly to the CBC. And even though it felt it had been completely justified in its position, there is little doubt that the matter seriously compromised the corporation’s legitimacy with some Canadians. Not only was McCullagh

¹⁹⁴ Charles W. Connop to Gladstone Murray, January 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-2.

¹⁹⁵ R.J. Manion, January 16, 1939. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Fourth Session Eighteenth Parliament, 25.

¹⁹⁶ McCullagh was brought in as an expert to participate in roundtable discussions once the war started in September. William Lyon Mackenzie King, January 16, 1939. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Fourth Session Eighteenth Parliament, 12

influential because of the *Globe & Mail*'s wide readership, but the events in Europe also shaped how some people felt about government control over broadcasting. In the spring of 1939, for example, George Drew, leader of the Conservative opposition in Ontario, complained in the legislature about the CBC providing air time to university professors who believed that Canada should not enter a potential European war. This led to a heated written exchange with Alan Plaunt, who felt that Drew was being cowardly in using the protection of Parliamentary privilege to make his statements. Plaunt also questioned Drew's rationale:

I have read with interest your many eloquent appeals for Canada to prepare to fight for democracy. The events to which I have referred compel me to enquire how you define democracy. As you are doubtless aware, many Canadians take the view that Canada should not intervene in European wars. Is not the number of such people likely to increase if it is felt, as you appear anxious to demonstrate, that we must destroy democracy at home in order to fight for it abroad.¹⁹⁷

Drew shot back by saying that democracy "will be much more likely to survive on a simple acceptance of the fact that we are British than if our youth are instructed by parlour pinks who preach Empire disunity from the cloistered protection of jobs which give them all too much free time."¹⁹⁸ The debate between the two men not only foreshadowed the issues over what would be acceptable commentary during the war, but also highlighted the problems associated with controversial programming.

Further complicating matters, another controversy emerged, this time from Alberta, where Premier William Aberhart continued to elicit complaints from listeners. As previously mentioned, Aberhart frequently used his religious program to speak about political issues and attack his opponents. In early January, H. Milton Martin, who served on the Western Regional

¹⁹⁷ Alan Plaunt to George Drew, April 17, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 15.

¹⁹⁸ George Drew to Alan Plaunt, April 18, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 2 File 4.

Advisory Council, wrote Murray to say that he was frequently asked “why it is that Mr. Aberhart is allowed to say things which nobody else is allowed to do on the air.”¹⁹⁹ What further upset some Albertans was that the CBC had taken action in suspending Lanphier, but did nothing about Aberhart. Frank Cusack, a listener from Calgary, wrote to express his support for the policy that led to Lanphier’s suspension, but pointed out that “I have never heard of any action by your organization against Premier Aberhart for his breach of the broadcasting regulations... It does appear that it makes quite a difference as to who happens to be the offender.”²⁰⁰ The complaints continued into the spring as the corporation was in the midst of the McCullagh and Drew controversies. In March, a listener from Edmonton complained about the use of religious programming for political purposes by saying that Aberhart “scarcely even now takes the trouble to disguise it as a religious service.”²⁰¹ While Aberhart had been a contentious figure in broadcasting since the 1920s, discussion over Lanphier, McCullagh, and Drew served to renew the debate over Aberhart’s program in Alberta.

The controversies of early 1939 are illustrative of a gap in the corporation’s plans. In his 1962 thesis on broadcasting regulation in Canada, William Mallone argued that the CBC had learned from the CRBC and that “up to 1939 there was no particular problem” with political programming.²⁰² As previously discussed, the corporation wanted to earn the support of as wide a base as possible – placing such a priority on this that it was not firm in its enforcement of the regulations. In order to fulfill its goal of connecting Canadians, however, the corporation felt it needed to air commentaries on current events by, what it determined to be, qualified speakers – frequently university faculty. And despite its best efforts to be balanced, these types of programs

¹⁹⁹ H. Milton Martin to Gladstone Murray, January 5, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-9.

²⁰⁰ Frank Cusack to Gladstone Murray, January 6, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-9.

²⁰¹ H.R.L. Henry to Gladstone Murray, March 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-9.

²⁰² William Malone, “Broadcast Regulation in Canada: A Legislative History,” Unpublished Thesis, 1962. LAC RG 41 Vol. 410 File 24-16.

often infuriated individuals or groups. What further exacerbated this outrage was the potential for war in Europe. The corporation believed that listeners who did not support the opinions of some of the speakers would still respect its programs and policies, but in an atmosphere where tensions were raised, some took the CBC's actions as evidence of government censorship and left-wing propaganda. There were occasions where the press contributed to that impression – a member of the Faculty of Law at McGill University informed Plaunt in March 1938 that the *Montreal Gazette* reported on a broadcast on taxation but only mentioned one of the two speakers, thus giving readers the impression that the CBC was partial to one side of the debate.²⁰³ For the most part, however, the CBC was consistent with its policy as it understood that completely avoiding controversial material would have ignored its *raison-d'etre*. That Gladstone Murray and Augustin Frigon did not anticipate the backlash, however, is surprising. With Murray's background in public relations and Frigon's familiarity with controversies in broadcasting, it would have been reasonable for the CBC to have been more proactive in addressing the scandals. Instead, for one of the first times in its existence, the corporation was passive in its response, which compromised its integrity with respect to controversial programs.

Fortunately for the corporation, it received a bit of a reprieve from the scrutiny following the report of the 1939 Parliamentary Committee on Broadcasting. Manion had suggested that the committee re-convene in January by making note of the censorship scandals and “in view of the other things which are being said about the radio corporation, that we should have set up this year a committee of the House of Commons to deal not only with the question of censorship but with other matters as well which affect the broadcasting corporation.”²⁰⁴ There was little

²⁰³ Frank Scott to Alan Plaunt, March 14, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 4 File 16.

²⁰⁴ R.J. Manion, January 16, 1939. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Fourth Session Eighteenth Parliament, 26.

objection to the request and on February 10 Howe introduced the motion to convene a committee “to consider the annual report of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and to review the policies and aims of the corporation and its regulations, revenues, expenditures and development.”²⁰⁵ Like the year before, however, the committee’s membership was primarily Liberal – of the twenty-three members, seventeen were Liberals, three Conservatives, two Social Credit, and Harry Stevens representing the Reconstruction party. Once again the committee produced a positive report, stating that it “was impressed by the increasing scope and importance to Canada of the Corporation’s work.”²⁰⁶

It is possible that the majority Liberal composition of the committee influenced its report, but as has been discussed, Liberals do not appear to have received preferential treatment by the CBC. It should also be noted that Liberals were not universally supportive of the CBC and that the subsequent parliamentary committee investigating radio in 1942 – which, of its twenty-three members, had seventeen Liberals – produced a scathing report criticizing the corporation. The report primarily blamed Gladstone Murray, by this time an increasingly divisive figure, for the corporation’s problems, but it did demonstrate that the Liberal party was willing to publicly criticize the CBC. The 1938 and 1939 committees may not have been overly critical, but they were also not simply rubber-stamping the CBC’s operations. For instance, the 1939 committee did make reference to the controversies early in the year and stated that “more effective steps should be taken, through broadcasting itself and other appropriate methods of disseminating information, to familiarize the public with its varied activities.”²⁰⁷ The CBC was pleased with the report – in particular because it felt it justified policies on controversial and political

²⁰⁵ C.D. Howe, February 10, 1939. Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons; Fourth Session Eighteenth Parliament, 821.

²⁰⁶ Report of 1939 Committee on Radio Broadcasting, May 9, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 287 File 14-1-3.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

broadcasting – and quickly distributed a press release in an attempt to generate some much needed positive publicity.²⁰⁸

While Murray and the Board of Governors were satisfied with the report, they understood that the Liberal composition of the committee meant that it would not assuage those who believed that the corporation was unnecessarily censoring dissenting opinions. There therefore needed to be another source of goodwill for the increasingly beleaguered broadcaster. This took the form of working to finally finish the series of high-power transmitters that had been started with Hornby, Ontario, and Verchères, Quebec, in 1937. At the time the corporation had been open about prioritizing central Canada, but it had also assured listeners in the Maritimes and Prairies that new transmitters would soon be built for those regions. The Sydney, Nova Scotia, *Post-Record* reported in October 1937 that CBC officials had said that a 50,000 watt station should be assembled by the end of 1938.²⁰⁹ It would appear as though the CBC was anxious to meet that deadline as the Board of Governors passed a resolution in March 1938 opening the process for contractors to submit tenders for the two stations.²¹⁰ The process took longer than expected, however, and the Finance Committee did not approve the cost of the stations until October, thus making their completion before the end of the year impossible.²¹¹

Part of what lengthened the process was determining where to put the transmitters, which in the case of the Maritime station was hotly debated. Once it was known that the CBC was openly accepting tenders, it received a number of letters from various towns in the region hoping

²⁰⁸ CBC Press Release, "CBC Policies and Finances are Sound, Committee Finds," May 10, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-9.

²⁰⁹ "Nationalizing Radio," Sydney *Post-Record*, October 7, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

²¹⁰ C.D. Howe indicated in February that the government would again provide a \$500,000 loan to the corporation for the construction of the new stations. Minutes of the Seventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 22, 24-25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

²¹¹ The total cost of the two stations was \$560,000 - \$500,000 of which would come from the government loan with the remaining \$60,000 coming from the corporation's 1937-1938 budget surplus. Minutes of the Sixth Meeting of the CBC Finance Committee, October 6, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

to host the station. Those requests fell on deaf ears, however, as the decision had already been made to locate the station on Cole Island near Sackville, New Brunswick, where the CBC had purchased 7.9 acres of land for \$1.²¹² This did not deter K.J. Cochrane, Liberal MP from Cumberland, Nova Scotia, from trying to use his influence to have the transmitter in his riding, telling Murray that “anything you can do to assist in having the station established in my County will be of great help to me and I assure you will be very much appreciated.”²¹³ Similarly, A.E. Pearson, Mayor of Sussex, New Brunswick, wrote Murray not only to stress that his town was ideally situated to host the station, but also to point out that “with war clouds in the horizon, Cole’s Island could easily be bombarded from Bay of Fundy side or from the Gulf of St. Lawrence side while Sussex could only be reached by air.”²¹⁴ Despite these protestations, the CBC was confident in its selection of Sackville and felt that the station would provide ideal coverage for the region.

During construction, however, Sackville Mayor C.M.P. Fisher was concerned that the town would not receive enough credit for hosting the station, which was given the call letters CBA. In September he wrote Murray to relay the town’s wishes that the station be referred to as CBA Sackville in order to promote the community.²¹⁵ Murray responded by noting that while there had yet to be a definite decision on station identification, “it is not the practice to identify the situation of the transmitter on the air except, perhaps, at the beginning and end of the day’s activities.”²¹⁶ This continued to be an issue throughout construction, however. In January 1939 Henry Emmerson, Liberal MP for Westmorland, New Brunswick, met with Murray to discuss

²¹² CBC Contract to purchase land at Sackville, New Brunswick, October 14, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 110 File 3-21.

²¹³ K.J. Cochrane to C.P. Edwards, April 21, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 125 File 4-1.

²¹⁴ A.E. Pearson to Gladstone Murray, March 16, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 125 File 4-1.

²¹⁵ C.M.P. Fishor to Gladstone Murray, September 22, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

²¹⁶ Gladstone Murray to C.M.P. Fishor, September 27, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

the naming of the station.²¹⁷ In describing the meeting, Murray noted that the CBC would have to be careful as “my own experience has been that there is apt to be rivalry amongst the smaller communities.”²¹⁸ Given that the station needed to represent the entire region, this was a rather delicate situation. Chief engineer Gordon Olive noted that the station was located near the Nova Scotia-New Brunswick border and, therefore, “we are not favouring either” province.²¹⁹ Despite a February notice saying that the station would be known as CBA Sackville, it was ultimately determined that all station calls would be ‘CBA Maritimes.’²²⁰

At the same time as letters were being written about the name of the new station, the press in the Maritimes was eagerly following its construction. Starting in September, the local press closely covered the station’s progress – in October the *Moncton Times* reported that the transmission tower could be seen from miles away and in November the St. John, New Brunswick, *Telegraph-Journal* informed its readers that the tower’s lights had been switched on for the first time.²²¹ Capturing the excitement of local residents, the *Sackville Tribune* published a photo of the transmitter in January 1939 and waxed that “an arresting sight of beauty in steel will greet visitors...this summer.”²²² When it was announced that the station would finally open in early April, the Sydney, Nova Scotia, *Post-Record* noted that the station “will be equipped with the most scientifically correct transmitters available.”²²³ In the days leading to the official opening, community papers across the region excitedly announced the news – from large dailies

²¹⁷ He was concerned that the station identification would not include Sackville.

²¹⁸ Gladstone Murray to Edward Pickering, January 31, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

²¹⁹ G.W. Olive to Edward Pickering, February 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

²²⁰ Gladstone Murray to Gordon B. Isner, April 21, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

²²¹ “Transmission Tower of CBC Rapidly Rising,” *Moncton Times*, October 25, 1938; “Tower Lights On,” *St. John Telegraph-Journal*, November 18, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

²²² “First Photograph of the New Radio Tower,” *Sackville Tribune*, January 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

²²³ “CBC’s New Maritime Station,” *Sydney Post-Record* March 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

like the Charlottetown *Guardian* to smaller publications like the Kentville, Nova Scotia, *Advertiser* and the Edmunston, New Brunswick, *Le Madawaska*.

The station's opening broadcast on April 8 was quite similar to the inaugural broadcasts for CBL Toronto and CBM Montreal. There was an orchestral performance, C.D. Howe sent his best wishes, and the premiers of the Maritimes provinces, Alison Dysart of New Brunswick, Thane Campbell of Prince Edward Island, and Angus MacDonald of Nova Scotia, each gave short speeches. Perhaps the most notable thing to come from the broadcast was the way in which the station was identified. The announcer welcomed the audience by saying: "From Canada's three provinces by the sea, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation presents the inaugural programme of its new 50,000 watt Regional Transmitter, CBA Maritimes at Sackville, New Brunswick."²²⁴ The announcement stressed that it was a regional station while also identifying Sackville in the hopes that the CBC could overcome the controversy associated with the naming of the station. Following the broadcast, some local newspapers provided the positive press that the corporation was hoping to generate. The Chatham, New Brunswick, *Gazette*, for example, wrote that CBA was "a station that the Maritimes have been in want of ever since radio was developed" and the extended coverage meant that "at last radio owners in this part of Canada who have been paying radio licences for little or no entertainment so far as the CBC was concerned will be getting some value for their \$2.50."²²⁵

The praise was not universal, however, as there were some questions as to the necessity of the new transmitter. In New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, for instance, it was reported that the new station had no better reception in the town than CFCY Charlottetown, leading the local paper to criticize the selection of "a low lying island in the Bay of Fundy" to build the station and that "it

²²⁴ Script for the Opening of CBA, originally broadcast April 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 108 File 3-19-27.

²²⁵ "Opening of Radio Station for Maritimes," Chatham *Gazette*, April 10, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

would almost seem as if the new station was another example of needless public expenditure.”²²⁶ Similarly, the Summerside, Prince Edward Island, *Journal* was critical of the indecision on identifying Sackville as the host of the station, wondering “why do the Broadcasting people continue to make fools of themselves over this little matter?”²²⁷ It would appear as though those who were critical of the new station were in the minority, however, as the press was generally excited about the region’s inclusion in the national network of high power stations.

A month after the opening the *Sydney Post-Record* reported that there were improvements to be made as daytime reception was not great and more musical programs would be welcome, but with respect to news it was pleased that the station featured Canadian information “not hitherto available to Sydney listeners, who previously had to suffer through a purely American news broadcast stuffed with advertising ‘blats.’”²²⁸ Once the station had been in operation for a few months, the Summerside *Pioneer* offered a much different perspective from its local competitor by stating that it was a gesture by the CBC to “interest themselves in the Maritimes” and encouraged everyone “to pull together to make CBA the best station on the Canadian network. It will be the radio mirror through which we will be seen by Canada, the United States and the world.”²²⁹ For the CBC, the station offered a much needed reprieve from the controversies over censorship and provided another critical step forward in the quest to complete the national network of high power stations. With the corporation struggling for positive public relations, the station was used as a sign that the CBC had not abandoned its goal

²²⁶ “The New Radio Station,” *New Glasgow Eastern Chronicle*, April 27, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

²²⁷ “Name ‘Sackville’ Dropped from Broadcasts,” *Summerside Journal*, April 27, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 14-1-2.

²²⁸ *Sydney Post-Record*, May 4, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 108 File 3-19-27.

²²⁹ *Summerside Pioneer*, July 22, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 108 File 3-19-27.

of national coverage and that, with the potential of war, securing a coast-to-coast communications network remained a top priority.

While the station was being built, Gladstone Murray had also hinted at some other methods to garner positive public relations. Perhaps the most drastic of these came in March 1939 when he asked Assistant General Manager Augustin Frigon to prepare a new budget for the corporation – one with a \$2 licence fee. For Murray, reducing the licence fee to its original level while at the same time opening a new station in the Maritimes would provide a major boost to public relations. Frigon was dubious, however, saying that such a reduction would cost \$600,000 in revenue and “would necessitate a complete change of policy rather than a budget adjustment.”²³⁰ Frigon noted that expansion and improvement plans across the network would have to be scrapped and that, in addition to the loss of revenue, “a reduction in the quality and service would undoubtedly affect our commercial revenues as sponsors would not be readily willing to join a network operating under these conditions.”²³¹ This final point was critical as commercial revenues continued to represent a sizable portion of the corporation’s budget. In a June report the Commercial Department noted that it had already contracted net revenues of \$326,334.17 for the 1939-40 fiscal year and estimated that the total for year would be \$526,344.17.²³² Given that these revenues represented a major component of the corporation’s operations budget, it could not afford to take a chance on a licence fee reduction. Murray was likely aware that it was not feasible when he asked Frigon to present a budget for a reduced fee, but that the request was made is evidence of the extent to which the CBC felt it needed to regain the trust of listeners following the scandals of early 1939.

²³⁰ Augustin Frigon to Gladstone Murray, March 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 78 File 3-10-1.

²³¹ Augustin Frigon to Gladstone Murray, March 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 78 File 3-10-1.

²³² Commercial Department Report, June 12, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

With a reduction in the licence fee not possible, the CBC looked to expanding its popular news service as another way to boost its public image. News had long been a mainstay of both national and local radio – in fact the CBC had inherited a generally positive relationship with the Canadian Press (CP) from the CRBC; when the CBC took over from the commission twenty-six stations aired daytime CP bulletins. For its part, CP was pleased with the arrangement and hoped it would continue, leading CRBC director of Public Relations E.C. Buchanan to write CP General Manager Gillis Purcell and assure him that “the new Corporation will be very desirous of cordial and co-operative relations with the press and particularly with The Canadian Press.”²³³ The CRBC had shied away from making any statements about the new corporation’s policies, but Buchanan had received word from Murray that the CBC hoped to continue the arrangement. Apart from the popularity of news features, the CRBC, and later CBC, did not pay CP for the right to air the bulletins, which only increased their value to the broadcasters. While there were some expenses associated with the broadcasts, the news represented a popular, low-cost sustaining feature and maintaining the arrangement with CP was an easy decision.

Over the next three years the CBC aired CP news bulletins over the national network, with the most popular being a nightly fifteen minute feature at 11PM. CP would write the scripts for the broadcasts and send them to CBC studios in Toronto where an announcer would present the material.²³⁴ Through the years some improvements were made to the service – in 1937 a telegraph ticker was installed in Montreal and Toronto to improve communication between the CBC and CP – as the news remained a popular feature on the network.²³⁵ There were, however,

²³³ E.C. Buchanan to Gillis Purcell, October 21, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 173 File 11-17-3.

²³⁴ The CBC also translated the continuities to French and the bulletins aired over the French network from Montreal.

²³⁵ Installing the ticker represented a savings for the CBC. The ticker came with a daily fee of \$1, an installation charge of \$20, and a monthly rental fee of \$67.13, whereas the corporation was paying between \$125

occasions where members of CP expressed some dissatisfaction with the arrangement. Following the Ontario provincial election in 1937, the Peterborough *Examiner* was upset that radio stations were being praised for their coverage of the campaign and informed its readers that “the radio stations have no facilities for collecting news; the newspapers paid the entire cost of collecting all the returns; paid for sending them to the head office of the Canadian Press, and then gave the service which the radio used...it is due to [the newspapers’] efforts that news or election broadcasts are possible.”²³⁶

In addition, some papers worried that radio news would reduce their circulation. Both the CBC and CP believed, however, that radio would in fact increase circulation because of “the whetting by radio of the public appetite for news.”²³⁷ A good example of this came in the fall of 1938 when CP inaugurated over one hundred special bulletins updating the international crises in Europe. While the updates kept Canadians informed, they were not comprehensive accounts of the events nor did they provide any commentary – for that people would need to purchase a newspaper. And as tensions increased in Europe, news bulletins started to take on added significance in the corporation’s schedule.

Reflecting this importance, the CBC and CP started to re-negotiate their deal through the fall and into the winter of 1939. At the Board of Governors meeting in February, Chairman Leonard Brockington presented the details of the agreement, which included provisions for CP’s entire news service to be at the disposal of the CBC, the use of that news to be exclusively aural, and prohibited the commercial sponsorship of news.²³⁸ While this would greatly improve the

and \$150 per month to telegraph the news to Montreal. Ernest Bushnell to Gladstone Murray, November 15, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 173 File 11-17-4.

²³⁶ “The Radio and its News,” Peterborough *Examiner*, October 9, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

²³⁷ CBC Annual Report 1938-1939. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG30 E481 Vol. 45

²³⁸ Minutes of the Special Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, February 20-21, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

corporation's ability to broadcast news, the agreement also gave the CBC the option to write and edit the scripts for all bulletins – a welcome development as some at the corporation, in particular Ernest Bushnell, complained that CP writers were not qualified to write for radio – but in return the CBC agreed to pay CP's expenses associated with broadcasting.²³⁹ In addition, some local stations did not have access to CP bulletins and had been using private news services, so the agreement included a clause that the CBC would feed CP bulletins to any private station requesting the service and would encourage stations to take advantage of the opportunity. Putting these provisions in place would be a major undertaking, but given that the deal did not go into effect until September 1, 1939, the CBC and CP had time to arrange the details.²⁴⁰ Murray noted that the corporation was motivated to increase its news offerings in part because of world events – in particular he felt that the agreement needed to be completed before the 1939 Royal Tour – and the CBC hoped that increasing its news offerings would help to dispel notions that it censored controversial material.²⁴¹

Improving its relationship with CP not only had the clear benefit of increasing its news coverage, but it also created some positive sentiment toward the corporation from the press. While maintaining a positive relationship with such an influential organization was important, the corporation understood that the support of private stations remained a top priority. Two weeks after it had suspended Charles Lanphier, the CBC sent a memorandum to seventy-eight

²³⁹ There was a brief disagreement as to how much this would be, with CP claiming that at minimum its costs were \$20,000/year and the CBC claiming that \$20,000/year was the maximum it would be willing to pay. The final agreement called for a fee of \$20,000/year. Gladstone Murray to Ernest Bushnell, February 22, 1939; Gladstone Murray to Harry Baldwin, April 29, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 899 File 10-1.

²⁴⁰ The decision was made to provide regional bulletins: Maritimes, 1:15-1:30PM (AST) daily except Sunday and 7:15-7:30PM (AST) Monday to Friday; Ontario and Quebec, 12:30-12:45PM (EST) daily except Sunday and 6:30-6:45PM (EST) daily except Sunday (a translated version would air simultaneously on the French network); Western region and British Columbia, 9:30-9:45AM (PST), 1:00-1:15PM (PST), and 10:45-11:00PM (PST). In addition to the local bulletins the CBC would also air a national bulletin from 11:00-11:15PM (EST). Ernest Bushnell to Gillis Purcell, June 28, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 899 File 10-1.

²⁴¹ For further discussion of the relationship between the CBC and CP during this period, see Gene Allen, *Making National News: A History of Canadian Press* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

private stations across the country inviting them to the next Board of Governors meeting. For the stations, there was no need to focus exclusively on one issue as “the Board of Governors will set aside a full day to be devoted to private stations, in order to enable them to make such representations upon various matters as they might desire.”²⁴² For many of the private stations this was an opportunity to discuss potential increases in their power and changes to frequency allocation, issues that had been contentious since the CBC came into existence. As early as December 1936, the Board of Governors passed a resolution declaring that private stations should not be granted licences at power over one kilowatt.²⁴³ In adopting this policy, the CBC publicly stated its belief that high power stations should be reserved for its own national network. In explaining this to the 1938 Parliamentary Committee, Leonard Brockington insisted that the corporation did not seek a monopoly; it just believed that high-powered broadcasting in Canada should be controlled by the CBC for the benefit of the Canadian people.²⁴⁴ Similarly, the corporation was reluctant to re-allocate frequencies that had already been assigned – in part because it was waiting for the ratification of the Havana Treaty before it made those decisions.

Private stations frequently complained that the inability to increase their power or switch from a poor frequency put them at a competitive disadvantage, not only with CBC stations but also with the high-power American and Mexican stations that interfered with their signals. When the Board of Governors offered to meet with them, therefore, private stations were eager to present their cases. During the session, which was held March 21 in Ottawa, multiple stations outlined their need for increased power in order to compete. CJCA Edmonton, for example,

²⁴² Horace Stovin memorandum to private stations, January 20, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

²⁴³ The policy was to favour power increases up to 1,000 watts. While the power to grant licences and power increases ultimately rested with the Minister of Transport, the Broadcasting Act called for him to act based on recommendations from the Board of Governors. Minutes of the Second Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, December 17-19, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

²⁴⁴ Leonard Brockington, March 24, 1938. Excerpt of testimony to Parliamentary Committee. LAC MG 28 I363 1986-0022 Vol. 1 Historical-Technical.

highlighted its longevity, size of staff, breadth of program schedule, and cooperation with the CBC in requesting an improved frequency. Managing Director John M. Imrie emphasized this final point by stating that the station carried over 50% of all CBC releases and that “the spirit of co-operation thus reflected has characterized the attitude of CJCA in its relations with successive federal radio authorities ever since it first went on the air almost 17 years ago.”²⁴⁵ Imrie also used a strategy employed by many of the private stations in discussing CJCA’s public service role, which for him meant providing service to isolated communities north of Edmonton. He informed the Board of Governors that “CJCA is keenly sensitive of its responsibility to its vast northern hinterland and in particular to the isolated settlements and individual settlers therein. In the discharge of that responsibility...CJCA has spared neither effort nor expense.”²⁴⁶ Given that Alan Plaunt, Augustin Frigon, Gladstone Murray, and Leonard Brockington, all of whom had championed radio as a public service, were at the meeting, this was a particularly compelling line of argument for private stations.

Private stations also made frequent reference to the Havana Treaty and the need for Canada to use all the high-power frequencies it had been granted in the deal. As previously noted, it was widely regarded that Canada received more exclusive frequencies than required for the CBC national network. As a result, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters was eager to see some of those frequencies used by private stations. After all, if Canada did not use the frequencies it risked losing them altogether. While the Board of Governors was sympathetic to the argument it remained unwilling to approve changes as the Havana Treaty’s status was still unclear. A month before the meeting with private stations, K.A. MacKinnon, a CBC engineer who had been a significant contributor to the Canadian delegation at Havana, pointed out that

²⁴⁵ Edmonton Journal Submission to Board of Governors, March 21, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

while Canada, Cuba, and the United States had all ratified the agreement, Mexico had not.²⁴⁷ MacKinnon believed that this was seriously hurting the CBC as the exclusive high-power frequencies it had been granted at the conference were still occupied by Mexican stations. The resulting interference meant that the corporation's stations were not getting as wide coverage as hoped. And while MacKinnon noted that some private stations were also suffering from Mexican interference, it was not "anywhere near the extent that are the CBC high-power network stations."²⁴⁸

Not only was MacKinnon upset by Mexico's failure to ratify the treaty, but he was also sceptical that the Mexican government would ever address the issue. Without ratification the Treaty would never be enforced and what seemed at the time as a great deal for Canada would not materialize. MacKinnon outlined what this would mean for the CBC by writing that "we shall have to re-examine the whole high-power allocation structure in Canada in order that a truly national coverage may be obtained from our existing high-power stations, which on their present channels cannot be used to the extent that our investment in them demands."²⁴⁹ While MacKinnon's focus was on how CBC stations would have to be reorganized, he was also dubious about some of the private networks' claims for higher power or new frequencies. He concluded that stations were basing their arguments on a misunderstanding of the Havana Treaty while pointing out that if all the requests were granted, Canadian stations would be interfering with each other to the point where listeners' reception would be compromised across the country.²⁵⁰ Coming out of the meeting, therefore, there was no immediate action taken by the

²⁴⁷ It took ratification by four countries for the treaty to go into effect. K.A. MacKinnon to Donald Manson, February 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6-1.

²⁴⁸ K.A. MacKinnon to Donald Manson, February 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6-1.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ K.A. MacKinnon, "A Critical Review of the Report of the CAB Technical Committee on the Havana Treaty," January 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6-1.

Board of Governors to address the private stations' concerns. And while the corporation's intentions were good in inviting the CAB and its member stations to present their grievances, the inaction was yet another disappointing feature of early 1939.

Furthering the corporation's problems, just a day before the meeting with private stations a petition arrived from attorneys George Reid and Louis St. Laurent. Sent on behalf of radio workers in the province of Quebec, the petition protested the regulation prohibiting beer and wine advertisements over the air, thus eliminating programs sponsored by wineries and breweries. Such a ban had been included in the CBC's original regulations in 1937, but Quebec was exempt, in part, because there was no provincial law prohibiting the advertisement of beer and wine in the press. In December 1938, the Board of Governors proposed extending the regulation to Quebec, with a decision scheduled to be made at its meeting in March 1939. Murray wrote a letter to Quebec stations in January informing them that the regulation was under review and suggested "the desirability in the mutual interest of avoiding contractual engagements for beer and wine programmes after March 31st."²⁵¹ This elicited strong reactions throughout the province, including Reid and St. Laurent's petition, which argued that 75% of French Canadian actors depended on programs supported by beer and wine advertisements and without that investment, new talent would not be discovered and current workers would inevitably be laid off. Reid and St. Laurent also claimed that "the advertising of Beer and Wine does not incite people to drink more beer or wine, it merely develops trade preference."²⁵²

In addition to the petition, individual stations expressed their dissatisfaction with the possible change. Alexandre Dupont of CKCH Hull noted that there was no prohibition on beer

²⁵¹ Gladstone Murray Memorandum to all privately owned stations in Quebec, January 5, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 540 File 13-7-1.

²⁵² George Reid and Louis St. Laurent to CBC Board of Governors, March 20, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2-2.

and wine advertising in the press and expressed his hope that “the Board of Governors will not take steps that would show discrimination between Radio and Newspapers as an advertising media.”²⁵³ The CBC also received letters from listeners who were upset about the regulation, with one from Montreal arguing that “Radio-Canada ne devrait en aucun temps server de jouet à un faux puritanisme, ni au crétinisme et à l’hypocrisie déguisés.”²⁵⁴ Other listeners worried about the potential economic ramifications of the regulation, with one stating that “it is my firm belief that legislation prohibiting the use of radio to certain manufacturers is bound to be reflected in the sale of goods and consequently lowers the standard of living for workers in their factories, offices, etc.”²⁵⁵ This line of argument was effective as ten days before the Board meeting, C.D. Howe informed Murray that he had received strong representations asking for a delay until June in applying any potential prohibition because “an earlier cancellation will throw out of employment a number of artists who will have no immediate prospect of employment.”²⁵⁶

The potential economic damage of a ban on beer and wine advertisements was a serious consideration as breweries and wineries had been sponsoring radio programs in Quebec since the 1920s. The practice had quickly become commonplace and the CRBC’s regulations allowed the advertisements in the province. When it came time for the CBC to draft its regulations in 1937, however, one of its major concerns was that radio signals do not necessarily respect provincial boundaries, meaning that such advertisements on Quebec stations could also be heard in New Brunswick and Ontario. The corporation had also received several representations from temperance unions and religious organizations supporting a complete ban on beer and wine sponsorship. During its August 1937 meeting, for example, the Board of Governors spent a day

²⁵³ Alexandre Dupont to Gladstone Murray, January 7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 540 File 13-7-1.

²⁵⁴ Rolland Langlois to CBC, March 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 540 File 13-7-1.

²⁵⁵ Arnold Bennett to Leonard Brockington, March 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 540 File 13-7-1.

²⁵⁶ C.D. Howe to Gladstone Murray, March 10, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 540 File 13-7-1.

meeting with representatives of the Canadian Temperance Federation, the Quebec League Against Alcoholism, the United Church of Canada, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union while the following day was spent with representatives of the National Brewers, Molson's Brewers, and several advertising agencies.²⁵⁷ Understanding that it was a contentious issue, Murray also corresponded with Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis to determine if the provincial government had a position on the issue.²⁵⁸ Ultimately a compromise was reached whereby distilleries could not sponsor programs, but breweries and wineries could.

When the Board of Governors discussed the issue during its March 1939 meeting, not only was St. Laurent there representing a group of radio artists, but there was also a representative of National Breweries and John Molson to advocate for the continuation of beer and wine sponsorship in Quebec. St. Laurent focused on the economic impact of a ban, Molson expressed his willingness to restrict commercial commentary to an absolute minimum, and National Breweries stated that prohibiting beer and wine advertisements would impinge upon civil rights in the province. They were countered by a delegation of roughly sixty people from various religious organizations who not only asked for a ban, but also wanted it implemented by the end of the month.²⁵⁹ Given that it was such a contentious issue, the Board of Governors ultimately decided to delay a final decision on the matter. On the final day of its meeting, it was determined that beer and wine sponsorships would be temporarily allowed in Quebec provided that there only be two commercial announcements per program, that the announcements follow a set formula, and that all scripts receive approval prior to broadcast.²⁶⁰ During its next meeting,

²⁵⁷ Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, August 5-8, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

²⁵⁸ Gladstone Murray to Maurice Duplessis, September 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 540 File 13-7-1.

²⁵⁹ Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 20-22, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

the Board of Governors determined that “after further discussion, it was agreed that, on the whole, the regulations were working satisfactorily and that no case had been made for modification.”²⁶¹

While it could be argued that both sides in the debate were pleased with the outcome – the advertisements continued, but with greater oversight – it could also be argued that the entire process represented a major error by the CBC. While its willingness and desire to collaborate and receive feedback was understandable, taking on the issue of beer and wine advertisements in Quebec was a questionable decision. Once the broadcast regulations were put in place in 1937, there was not much discussion on the issue and the corporation did not receive many letters complaining about the commercials. It is true that groups such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement and the Lord’s Day Alliance did not approve, but there does not appear to have been much public debate on the matter nor a desire on the part of listeners to eliminate the ads. By announcing that it would review the matter in December 1938, the corporation enflamed passions on both sides and created a mild controversy where one had not existed. While it announced the review before the Lanphier scandal in January, re-convening the debate on beer and wine advertisements in Quebec opened the CBC to criticism at a time when it was already struggling with its public image. At the time, the Board of Governors likely believed that the decision would be met with praise and as a sign that the corporation was collaborative and transparent, but that is not what happened. Ultimately, the decision backfired and the CBC unintentionally found itself at the centre of yet another controversy in the spring of 1939.

As the corporation struggled through the early part of the year, it understood that it could not afford any further negative publicity. As the number of complaints it received increased,

²⁶¹ Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, July 5-7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

Murray sent an internal memorandum to all employees outlining the proper procedure for responding to listener criticism. Murray informed the staff that if they received any criticism directly, the complainant should be “invited to submit the complaint officially in writing to the Corporation.”²⁶² He noted that “the CBC invites constructive criticism,” but wanted to be sure that the corporation could reply “correctly to all complaints.”²⁶³ This was partly in response to the increased number of complaints the corporation received because of the Lanphier scandal, but it can also be seen as part of a renewed focus on its public image. While the corporation had always been concerned with distinguishing itself from the CRBC, 1939 saw the focus change from highlighting how it was different to promoting itself as a world-class broadcasting system. The memories of the commission had started to fade in the two-and-a-half years since it disbanded and the corporation could no longer use its distinctiveness to promote itself. Instead, the CBC undertook an ambitious scheme of publicity – which in the context of the 1939 scandals, was much needed.

In pursuing further publicity, the CBC also responded to a common complaint from employees: that the corporation had not been proactive enough in promoting its programming. While it had eagerly publicized its efforts to expand the network, the CBC had struggled to distribute information on its programs. In an October 1938 report, Austin Weir suggested that this was partly the result of a press that was generally unfavourable to radio. He argued that inadequate coverage was devoted to radio programming as “the daily newspapers throughout Canada and more particularly in Ontario, look upon broadcasting as direct competition.”²⁶⁴ While this was an impediment, Weir also noted that the corporation had not been good enough in

²⁶² CBC Internal Memorandum No. 85, January 17, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ He studied thirty-two newspapers for a two-month period and found that five did not mention radio at all. Of the papers that did discuss radio, 22% of the space was devoted to the CBC. E.A. Weir Report, sent to August Frigon from Gladstone Murray, October 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 489 File 2-3-3-10.

coordinating its press releases announcing new programs, which frequently caused them to arrive too late for publication. Given the obstacles, Weir suggested that the corporation “follow the same course as the British Broadcasting Company and establish its own official organ at the earliest moment possible.”²⁶⁵ By doing so, not only would the corporation be able to better coordinate its publicity but it would also be able to foster better relationships with daily newspapers in the hopes of securing more space. It was important that the CBC develop loyalty among listeners and securing positive publicity of its programs was critical because “adequate publicity is essential to the proper functioning of a broadcast organization.”²⁶⁶

To address the problem the CBC held a publicity conference in Toronto in November 1938. The regional representatives of the publicity department, which was part of Press and Information Services, were there as well as representatives of the commercial department, the station relations department, the traffic department, and local stations. C.E. L’Ami, a publicity representative in Winnipeg, noted that he had been quite successful in securing space in the local press. While noting that “the unique place which public broadcasting holds in the life of the West was no doubt a helpful factor,” he also stressed that “the establishment of personal relations with those responsible for radio items in individual papers as well as with editors and proprietors would achieve results and might modify policies of hostility.”²⁶⁷ In order to facilitate these relationships, it was determined that better coordination was required for the distribution of publicity items – in particular the program schedule – and that, starting with CBL Toronto, five

²⁶⁵ E.A. Weir Report, sent to August Frigon from Gladstone Murray, October 24, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 489 File 2-3-3-10.

²⁶⁶ Memorandum Regarding the Publicity Organization and Problems of the CBC, December 1, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 351 File 17-2.

²⁶⁷ Report of the Proceedings of the First CBC Publicity Conference Held at 1 Hayter Street, Toronto, November 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 351 File 17-2.

minutes daily would be used to promote upcoming CBC programs.²⁶⁸ The biggest point of emphasis from the meeting, however, was that there needed to be greater cooperation between the publicity department and the rest of corporation. It was believed that the lack of coordination between the various departments led to delays and the spread of incorrect information. As such, it was made clear that the department's "sole aim is to become the servant of all branches of the Corporation whose work can be furthered by means of publicity."²⁶⁹

This was important as only a couple of months later the corporation needed all the positive publicity it could get. As the corporation struggled through the controversies of early 1939, internally there were questions as to its long-term survival. In a confidential memorandum from February dealing with hostility towards the CBC in south-western Ontario, it was suggested that the widespread dissatisfaction in the region "may become a threat to the permanence and security of public service broadcasting."²⁷⁰ And as MPs increasingly received letters from angry constituents "there is every probability that, failing some remedial measure on the part of the CBC itself, the present basis of broadcasting in Canada will become a political issue in the area in question whenever the general election takes place."²⁷¹ While the memorandum focused primarily on lack of coverage, the dissatisfaction identified could also be the result of the disastrous start to 1939. The report argued that "the only justification for compelling the people of South Western Ontario, or other parts of Canada, to support a national publicly-owned radio system, is that it will give them a national service."²⁷²

²⁶⁸ The publicity would air during a period when large audiences were expected (6:10-6:15 PM) and, if successful, would be expanded to other CBC stations.

²⁶⁹ Report of the Proceedings of the First CBC Publicity Conference Held at 1 Hayter Street, Toronto, November 17, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 351 File 17-2.

²⁷⁰ Memorandum Regarding the Problem of South-Western Ontario: Hostility Towards the CBC, Lack of CBC Coverage, February 15, 1939. LAC RG 41 351 File 17-2.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

The CBC did not have long to celebrate New Year's in 1939 – its problems started January 1 when Charles Lanphier took to the air for the *Catholic Hour*. That led the corporation into a string of controversy and scandal that led to accusations of bias and censorship. With prominent figures such as George Drew and George McCullagh openly criticizing the public broadcaster, there were serious questions about the CBC's ability to handle controversial matters over the air – an issue that took on greater significance with the growing likelihood of war in Europe. Add the debate over beer and wine advertisements in Quebec and private stations' frustrations with the inability to increase their power and the corporation had clearly lost any momentum it had going into the year. While there were occasional successes – furthering its continental integration with the Voice of Newfoundland, the completion of the Maritimes transmitter, the positive report of the Parliamentary Committee, and the agreement with Canadian Press – it was clear that the CBC needed a major achievement to regain the country's approval and demonstrate its value to national life. Fortunately for the corporation, it would soon have an opportunity to redeem itself. With war clouds gathering in Europe, the King and Queen were on their way to Canada.

Chapter Six: Laying the Cornerstone

On June 15, 1939, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth boarded the *Empress of Britain* in Halifax to begin the journey to England following their month-long Tour through North America. As they prepared to leave the harbour, the CBC announcer covering the event remarked that the Royals were leaving “knowing the great love of the Canadian people.”¹ And while Canadians had shown great appreciation and affection for the King and Queen throughout their visit, the announcer could have used the same words to describe the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s feelings towards the royal couple as the Tour marked the culmination of the biggest undertaking in its history. In broadcasting the events of the Royal Tour, the CBC was not only able to overcome, if only temporarily, the controversies from the early months of 1939, but it also demonstrated its utility as a national institution and earned more popular support than ever before. In addition, the national attention the Tour received in the United States presented another opportunity for the CBC to claim its place within North America’s broadcasting structure. An organization that for the previous two-and-a-half years had been struggling to earn legitimacy emerged from the Royal Tour in position to be able to capitalize on the opportunity presented by the outbreak of the Second World War ten weeks later.

When the King and Queen first arrived in Quebec City on May 17, 1939, it marked the beginning of a critical month in Canadian history. For as much as some Canadians were honoured by their presence, the Tour is generally remembered as a British effort to ensure that Canada remained a loyal member of the Empire. With the situation in Europe deteriorating, securing favour was important for the British as Canada would be an important ally in any potential conflict. In reading a Duncan Campbell Scott poem as the King and Queen departed for

¹ “A Fond Farewell,” June 15, 1939. CBC Digital Archives. www.archives.cbc.ca/society/monarchy/clips/13932. Accessed February 29, 2012

Britain at the end of the Tour, Frank Willis gave expression to this purpose, as the final three verses read:

While the King reigns from ocean to ocean,
Under the wide, serene Canadian sky,
We whom you leave in ageless, deep devotion,
Can never to our Sovereign say good-bye.

Master of Life whose power is never sleeping
In the dark void or in the hearts of men,
Hold them, our King and Queen, safe in Thy keeping
And bring them to their Western realm again.

And for their Canada be watchful ever,
Grant us this boon if there be one alone
To do our part in high and pure endeavour
To build a peaceful Empire 'round the Throne²

From a Canadian point of view the Tour represented a political opportunity for William Lyon Mackenzie King as well as an occasion to honour the King and Queen. Knowlton Nash argues that the Prime Minister, while well aware of the political benefits of being photographed with the Monarchs, felt that with the gathering of war clouds in Europe “it [was] important to provide a demonstration of Canadian affection for the King and Queen.”³ This expression of affection could also be broadcast to millions of people throughout the British Empire, thus creating a community of listeners receiving the Tour’s unifying message. This was not limited to Empire countries either, as Mary Vipond has noted that the Tour was also an effort to reinvigorate the Anglo-American relationship and overcome isolationist sentiment in the United States. She

² CBC Press Release ‘Canadian Poet Writes CBC’s Farewell Ode to Their Majesties,’ June 8, 1939. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37.

³ Knowlton Nash, *The Microphone Wars: A History of Triumph and Betrayal at the CBC* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), 153.

argues that “the radio coverage of the Tour played a role in what one might call the ‘softening up’ of North American public opinion about Britain in this crucial period.”⁴

While the broadcasts in particular, and the Tour in general, may have been intended to promote the benefits of strong relations between the three countries, the CBC took advantage of the Tour to legitimize itself as a national institution. In her 2003 presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association, Vipond discussed the 1939 Empire Day broadcast from Winnipeg, which was the highlight of the Tour for the CBC, and argued that the broadcast “demonstrates the CBC’s conscious construction of itself as the pre-eminent national cultural force.”⁵ For the CBC to get to that point, however, it needed to utilize the resources developed through its first two-and-a-half years while also overcoming major logistical obstacles in the months leading up to the Tour. The CBC used its experience of coordinating with wire companies, consulting with private stations, and battling with C.D Howe to prepare and execute a series of broadcasts the scope of which had never before been accomplished. The Tour demonstrated the CBC’s growth and development from a disparate broadcaster to a truly national institution. In many ways, the Tour could be seen as a singular event used to build the corporation into a cultural force, but it is better examined as the culmination of the corporation’s formative years, out of which emerged a national organization that was prepared for the Second World War.

Just before the King and Queen’s arrival, however, the corporation had to deal with yet another one of the controversies that had marked 1939 to that point. The Duke of Windsor, Edward VIII, a controversial figure following his abdication of the throne in 1936, had long been

⁴ Mary Vipond, “A Living, Moving Pageant: The CBC’s Coverage of the Royal Tour of 1939,” in *More Than Words: Readings in Transport, Communication and the History of Postal Communication*, ed. John Willis (Gatineau, QC: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2007), 339.

⁵ Mary Vipond, “The Mass Media in Canadian History: The Empire Day Broadcast of 1939,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* Vol. 14 (2003): 1-21.

a proponent of appeasement and peace with Germany, even meeting with Hitler in 1938. Despite the fact that he had largely remained out of the public spotlight since his abdication, on May 8, 1939, he gave a radio address from Verdun, France, to promote peace. While the speech was relayed through Paris and aired on NBC, the BBC refused to carry the address in Britain. For those who supported the cause, this was a major insult to the Duke. The *Catholic Herald*, a weekly British newspaper, was extremely critical of the decision, writing that “the BBC would do better to examine carefully its foreign news bulletins, of which complaints are already being made, than to boycott the words of a great public figure, whose every syllable breathes that will, work and prayer for peace which alone can save even the BBC from the ‘powers of evil’ that will be the only victors in this modern war.”⁶ A couple of weeks later, columnist Compton Mackenzie was even more pointed in his comments when he wrote that “the refusal to grant fair play to the Duke is a very real disloyalty to the Crown as well as a great disservice to the country.”⁷

The CBC, which had followed the BBC’s lead and not aired the broadcast, was also hearing criticism from listeners who supported the Duke’s position. One listener made reference to the controversies the corporation had struggled through during the early part of 1939 and said that not airing the Duke was “only the latest of a series of ill-considered, unjust and uncalled for decisions which the CBC have [sic] made.”⁸ A listener from Ottawa was direct in her criticism by arguing that “the intelligence of the Canadian public has again been subject to insult and injustice through the stupidity of small dictators, with respect to the ‘gagging’ of the ‘AIR.’”⁹

⁶ “The Duke of Windsor,” *Catholic Herald*, May 12, 1939.

⁷ Compton Mackenzie, “Compton Mackenzie Writes About...” June 2, 1939.

⁸ J. Martin Brock to ‘Canadian Broadcasting Commission,’ May 9, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-8.

⁹ A. Carolyn Bayfield to Gladstone Murray, May 9, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-8.

Many listeners agreed and sarcastically asked “are we living in Germany or Canada?”¹⁰ In defending the decision, Murray stressed that the corporation was simply following the lead of the BBC. This answer did not satisfy critics, however, with one listener stating that for “much too long has this country played ‘What monkey sees, monkey does.’”¹¹ Given George McCullagh’s well publicized tension with the CBC, it is not surprising that the *Globe & Mail* was also critical of the decision. In an editorial, W.R. Givens, former publisher of the *Kingston Standard*, argued that “if there was a time for the need of unity and solidarity, the time is now” and that “every voice raised on behalf of peace should be harkened unto... whether the voice be that of the humblest soldier or the highest statesman.”¹²

When seen in context of the reason for the Royal Visit, it is possible to see the decision as an attempt to dismiss points of view that ran counter to the narrative presented by Tour. For its part the CBC did not actively defend itself from the criticism and it is possible that with the extensive planning associated with the Tour it simply did not have time to launch a public relations effort to address the complaints. One listener raised another possibility, however, by wondering if the decision was made in an effort to increase the public’s anticipation for the Tour – stating that “the action will not make the King’s visit any more popular than it would be.”¹³ Regardless of the motivation for the decision, it seems as though the corporation hoped that the excitement over the Tour would overshadow the controversy. When placed in the context of the censorship scandals of early 1939, this served to place greater importance on the corporation’s coverage of the Tour in order to regain the public’s trust.

¹⁰ Fred G.H. Williams to Gladstone Murray, May 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-8.

¹¹ H.L. Lennon to Gladstone Murray, May 9, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-8.

¹² W.R. Givens, “Banning the Duke a Sorry Spectacle,” *Globe & Mail*, May 27, 1939.

¹³ S.W. Fisher to CBC, May 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 393 File 21-8.

The 1939 Royal Tour was the first opportunity Canadians had ever had to welcome a reigning monarch. As such, cities and towns across the country that were lucky enough to be placed on the royal itinerary eagerly prepared for the historic event. On a much larger scale, so too was the CBC preparing for the unprecedented task of following the King and Queen across the country while providing live commentary from the major events on the Tour. Even though the development of the Special Events Department gave the CBC some experience in live remote programming, the Tour represented an unprecedented challenge – perhaps the only comparable event was the Moose River Mine Disaster of 1936. Voted the top radio news story of the first half of the 20th century by the Canadian Press, the Moose River Mine Disaster put Canadian radio in the international spotlight and turned local reporter Frank Willis into a celebrity. The Nova Scotia gold mine collapsed on April 12, 1936, but Willis, regional director for the CRBC, was not permitted to provide live updates until April 20. From that day, Willis provided two minute updates every half hour to an estimated 100-million listeners. Working fifty-four consecutive hours, Willis provided insightful and dramatic reports from the mine. When two of the three trapped men were successfully rescued, Willis emphatically stated that “I’ll remember this until the dying day of my life.”¹⁴ By the time of his final broadcast, Willis, despite being “dead tired down here,” had changed the face of broadcasting.¹⁵ Where the Moose River Disaster was a remarkable feat due in large part to its longevity, the Royal Tour further compounded the organizational issues by adding the logistical challenge of travelling back and forth across the country.

¹⁴ J. Frank Willis, “Moose River Mine Disaster,” April 20-23, 1936, CBC Digital Archives. <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/economy-business/natural-resources/the-1936-moose-river-mine-disaster/moose-river-mine-disaster.html>. Accessed August 21, 2012.

¹⁵ Ibid.

This planning had started as soon as rumblings of a potential Tour reached the CBC in the fall of 1938. R.T. (Bob) Bowman, who worked in the Special Events Department and along with T.O. (Terrance) Wiklund was responsible for the broadcasts, understood the scope of the operation he was about to undertake and that nothing of this magnitude had ever been attempted in the history of commercial broadcasting. Between the geographic distances that needed to be covered, the amount of remote work that needed to be done, and the sheer frequency of programs that needed to be broadcast, Bowman, Wiklund, and the corporation were faced with an unprecedented logistical and technical test. Bowman, son of long-time Ottawa *Citizen* editor Charles Bowman, was not one to shy away from such a task, however, as he had inherited his father's desire to see a coast-to-coast network unify the country. Bowman had earned Murray's respect when he worked for the BBC in 1936 and, according to Murray, "acquired a critical working knowledge of public service broadcasting under British conditions," including "mastering the intricacies of actuality work."¹⁶ In bringing this experience to the Special Events Department, Bowman was thought of as a particularly passionate member of the CBC staff. In an October 22, 1938 article, the *Toronto Star's* Main Johnson described Bowman's efforts to use remote technology to cover such events as the Davis Cup tennis matches and the Bluenose-Thebaud races. He described the 28-year old as "youthful and enthusiastic" and as someone who "looks upon the duties of himself and his efficient staff in the CBC as giving Canadians a service they want and deserve in the way of sporting and public events. But he also regards the work as a unifying force within far-flung and diversified Canada."¹⁷

¹⁶ Gladstone Murray to Alan Plaunt, February 8, 1936, University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 3 File 17.

¹⁷ Main Johnson, "CBC Already Planning to Cover Monarchs' Visit," *Toronto Star*, October 22, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

Carrying that reputation, Bowman attacked his new assignment with the same enthusiasm as he had done in the Special Events Department, understanding that early preparation was going to be critical to the success of the broadcasts. In mid-October 1938, a full seven months before the Tour, he informed Murray that he was working “to try and evolve some scheme of organization”¹⁸ and even though there was not as yet a definite itinerary they should still get to work on such things as obtaining “permission to put equipment on board the ship that will bring the King and Queen across the Atlantic so we can start broadcasting as they are coming up the St. Lawrence.”¹⁹ Bowman was not shy about using his contacts in England either, writing to S.J. de Lotbiniere, the director of outside broadcasts for the BBC who had handled Royal tours through Wales, Scotland, and North Ireland, to ask him if he had any useful hints for pulling off such an extensive undertaking.²⁰ Bowman understood that getting such an early start on the arrangements would put the CBC in position to be successful with the broadcasts and ensure a successful Tour, telling A.A. Schechter, the Director of News and Special Events for NBC, that “we won’t miss a trick – you can bet your hat on that.”²¹

Given some of the corporation’s early struggles, this was a level of confidence that had never been seen. But with the knowledge that the Maritime transmitter was likely to be completed well in advance of the Tour and the optimism that the Prairie transmitter might be completed in time, Bowman felt as though this would serve as the perfect opportunity to demonstrate the progress the corporation had made in its early years. A major component of this development was that the CBC would not have to rely on private stations to produce or distribute the programmes. There were, however, two notable exceptions: first, any events not covered by

¹⁸ R.T. Bowman to Gladstone Murray, October 21, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

¹⁹ R.T. Bowman to Gladstone Murray, October 25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

²⁰ R.T. Bowman to S.J. de Lotbiniere, October 21, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

²¹ R.T. Bowman to A.A. Schechter, November 16, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

the CBC could be covered locally by a private station, provided the station did not attempt to sell commercial time on the broadcast. For example, when the CBC decided not to have a commentator at Prince Edward Island's Government House when the King and Queen arrived for a garden party, CFCY Charlottetown was granted permission to inaugurate a local broadcast because it had "every reason to believe that there will be a rather unique musical program during the course of the party."²² The second exception was that American networks would be permitted to inaugurate their own broadcasts "only on the days on which Their Majesties are visiting cities in which the particular network has a regularly affiliated station."²³

Murray felt that this limiting of private stations was necessary to prevent the commercialization of the Tour, which he felt would be inappropriate; he responded to a request by the Richardson-MacDonald Advertising Service to allow Weston's English Quality Biscuits to sponsor the King and Queen's landing in Canada by saying that "it would not be the correct thing to commercialize broadcasts of this kind."²⁴ He also felt that during the months leading to the Tour there "is liable to be dangerous rivalry amongst private broadcasters," something which CBC exclusivity would prevent.²⁵ While private stations did remain a key component of the corporation's national network, they would not have any control over the style or content of the broadcasts, meaning that the programmes' success or failure would be solely the responsibility of the CBC.

²² L.A. McDonald to Ernest Bushnell, May 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

²³ Charles Jennings to Paul W. White, January 12, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2. White was the Director of Public Affairs for CBS, which, along with NBC and MBS, was eager to be included in the broadcasts of the Tour. The CBC did not necessarily want to limit the American networks' ability to broadcast the events of the Tour, there were simply limits on studio space and wire lines that made it impossible to have multiple networks covering the events outside Montreal and Toronto. While the networks could not broadcast outside these cities, they were each granted space for one reporter on board the pilot train, which would precede the Royal Train by roughly twenty minutes.

²⁴ Gladstone Murray to G.H. MacDonald, October 19, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

²⁵ Gladstone Murray to H. Willis O'Connor, October 25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

The corporation's approach to the Tour was eventually condensed into a Station Relations Department document entitled 'Royal Visit Broadcasting Policies' in which the CBC explained how the Royal Tour should be treated by private stations. It started by stressing that the CBC was fully responsible for all national network broadcasts associated with the Tour. The corporation was able to claim exclusivity over the broadcasts because of Provision 21 of the Canadian Broadcasting Act of 1936 stated that "no private station shall operate in Canada as part of a chain or network of stations" without CBC approval and Provision 21c allowed the corporation to "control the character of any and all programs broadcast by the Corporation or private stations."²⁶ With those provisions in place, private stations could not build a network to broadcast the events and the corporation was able to claim exclusivity on the broadcasts. The CBC understood that private stations would be eager to participate in the Tour, however, and in its 'Royal Visit Broadcasting Policies' noted that private stations not affiliated with the CBC network who wished to pick up the broadcasts had to pick them up in their entirety, as fading in and out would not be acceptable. In addition, the policy reaffirmed that no commercial sponsorships would be permitted for any programmes associated with the Tour, including commentaries and factual descriptions.

Murray's strong fears of commercialization threatening the integrity of the broadcasts was further reflected in the policy prohibiting greetings to the couple or any reference to the Tour on any commercially sponsored programme as well as a ban on sponsorship in the fifteen minutes directly preceding or following any Royal Tour broadcast.²⁷ The great irony of the CBC's decision to restrict sponsorship of these broadcasts was that the corporation fully

²⁶ Canadian Broadcasting Act, Assented June 23, 1936. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

²⁷ 'Royal Visit Broadcasting Policies,' March 10, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

expected to benefit from the publicity generated by the Tour.²⁸ When it was suggested in March 1939 that the CBC-lettered microphones that were to be placed in front of the King may have to be covered owing to his nervousness, Austin Weir feared that “75% of the press publicity which the CBC stands to gain from its efforts in connection with the Royal Visit will be lost.”²⁹ In addition, Augustin Frigon was concerned that the CBC receive the credit for having produced the broadcasts and therefore would have to protect against “private stations’ owners substitut[ing] their announcement to the CBC’s identification which goes with such programmes.”³⁰ It was clear that for the corporation allowing private stations to profit from the Tour would be inappropriate, but ensuring that it profited from the Tour would be critical.

While the CBC was hoping to capitalize on the opportunity presented by the Tour, taking exclusive control put extra pressure on the corporation to produce high quality broadcasts, as any mistakes would be seized upon by private broadcasters and their allies to call into question the necessity of public broadcasting in Canada. When some preliminary publicity for the Tour was distributed in November 1938, Bushnell wrote to Weir to inform him that “so far our plans are not sufficiently matured for us to give out anything other than in very general terms” and that “we do not want to make promises which we will be unable to fulfill.”³¹ This understanding that they could not afford to make mistakes with these broadcasts was further emphasized by the

²⁸ The American networks were also eager to capitalize on the publicity opportunities presented by the Tour and it was not until May 11, 1939 that the CBC confirmed it would pause for “network identification,” thus allowing American networks to insert a network cue. Charles Jennings Memorandum, May 11, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 41 Vol. 243 File 11-37-14-2.

²⁹ E.A. Weir to Gladstone Murray, March 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2. It should be noted that the American networks were also concerned about a potential lack of recognition from the broadcasts. President of MBS Adolph Opfinger wrote to Bushnell on March 30 to express his concern that MBS insignia will not be used while CBS and NBC insignia will, noting that the network found it important “to be in a position so as to strengthen our recognition with foreign diplomats and so forth on occasions of this kind.” Adolph Opfinger to Bushnell, March 30, 1939.

³⁰ The decision was eventually made that announcers should frequently mention that it was a CBC production. August Frigon to Ernest Bushnell, March 27, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

³¹ Ernest Bushnell to E.A. Weir, November 18, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

various controversies that marked the early months of 1939. Therefore, the CBC was well aware that it had to have the entire length of the Tour covered. To that end, Chief Engineer Gordon Olive proposed in December 1938 “to have each region equipped with remote control facilities and able to take care of any special broadcasts that may originate within their territory during the visit of the King and Queen.”³² There was no way to fill all the gaps in the national network, however, as Stovin informed E.W. Jackson that CFPR Prince Rupert, CFGP Grande Prairie, CFAR Flin Flon, and CJCU Aklavik “will have to be disregarded” because of difficulties in securing wire lines.³³

In order to fully resolve these issues, the Corporation established a Royal Visit Broadcasting Committee. In its first report on January 14, 1939, the committee re-affirmed the responsibility of the CBC to broadcast the Tour, writing that “in accordance with a tradition already established in Imperial and International broadcasting, the CBC also has a moral responsibility, in which the prestige of Canada is engaged, to make an adequate service available throughout the Empire and the United States.”³⁴ In order to do this, the committee proposed a \$100,000 budget to the government, which included \$34,500 for operation costs, \$46,800 for new equipment, and \$10,000 for loss of revenue from commercial programmes that would need to be pre-empted.³⁵ This budget was later cut in half by Minister of Transport C.D. Howe, an action that was not particularly surprising given that the first budget presented by J.A. Ouimet in December had been for a total of \$64,170.³⁶ Frigon felt that this reduction would result in “inconveniences and loss of prestige” for the CBC and that, once again, the corporation would

³² G.W. Olive to Ernest Bushnell, December 1, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

³³ Horace Stovin to E.W. Jackson, November 25, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

³⁴ ‘Royal Visit Broadcasting Committee Report No. 1,’ January 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ J.A. Ouimet Memo, December 28, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

have to battle it out with the Minister.³⁷ What differed in this showdown between the CBC and Howe, however, was that this time Mackenzie King had made the initial decision and, therefore, the corporation would not be able to go over Howe's head as it had done in the past. The government felt as though \$50,000 was enough to cover the corporation's Tour expenses, with any overages being easily assumed by the CBC.

While the CBC felt that King and Howe had been unfair in reducing the budget, it is easy to understand the government's position given the corporation's financial situation at the time. In its annual report for the fiscal year April 1, 1938 to March 31, 1939, the CBC reported a surplus of \$357,454.21, the third year consecutive year in which it reported a surplus.³⁸ The CBC also reported that its fixed assets had increased by \$246,561.18, mostly as a result of new construction, and that it had paid the first \$50,000 off its loan from the government. For the CBC this was the result of prudent financial control – in March 1939 Plaunt wrote Weir to stress that Weir be more careful as he had used three-cent postage on an item that only required one-cent postage³⁹ – and that they should not be forced to use their reserve funds for such an important national event. Within the context of the Depression and the CBC's request for an increase in the licence fee in 1938, however, corporation officials were well aware of how maintaining a surplus might appear to the Canadian public. In an attempt to be proactive on this matter, members of the Board of Governors along with Murray and Frigon would often address the issue during speaking engagements across the country. During a speech in Winnipeg in February 1938, for example, Plaunt assured the crowd that while “the CBC is not setup for profit” it is also not “setup for a loss,” and as it continues to advance and improve services “its only dividends can be

³⁷ Augustin Frigon to Gladstone Murray, February 2, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

³⁸ CBC Annual Report 1938-1939, LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

³⁹ Alan Plaunt to Austin Weir, March 28, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 14.

the entertainment and enlightenment which come, with varying acceptance, into hundreds of thousands of homes just like yours.”⁴⁰

Despite their best efforts and the fact that there were exceptions put in place so that charitable institutions and recipients of relief would not have to pay the licence fee, there was no way for the CBC to overcome this gap in its plea for the restoration of a \$100,000 budget. That being the case, the CBC made the decision to pay for any overages itself rather than reduce the budget, with Murray telling Frigon in February to proceed with the purchase of essential equipment which cost between \$45,000 and \$50,000.⁴¹ To overcome the additional expenses, the corporation did make further efforts to try to reduce its costs whenever it felt it would not have a negative effect on the production. In one case, E.W. Jackson pointed out to Murray that during the 1937 Coronation Broadcast the wire companies provided their facilities for free while the King was speaking and, perhaps, the CBC should approach the companies to inquire if this would again be possible.⁴² Such an arrangement was difficult to organize however, as Canadian National Telegraphs and Canadian Pacific Communications were specific in 1937 that “this special reduction is not to be considered as a precedent for future occasions.”⁴³ Although the wire companies were not willing to make concessions, the CBC did find some outside help with the cost as the BBC offered to pay half the costs (up to \$500) associated with the transmission of the Empire Day broadcast from Winnipeg.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Alan Plaunt Address in Winnipeg, MB, February 3, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections, Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 16, File 2.

⁴¹ Gladstone Murray to Augustin Frigon, February 7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2.

⁴² E.W. Jackson to Gladstone Murray March 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2.

⁴³ Canadian National Telegraphs and Canadian Pacific Communications response to Gladstone Murray April 30, 1937. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37-2.

⁴⁴ Gladstone Murray to B.E. Nicholls, January 30, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 749 File 18-16-2-48.

With the budget in place, the CBC got to work making arrangements with local organizing committees to confirm logistics for the various broadcasts. Whether this meant ensuring a space overlooking the dock in Quebec City for the Royal arrival or confirming a spot on the platform of the train station at Sioux Lookout, Bowman and Wiklund were thorough in arranging quality vantage points for their announcers to accurately describe the events. This was not always easy however, as some private businesses wanted to ensure that they were publicly recognized for providing their facilities. For example, when Murray wrote to W.H. Aylett, manager of the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa, to confirm that the CBC could use the hotel's balcony to cover the unveiling of the national war memorial, Aylett used the opportunity to "ask for a little further publicity for the Chateau Laurier" in the form of a mention in the programme's sign-off "that the broadcast is from CBO Studio 'located in the Chateau Laurier.'"⁴⁵ While Murray was able to delay any action on the matter by saying that he thought the "suggestion should be linked up with the idea of developing the studio accommodation in the Chateau Laurier with the view of making it a show place to our mutual advantage,"⁴⁶ it was clear that the CBC would have to be conscious of local businesses predisposed to seek publicity from the Tour.⁴⁷ One way of maintaining close contact with such businesses was to make use of the corporation's national organization, in particular the regional representatives. In February Bowman advised Peter Aylett in Vancouver and J.M. Beaudet in Montreal that they would need to keep in close touch with local organizing committees to keep them abreast of the CBC's plans in order to avoid any

⁴⁵ W.H. Aylett to Gladstone Murray March 31, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 850 File PG1-8.

⁴⁶ Gladstone Murray to W.H. Aylett, April 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 850 File PG1-8.

⁴⁷ The issue over publicity with the Chateau Laurier continued throughout the summer of 1939 and eventually included CBC associated hotels in Halifax and Vancouver which were also upset about a lack of publicity. It was not until September 1939 that it was decided that the start and end of each day should include an acknowledgment that the CBO studios were located in the Chateau Laurier.

problems.⁴⁸ In keeping with this general policy of collaboration, Bowman also asked Major G. Lanctot from the Dominion Archives to recommend a historian who could provide interesting historical information on the various locations the King and Queen were scheduled to visit as a means of enhancing the scripts.⁴⁹ Perhaps one of the more ambitious plans, however, was to place a small transmitting station on the bridge of the Royal Canadian Navy ship H.M.C.S. Saguenay as it met the Royal ship arriving in Canadian waters, a plan which the navy felt would present no difficulty in finding the necessary space.⁵⁰

With such grand ambitions, it was decided that there would be two travelling parties, headed by Bowman and Wiklund respectively, which would ‘leap frog’ each other as they crossed the country.⁵¹ This meant that while one group was in Quebec City the other would be in Montreal preparing for the next day’s broadcast, at which point the Quebec City group would be travelling to Ottawa to broadcast the Tour’s stop there.⁵² This pattern would be repeated across the country and ensured that in each city there would be enough time to set up prior to the King and Queen’s arrival. Allowing this extra time proved successful, with Charles Bothwell writing in *Maclean’s* following the Tour that “one of the reasons why these broadcasts of the Royal Tour were so successful, was that the announcers had time to familiarize themselves with the various scenes.”⁵³ Bowman foresaw these benefits, but also understood that it would place great stress upon the various local and regional engineering staffs. In March 1939, with the start of the Tour

⁴⁸ R.T. Bowman to Peter Ayles February 22, 1939. R.T. Bowman to J.M. Beudet, February 22, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2.

⁴⁹ R.T. Bowman to Major G. Lanctot, February 15, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2. In the same vein, Bowman also asked F. Christianson from the *Daily Express* in London on February 24, 1939 if he could provide “some human-interest material” about all members of the Royal Party.

⁵⁰ K.A. MacKinnon to G.W. Olive, February 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2.

⁵¹ According to Bowman, determining the number of announcers for these groups was actually one of the more difficult tasks of the entire planning process. R.T. Bowman to D.W. Claringbull, December 14, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

⁵² ‘Royal Visit Bulletin No. 1,’ February 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37.

⁵³ Charles Bothwell, “The Voice You Heard,” *Maclean’s*, August 15, 1939.

fast approaching, the CBC brought all the regional engineers to Montreal for a conference, which was deemed to be “necessary in order to place these men in a position to intelligently carry out the necessary regional preparations for the tour.”⁵⁴ Ouimet suggested that a similar training session be held for announcers as well, as it “would permit a rehearsal of all facilities under actual conditions and this should be extremely useful.”⁵⁵ A further means of ensuring the corporation was prepared was having Wiklund travel the entire Tour route in March to report on the locations for commentators and the needs of private stations.⁵⁶

As the CBC made these final arrangements, it also sent out its first press release announcing its coverage of the Tour, which informed Canadians that in addition to the live broadcasts it would also “have a commentator broadcast a summary of the day’s activities each evening.”⁵⁷ By this point the CBC was so eager to prove it was capable of successfully broadcasting the Tour that it actually turned down a BBC offer of assistance. It is possible that Murray refused the assistance because of the contentious circumstances surrounding his departure from the BBC in 1936, but given the largely congenial relationship between the two organizations it is more likely that he wanted the Tour to display the strength of the Canadian system. While Simon Potter has written about the Tour facilitating a greater level of collaboration between the CBC and BBC, particularly in the critical aspect of presenting an Empire that was united in its loyalty to the crown,⁵⁸ the CBC was eager to prove that it could handle such a significant series of broadcasts on its own. *The Daily Mail* (London) reported on March 18 that it was Murray who had declined the help as he “told our BBC that this was

⁵⁴ Operations Engineer to R.T. Bowman, March 7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2.

⁵⁵ J.A. Ouimet to R.T. Bowman, March 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2.

⁵⁶ R.T. Bowman to C.P. Edwards, March 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242 File 11-37-14-2.

⁵⁷ ‘Broadcasting the Royal Visit,’ CBC Press Release March 3, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

⁵⁸ Simon J. Potter, “The BBC, the CBC, and the 1939 Royal Tour of Canada,” *Cultural & Social History* Vol. 3, Issue 4 (2006): 434-444.

Canada's show and Canada was going to run it."⁵⁹ The paper, which clearly held Murray in high esteem, felt as though the BBC was acting in a rather greedy fashion in trying to take charge and that because of Murray's leadership, "Canada is more than equal to the task."⁶⁰

Being equal to the task meant that not only did the corporation confront the significant logistical issues, but it also focused on the minor details. On April 14, a month before the Tour was scheduled to begin, Bowman wrote Bushnell to let him know that knapsacks and thermos bottles needed to be included in the equipment provided for announcers and engineers since they would need to arrive at their posts around 6 A.M., would not be able to move until the afternoon, and would be unlikely to purchase food elsewhere as the restaurants "will be packed."⁶¹ Similarly, Ouimet wrote to regional engineers informing them that CBC equipment would likely need to be left overnight after testing in various locations and, despite the fact that it would be under military guard, "we believe that you should arrange to placard such equipment with a conspicuous sign reading 'CBC Property Do not Disturb'. We believe that this would be an advisable practice to discourage even innocent curiosity on the part of official guards."⁶² This type of final preparation marked the last few weeks prior to the arrival of the King and Queen as the CBC checked and double-checked that everything was in order. With Bowman receiving positive reports he was confident that everything would go off without a hitch, writing to J.C.S. MacGregor on April 26 that despite the difficulties associated with such a monumental task, "thanks to some marvellous new equipment and a fine staff, I think we have matters under control."⁶³

⁵⁹ 'Collie Knox Calling,' *The Daily Mail*, March 18, 1939. LAC Gladstone Murray Fonds, MG 30, E186 Vol. 4 File Clippings.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ R.T. Bowman to Ernest Bushnell, April 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

⁶² J.A. Ouimet Memo to Regional Engineers, April 18, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

⁶³ R.T. Bowman to J.C.S. MacGregor, April 26, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

For as much as Bowman and Wiklund may have been confident, there was no way of knowing for certain until the King and Queen arrived if the preparations had been sufficient. In a memo to all operating personnel, Ouimet wrote that everyone needed to get acquainted with their responsibilities, as it was “of vital importance for each man to study and become thoroughly familiar with his role in the proceedings, preparing for eventualities, and keeping in mind the fact that in doing so you will be contributing to the success of the greatest series of broadcasts ever undertaken.”⁶⁴ In addition, Murray discovered that some internal information with regards to CBC plans for the broadcasts had been leaked to the press, prompting a blunt telegram to Olive “asking the chief engineer to warn his people again that it is very much to the interest of the corporation to canalize all this information and to restrain the enthusiasm of individuals whose work may bring them in touch with the press.”⁶⁵ With that caution to the staff and the final preparations in place, Bowman felt as though the CBC was ready for the Tour to finally start. Despite the planning, Bowman understood that the corporation would need to be flexible as the Tour moved across the country, telling George Young on May 9 that “every effort is being made by the Royal Tour committee to have the King’s schedule kept to the minute, and I do not anticipate any long delays,” but at the same time “we should learn a great deal on the Western leg of the trip, and it may be that we shall make other arrangements in the Maritimes in the light of this experience.”⁶⁶

While internally the corporation understood that flexibility would be important, publicly it was speaking in absolute terms when informing Canadians of its plans. In promoting the Tour as heavily as it did, the corporation was eager to ensure that the anticipated boon of goodwill

⁶⁴ J.A. Ouimet to All Members of the Operating Personnel, April 19, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 242, File 11-37-14-2.

⁶⁵ Gladstone Murray telegram to G.W. Olive, March 13, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁶⁶ R.T. Bowman to George Young, May 9, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

actually materialized. One of these strategies was to air a preliminary series of Royal Tour broadcasts designed to provide background information on the Royal Family while also generating interest in the Tour. These seven talks, scheduled between May 2 and May 14, featured titles such as ‘Royal Stamps and Coins,’ ‘Books and the King,’ and included topics such as a history of the national anthem and a background of previous royal visits.⁶⁷

Further, a series of ‘Royal Tour Bulletins’ were published to explain the scope of the corporation’s operations with respect to the Tour. One such bulletin, released two weeks before the Tour, introduced the various announcers who would be featured on the broadcasts and promoted the fact that “from the moment the Royal party is sighted off the coast of Newfoundland on May 13 to the departure from Halifax a month later, this staff of broadcasters will attend and report upon every major public function in connection with Their Majesties’ Tour.”⁶⁸ Given that nine of the announcers would be on the road for at least thirty-eight days, with the average between the sixteen announcers being thirty-five days, it was important for the CBC to introduce the listening public to people who would describe the events.⁶⁹ Ultimately though, whetting the public’s appetite for the broadcasts was the bulletins’ goal, with one promoting the broadcast from the H.M.C.S. Saguenay as it meets the Royal ship, boasting that “listeners will be able to hear the rush of the ocean as the Saguenay, with Commander Houghton at the helm, plows through the waves... They will hear the voices of the ship’s officers as they give orders. They will hear the sound of the bosun’s pipe and the words of command as the crew

⁶⁷ CBC Royal Tour Bulletin No. 3, April 19, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240, File 11-37.

⁶⁸ ‘Royal Tour Bulletin No. 5,’ May 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁶⁹ The CBC policy of preserving announcers’ anonymity did not apply in this case because of the public interest surrounding the Tour and the fact that a relatively small number of announcers would be featured, meaning that Canadians who listened to all the broadcasts would become rather familiar with the voices. R.T. Bowman to Ernest Bushnell, May 3, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

is ordered to man the ship's side."⁷⁰ These grand pronouncements can be seen as further evidence of Bowman's confidence going into the Tour and the corporation's sense that it could earn a significant amount of good publicity from delivering on its promise to Canadians of bringing the King and Queen into their living rooms.

This took a little longer than anticipated, however, as the icy Atlantic Ocean showed no regard for the corporation's plans and delayed the King and Queen's arrival. This forced the CBC to hurriedly make new arrangements to fill the scheduled times for the Tour. Through a flurry of letters and telegrams, it was determined that information on the Tour would be included in *The Happy Gang* broadcasts starting May 14, continuing until the Royals' arrival.⁷¹ As the delay stretched into May 16, confusion and uncertainty dominated the arrangements. Just before noon Miss Bell, a staff member in Toronto, sent a telegram informing that there would be a broadcast from the H.M.C.S. Saguenay, but she was not sure when.⁷² An hour later, Walter Anderson informed G.A. Taggart that Murray wanted announcements made about the status of the Saguenay every half hour.⁷³ Finally, just after 6 PM, Charles Jennings was able to confirm that there would be a five-minute live update from the Saguenay at 9 PM.⁷⁴ This was really the first instance where the CBC noticeably benefited from its capital investment in the Tour as the equipment on board the Saguenay was relied upon much more heavily than expected. Olive had purchased an inverter for the ship's power supply, built two antennae (one of which was completely clear of the ship's steel cables), and installed hundreds of feet of microphone cord in

⁷⁰ 'Royal Tour Bulletin No. 6,' May 6, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240, File 11-37.

⁷¹ Charles Jennings telegram to Miss Bell, May 13, 1939; Miss Bell telegram to Gladstone Murray, May 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁷² J. Bell telegram to Terrance O'Dell, May 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁷³ W.C. Anderson telegram to G.A. Taggart, May 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁷⁴ Charles Jennings telegram to J.M. Beaudet, J.R. Radford, and W.C. Anderson, May 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

order to record sound effects from multiple areas of the ship.⁷⁵ That the CBC went above the minimum requirements for the planned broadcast allowed the corporation the flexibility to provide constant updates from the ship, which in turn placated listeners who had been promised Royal Tour programming. Without this equipment, it is possible that the loss of prestige with which Murray was so concerned could have happened before the King and Queen even arrived.

All the stress and confusion through the 15th and 16th were quickly forgotten, however, when the King and Queen finally arrived at Quebec City on the morning of the 17th.⁷⁶ The CBC went on the air just as the Empress of Australia docked at 9:45 AM, with the announcer eagerly telling listeners that when they hear the Royal Salute it will be when the King's "foot first touches Canadian soil, or not Canadian soil here, although the symbolism will be there, it will be red carpeted cement."⁷⁷ While the excitement in the announcer's voice and the cheer of the crowd are pretty clear on the recording, the success of the broadcast was evident in the flood of congratulatory wires and letters sent to the CBC. Rupert Lucas, one of the announcers for the Tour, sent a telegram to Bushnell following the broadcast saying "if you are as proud of your lads as I am, you're proud!"⁷⁸ The American networks were also pleased with the CBC's efforts as the Director of the Department of Public Affairs at CBS wrote Bushnell to thank him for his efforts in the broadcast and letting him know that "you have a fine bunch of men and their cooperation greatly facilitated all our activities in covering the Royal Visit."⁷⁹ Adolph Opfinger, president of MBS, went even further with his praise in writing Bushnell to extend his "thanks

⁷⁵ J.E. Hayes, "Royal Visit Broadcasts from the H.M.C.S. Saguenay," December 21, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240, File 11-37.

⁷⁶ This is not to suggest that there were not stressful moments throughout the Tour. Bowman's assistant complained on May 25 about the number of last minute request for the armbands which served as CBC accreditation, writing that "I am fast learning to swear." M. Allen to R.T. Bowman, May 25, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁷⁷ "Quebec City Rolls Out the Red Carpet," May 17, 1939. CBC Digital Archives, www.archives.cbc.ca/society/monarchy/clips/13913/. Accessed February 27, 2012.

⁷⁸ Rupert Lucas telegram to Ernest Bushnell, May 17, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243 File 11-37-14-2.

⁷⁹ Paul White to Ernest Bushnell, May 18, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

and compliments for the excellent broadcasts” and saying that “we look forward with great pleasure and keen anticipation to the forthcoming broadcasts from CBC in connection with the Royal Visit.”⁸⁰ That initial excitement continued into the following day, as Elizabeth Long wrote after the day’s programme that “the whole continent [is] going more patriotic after every broadcast.”⁸¹ Over the course of the next few days, the Tour’s schedule was revised to account for the delay⁸² and the corporation started to settle into a routine with respect to the broadcasts.

The month-long Tour saw the King and Queen travel over 11,200 kilometres and the CBC was there every step of the way, producing broadcasts from twenty-six cities over the course of the journey. Even though the CBC did not follow the King and Queen through Washington and New York between June 7 and June 12, it still inaugurated a total of sixty broadcasts between May 17 and June 7 and June 12 and June 15.⁸³ The Tour’s signature broadcast was undoubtedly Empire Day from Winnipeg, which, as the “geographical centre of the Empire,” was the ideal location for such a broadcast. The day’s programming featured greetings to the King from representative Canadians,⁸⁴ messages from across the Empire, and a concluding address from the King himself. The CBC promised listeners that the King’s speech “will conclude the most ambitious programme in the history of Canadian broadcasting, and will

⁸⁰ Adolph Opfinger to Ernest Bushnell, May 17, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁸¹ Elizabeth Long telegram to W.C. Anderson, May 18, 1939. LAC 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

⁸² It was decided that the King and Queen would spend less time in Toronto and Ottawa. This meant that the original schedule could be resumed on May 22 when they departed for Winnipeg.

⁸³ While the tour visited the United States, CBC picked up broadcasts from MBS, CBS, or NBC depending on which network was covering the event and could efficiently transmit the signal to Canada. In total, the CBC picked up nine broadcasts from the American networks.

⁸⁴ This segment of the broadcast was entitled ‘Canada Calling the British Empire.’ The speakers were ship Captain George Himmelman in Nova Scotia, Yves DeMartine in Montreal representing French Canada, Alec Brady, an elevator operator at the bank of commerce building in Toronto, Mrs. R.W McKinnon for the famers of the Prairies, Pilot North Saul from Edmonton, and Jim Jones, a dock worker from Vancouver. CBC Digital Archives, ‘Canada Calling the British Empire,’ May 24, 1939. <http://archives.cbc.ca/society/celebrations/clips/8666/>. Accessed February 27, 2012.

climax the longest series of special event reporting in radio broadcasting.”⁸⁵ Vipond has written on the content of the Empire Day broadcast and how the language used spoke to the need for solidarity, not just within the Empire, but also within a community of English-speaking peoples in a time of great uncertainty.⁸⁶ And while the Empire Day broadcast differed from the rest of the Tour in its intended audience, it did not vary from the general formula which the corporation used throughout the Tour.⁸⁷

Each broadcast began with an announcer live at the event prior to the King and Queen’s arrival. CBC officials were extremely concerned that in the event of any technical delays, they would be forced to start a broadcast after the King and Queen had already arrived, thus depriving listeners of the opportunity to experience the entire occasion. As such, announcers generally had to spend ten to fifteen minutes describing the scene prior to the couple’s arrival. For example, in awaiting the King and Queen during the broadcast from St. John, New Brunswick, on June 13, the announcer described the weather, the role of the Loyalists in founding the colony, the Brunswick House from which the King came, and the anticipation of the crowd.⁸⁸ A different description came on May 24 in Winnipeg, however, when an early morning rain had the potential to dampen the crowd’s excitement. While waiting for the King and Queen to arrive for the Empire Day ceremony, the announcer noted that the precipitation was welcome in the drought stricken Prairies and that it was in fact “a million dollar rain.”⁸⁹ While these descriptions

⁸⁵ CBC Royal Tour Bulletin #4, April 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240 File 11-37.

⁸⁶ Vipond, “The Mass Media in Canadian History,” 14.

⁸⁷ In a paper entitled ‘Recording History: The 1939 Royal Tour Broadcasts’ presented to the ‘Cultural Historiographies’ conference hosted by the TransCanada Institute at the University of Guelph, I examined these broadcasts and considered their place within the larger historiography of the CBC. While the recordings are useful in studying the Tour, I argue that they fail to speak to wider CBC policies and priorities in the pre-WWII period.

⁸⁸ ‘Royal Visit to St. John, NB,’ June 13, 1939. LAC Audio A1 2002-02-0004.

⁸⁹ ‘The Royal Tour Rolls Through Winnipeg,’ May 24, 1939. CBC Digital Archives, www.archives.cbc.ca/society/monarchy/clips/13518. Accessed February 27, 2012.

generally focused on the size of the crowd, weather, and decorations, they were also intended to build anticipation for the eventual arrival of the King and Queen.

This anticipation was further buoyed when the announcer faded to allow listeners the opportunity to hear the slight chatter of the crowd slowly build to a full cheer. This was perhaps best exemplified during the broadcast from Edmonton on June 2, where the announcer was in the cockpit of a fighter plane at the foot of Portage Avenue. As the King and Queen started to make their way up the street towards the plane, listeners could hear the crowd get louder as they moved towards the announcer.⁹⁰ This was immediately followed by the playing of God Save the King with the Royal Salute of 21 guns in the background. Once the initial hoopla started to fade, the announcer would provide a description of the couple's attire, with a particular focus on the Queen. At the King's Plate in Toronto, for example, the lead announcer provided "the answer to something all Canadian women, all American women, must be wondering, what is the Queen wearing this afternoon?" From here a female announcer provided a detailed description of the Queen's long blue gown with white gloves and a pastel blue bag, as she was "smiling gracefully, her dark hair looks lovely beneath that pastel blue."⁹¹

Once listeners had heard about the surroundings of the event and the appearance of the King and Queen, they were provided with a description of the event taking place. This usually involved some type of formal ceremony, whether that be the laying of the cornerstone of the Supreme Court in Ottawa on May 20 or the formal departure from Vancouver to Victoria on May 29. In each provincial capital the King and Queen were welcomed into the legislature to accept a formal welcome from the premier, receive an introduction to all members of the

⁹⁰ 'Edmonton,' June 2, 1939. CBC Digital Archives, www.archives.cbc.ca/society/celebrations/clips/16901. Accessed February 27, 2012.

⁹¹ 'The King's Plate is Granted a Royal Audience,'" May 22, 1939. CBC Digital Archives, www.archives.cbc.ca/sports/racing/clips/16694. Accessed February 27, 2012.

provincial government and local dignitaries, and sign the visitor's register. In addition, veterans were always prominently featured at some point during these events. On the second to last day of the Tour in Pictou, Nova Scotia, when the King and Queen started to speak to a group of veterans, the announcer noted that "as always, Their Majesties are particularly interested in the return men."⁹² Upon the completion of the formal event, the King and Queen were typically swift in their departure. For instance, at the Saskatchewan legislature in Regina on May 25, as soon as the Queen was presented with a bouquet of spray orchids, the couple immediately made their way to their car to return downtown.⁹³ This departure was often accompanied by a comment as to how healthy or vibrant the couple appeared, with the announcer at Charlottetown on June 14 opining that "it is remarkable...how they stand the tremendous task of going one place to another" while maintaining good spirits and without showing any signs of fatigue.⁹⁴ For as much as this type of complimentary commentary can be seen as an aspect of the Tour's unifying goal, it was also the result of the announcers' genuine affinity for the King and Queen. In their retrospectives on the Tour, several announcers expressed gratitude to the Monarchs for their kind manners. They appreciated that the Royals quickly recognized travelling members of the corporation and were not shy to greet them throughout the Tour.⁹⁵ Wiklund's esteem for the Royals was so high that when he first came in close contact with the Queen "he was so flabbergasted that he didn't say a word about it."⁹⁶ Given this great appreciation for the Royals, it would have been easy for the announcers to provide a complimentary word as the King and

⁹² 'Royal Tour visit at Pictou, NS' June 14, 1939. LAC Audio A1 2002-03-0012.

⁹³ 'King's Tour – Regina,' May 25, 1939. LAC Audio A1 2004-11-0012.

⁹⁴ 'Visit to Charlottetown,' June 13, 1939. LAC Audio A1 2002-02-0012.

⁹⁵ One such story came from C.W. Gilcrest, a CBC representative who accompanied the Tour. He wrote that "when the Queen happened to spot a commentator at his post in some new and strange city she never failed to favour him with a smile and a little wave." 'Impression of Royal Visit From Commentators, C.W. Gilcrest,' July 4, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240, File 11-37.

⁹⁶ 'Reminiscences of Veteran Broadcasters, Bob Bowman, November 7, 1963.' RG 41 Vol. 401, File 23-1-3-1.

Queen departed the various events, after which the broadcast would either be thrown back to a commentator in the studio or signed-off completely, with the rest of the time being filled with recorded music.

The only major exceptions to this formula were the occasions when the King or Queen gave an address, which was generally the final component of the day's formal ceremony. For many listeners, this was a special occasion and was greatly appreciated. For the technical staff, this was a nerve-racking event and involved the added step of preparing to shut down the King's microphone in the event his famed stammer interfered with his address. Bowman later recalled that they had taken great care in preparing for such an occasion, as he himself "had to be nearby, and ready to switch to a standby in case [the King] brokedown."⁹⁷ Fortunately for all involved, the King's stammer did not get in the way of his five addresses, which were delivered from Quebec City (May 17), Ottawa (May 21), Winnipeg (May 24), Victoria (May 30), and Halifax (June 15). The Queen had a chance to address the nation as she gave a speech at the laying of the cornerstone for the Supreme Court in Ottawa on May 20 and also gave an impromptu address to thank Canadians for their hospitality on June 15. Mackenzie King recalled that this final address was particularly emotional for the Royals, confiding in his diary that "the Queen said that when the King spoke, it was all she could do to keep from crying. The King said that he had felt the same way when she spoke. I remarked that the rest of us had felt very much the same."⁹⁸

The Royal Tour formula proved rather successful for the CBC, with listeners overwhelmingly supporting the broadcasts. In the midst of the Tour, Mrs. M. Asher-Wilson from

⁹⁷ 'Reminiscences of Veteran Broadcasters, R.T. Bowman, November 7, 1963. LAC RG 41 Vol. 401, File 23-1-3-1.

⁹⁸ William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary, June 15, 1939. LAC Online Collection, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/king/001059-100.01-e.php>.

the Ladies Auxiliary of the Canadian Legion wrote the CBC to express gratitude for the broadcasts, saying “your company has made excellent word pictures of what has taken place on every occasion, and we all have certainly followed them closely.”⁹⁹ Not only were listeners impressed with the broadcasts, but the commentators themselves were acutely aware of the gravity of the task at hand. In recapping the events at the Plains of Abraham, announcer Jacques DesBaillets said that “I’ll bet my last month’s pay that somewhere in a better world a certain Marquis de Montcalm turned to face a certain General Wolfe and grinned.”¹⁰⁰ This impression that the Tour served as a uniting force in the country was seconded by C.W. Gilchrist, a CBC representative, who wrote that “it was the biggest effort in the history of radio broadcasting, the task of bringing to millions of listeners in Canada and throughout the world, day by day as the triumphal Tour progressed, accurate word pictures of events and scenes.”¹⁰¹ So successful were the broadcasts that they even managed to earn a certain level of support from some of the corporation’s staunchest opponents. The Toronto *Telegram*, for instance, editorialized on May 25 that as “a newspaper which has not at all times been a fervent admirer of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [we] may be permitted to congratulate that organization on its coverage of the Royal Tour both at the time of happening and in its late-hour summaries.”¹⁰²

The reaction was not entirely positive, however, as there were some complaints about the coverage. In the lead up to the Maritime leg of the Tour, PEI Premier Thane Campbell complained that the CBC was not adequately covering his province and requested that “in view of provincial status of Prince Edward Island on occasion of receiving Their Majesties’ visit” the

⁹⁹ Mrs. M. Asher-Wilson to CBC, May 31, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Impressions of Royal Visit from Commentators – Jacques DesBaillets.’ LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

¹⁰¹ ‘Impressions of Royal Visit from Commentators – G.W. Gilchrist,’ July 4, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

¹⁰² ‘Newspaper Reaction to the Royal Visit – Toronto *Telegram*, May 25, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

coverage be extended.¹⁰³ In a similar vein, the Saint-John *Times-Globe* expressed its displeasure at New Brunswick and PEI not having the opportunity to send greetings to the King and Queen during the Empire Day broadcast. The paper was particularly upset because it was not the first time that a “so-called Dominion-wide” programme ignored the two provinces and promised readers that “the last has not been heard of the incident.”¹⁰⁴ On the other side of the country, the Victoria *Times* complained that Vancouver Island was referenced during Empire Day instead of Victoria, although the paper did note that it had received a letter from CBC British Columbia regional representative Ira Dilworth assuring that the corporation had not intended such a slight.¹⁰⁵ In comparison to the number of letters and editorials expressing great satisfaction with the Tour, these complaints were relatively small, but did demonstrate that its unifying goal was not guaranteed.

Another aspect that had the potential to damage the Tour’s unifying theme was that the broadcasts were in English. In order to provide Royal Tour programming for the French network after the King and Queen left Quebec, the CBC did schedule eight French-language commentaries, one each from Toronto (May 22), Regina (May 25), Calgary (May 26), Vancouver (May 29), Victoria (May 30), Edmonton (June 2), Saskatoon (June 3), and St. John (June 13) with H. Rooney Pelletier and Leclerc splitting the duties.¹⁰⁶ The CBC’s meagre French-language coverage – when compared to its English-language programs – may indicate a lack of enthusiasm for the Tour in Quebec, but it would appear as though Quebecers were eager

¹⁰³ The CBC responded to the request by pointing out that it was unable to extend the coverage because of the limitations on staff and equipment in view of the coverage already being provided at the legislature. Thane A. Campbell Telegram to Gladstone Murray, June 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

¹⁰⁴ Newspaper Reaction to the Royal Visit, Saint-John *Times-Globe*, May 26, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

¹⁰⁵ Newspaper Reaction to the Royal Visit, Victoria *Times*, May 26, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243 File 11-37-14-2.

¹⁰⁶ The letter was written in the context of special facilities being required to transmit programs from outside Quebec to the French network and does not indicate the amount of French language coverage while the Tour travelled in Quebec. RG 41 Vol. 243 File 11-37-14-2.

to partake in the festivities. The King and Queen's delayed arrival was front page news across the province, with *L'Action catholique* assuring readers on both May 15 and 16 that "rien de changé au programme préparé pour Québec, Trois-Rivières et Montréal" as the visits to Ottawa and Kingston would be shortened instead.¹⁰⁷

Once he arrived in the province, the King quickly endeared himself to the public as his address at the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City featured a greeting delivered in French. Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis was similarly impressed with the couple, greeting them in the legislative chamber with an address that, Conrad Black has argued, "carried loyalism almost to the point of obsequiousness."¹⁰⁸ The King replied in French, further endearing himself to the public and press throughout the province. As *Le Clairon* reported "Sa Majesté le Roi du Canada s'exprime dans un français impeccable et sans accent. Les applaudissements redoublés qui éclatèrent alors marquèrent combien le Souverain avait fait plaisir à ses sujets du Canada français en leur parlant dans leur langue maternelle."¹⁰⁹ As the King and Queen continued through Quebec, the French-language press reported that large and enthusiastic crowds continued to greet the couple, with *Le Canada* reporting on May 19 that from the Royal arrival "à 2 heures 20 jusqu'à leur départ vers 10 heures 30, ce ne fut pour eux qu'un triomphe continu éclatant."¹¹⁰ The positive coverage extended beyond descriptions of the crowds' reactions to include glowing commentary on the Royals themselves. *Le Canadien français* from Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu reported on May 25 that the King and Queen "s'acquittent non pas simplement avec conscience

¹⁰⁷ 'Rien n'est changé au programme de la visite des Souverains en notre ville,' *L'Action catholique*, May 15, 1939, 1; 'Le Spectacle qui s'offre aux yeux de Leurs Majestés le long du Saint-Laurent leur fait oublier les ennuis de la traversée,' *L'Action catholique*, May 16, 1939, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Conrad Black, *Duplessis* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977), 196-197.

¹⁰⁹ "Leurs Majestés à Québec," *Le Clairon* (Saint-Hyacinthe, QC), May 19, 1939, 2.

¹¹⁰ "Splendide accueil de Montréal à son roi," *Le Canada*, May 19, 1939, 1.

mais avec bonne grâce de *leurs devoirs*, devrait nous être un exemple, le plus éloquent parce qu'il vient de haut."¹¹¹

As the Tour continued across the country, several French-language newspapers in Quebec continued to treat the Tour as front page news, even if it would occasionally appear below the fold. Even smaller local weekly papers devoted significant space to the Tour, with *Le Colon* of Roberval telling readers that while taking pictures of the events was restricted, they would have access to photos of the events as each edition would contain a feature entitled "Photo Album Royal."¹¹² This enthusiastic coverage continued through the King and Queen's departure from Halifax on June 15, upon which *Franc Parleur*, the "Journal de combat et de critique, organe d'action nationale," reflected on the trip as a positive for Canada as the Royal couple acquitted themselves rather well. The paper also noted that "la cinglante leçon administrée à tous nos politiciens unilingues, à tous les jingoes impérialisants, par les nombreuses allocutions en français de Leurs Majestés, dans un français admirable."¹¹³

Such positive sentiments were echoed in other regions as the King and Queen travelled across the country – with the reasons varying from coast to coast.¹¹⁴ Regardless of the reason for

¹¹¹ 'Après le Défilé Royal,' *Le Canada français*, May 25, 1939, 1.

¹¹² 'Un Album Royal,' *Le Colon* (Roberval, QC), May 25, 1939, 1.

¹¹³ 'Nos Visiteurs Sont Partis,' *Franc Parleur*, June 16, 1939, 1.

¹¹⁴ The reasons for such positive reactions can be debated, particularly as they relate to Canadians' connections to the Monarchy. In Quebec, the lingering sentimentality towards the Monarchy, which had started to erode before the 1930s, contributed to the excitement over the Tour. In English Canada an ever-increasing American presence led some nationalists to put greater emphasis on Canada's British connection. Perhaps just as much a factor, however, was North America's emerging celebrity culture. As tabloids and celebrity 'news' grew in popularity through the 1930s, the King and Queen were two major celebrities in Canada and, as a result, their presence elicited great excitement. See: Damien-Claude Bélanger, "Thomas Chapais, loyalist," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 65 no. 4 (2012): 439-472; Michael Behiels, *Prelude to Quebec's Revolution: Liberalism versus Neo-Nationalism, 1945-1960* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); C.P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010); Development Education Centre/Latin American Working Group, "Corporate Power, the Canadian State, and Imperialism," in *Imperialism, Nationalism, and Canada: Essays from the Marxist Institute of Toronto*, ed. Craig Heron (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1977); Ryan Edwardson, *Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); Mel van Elteren, "Celebrity Culture,

public's positive reactions, the CBC hoped it would generate public goodwill for public broadcasting following the Tour. Vipond has rightly argued that the CBC capitalized on the amity Canadians held for the King and Queen in order to legitimize itself – after all the corporation was quite eager to let people know that the Queen had informed “a small but enraptured audience that the Royal party had listened to several of the CBC Royal visit re-broadcasts in late evening while travelling on the train and had enjoyed them very much.”¹¹⁵ While this type of publicity represents a significant effort on the corporation's part to situate itself as a vital institution through the Tour, Vipond goes further by arguing that the announcers exploited the symbolism, spectacle, and internationalism associated with the Tour in order to legitimize the corporation as an organization. This internationalism, which was demonstrated by the corporation's close collaboration with American networks and the BBC to ensure international distribution of the Tour broadcasts, is particularly important as the corporation capitalized on its successful integration into the North American broadcasting structure to further the Tour's reach while also supplementing its own coverage. The American networks, particularly, MBS, wanted to include Tour broadcasts on their schedules and the CBC was more than willing to send the programs to the United States. Similarly, during the five days when the King and Queen visited Washington and New York, the CBC aired coverage from the American networks. In part because the corporation had already established positive relationships with its counterparts in the United States, there were no tense negotiations over the Tour as there seems to have been an assumption that the programs would be shared without incident. There was a mutual trust between the CBC and NBC, CBS, and MBS which had been developed over the previous two-and-a-half years

Performative Politics, and the Spectacle of 'Democracy' in America," *Journal of American Culture* 36 no. 4 (2013): 263-283;

¹¹⁵ 'CBC Royal Tour Bulletin 11d, 'King and Queen Listened to Empire Day Broadcast and Complimented the CBC,' May 26, 1939. LAC RG 41, Vol. 240, File 11-37.

and, during the Tour, showed how the CBC had become a respected member of the North American broadcasting fraternity.

For as much as the cooperation between North American broadcasters was on display during the Tour, the success of the broadcasts was largely due to the solid performance of the corporation's announcers. Vipond writes that "by their skilful use of the most powerful new medium of modernity, the CBC's announcers re-affirmed the status quo and helped construct and legitimate the authority of the neophyte public broadcaster." Nash also credits the announcers for their work during the Tour, arguing that "their gushing commentaries, stirring patriotism, and quotations from Shakespeare and Kipling all gave a reverential tone to the coverage."¹¹⁶ It is true that the announcers themselves were frequently cited in listeners' letters as being "praiseworthy," but they were players in a larger story.¹¹⁷ For as much as the announcers were critical to the Tour's success, so too were the engineers who put together the nightly 'highlight' package, which one woman praised for its "thoughtfulness."¹¹⁸ So while Vipond is correct to point out the CBC's use of the King and Queen's popularity to its own benefit, it was not only a matter of the announcers' language as the technical equipment and arrangements needed to be flawless. Given the public's interest in hearing the events of the Tour, had the CBC failed in its preparations or, perhaps even worse, suffered a significant equipment failure during one of the broadcasts, the goodwill generated by the Tour would likely have turned to anger and vitriol. The listener letters informing the CBC that "for the first time many of us have not begrudged the fee we pay for our radio,"¹¹⁹ would likely have been replaced with letters crying foul over the fee.

¹¹⁶ Nash, *The Microphone Wars*, 153.

¹¹⁷ Rev. Charles Carnegie to CBC. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240, File 11-37.

¹¹⁸ Miss Thelma J. Crawford to CBC. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240, File 11-37.

¹¹⁹ Miss Anna M. Freeborn to CBC. LAC RG 41 Vol. 240, File 11-37.

It is also important to note that it was not only the CBC that wanted to capitalize on the King and Queen's popularity. Local stations were eager to broadcast Tour events which the CBC had decided not to cover. When the Royal train was scheduled to stop briefly in Chatham, ON, Jack Beardall of CFCO Chatham was granted permission to provide a commentary of the scene provided he received the consent of the local police and "that no microphones...be placed near the Royal Party."¹²⁰ Claire Wallace, host of *Teatime Topics* on CFRB, Toronto's largest private station, spent the weeks leading up to the Tour talking about various aspects of the King and Queen's visit. In her broadcast on May 4th, for instance, she provided listeners with extensive details about the rail cars that had been built for the Royal Train, describing the sitting room's "two complete sets of furniture coverings, one of green damask for the furniture and green taffeta drapes for the windows and the alternative set blue and beige printed homespun for the furniture in gold drapes."¹²¹ As the Tour drew closer, Wallace provided listeners with details on the couple's visit to Toronto and offered tips on the best locations to catch a glimpse of the King and Queen. On May 22nd, *Teatime Topics* was dedicated to recounting Wallace's day following the King and Queen, where she told listeners:

The first person we saw was the Queen....You know, you get a little bored with reading in the papers that a reporter 'got shivers down his spine' on first seeing the King and Queen. But its true – something DOES happen to your spine and how! Our King and Queen look so young – so kindly – so human – so sincere. The Queen was in blue, a soft slightly-lighter shade than powder blue. Her dress of blue crepe very beautifully cut. Over it a long cape of blue georgette with platinum fox around the shoulders. Her hat of the same blue, turned up off the face with a blue feathery ornament on one side. And the Queen was wearing a hatpin the women spectators noticed, so maybe that will bring back the vogue of hatpins. Queen Elizabeth wore pearls and soft pink kid gloves.¹²²

¹²⁰ R.T Bowman to Jack Beardall, May 27, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

¹²¹ Claire Wallace, *Teatime Topics*, Thursday May 4, 1939. University of Waterloo Archives and Special Collections, Claire Wallace Collection, File 63.

¹²² Claire Wallace, *Teatime Topics*, Monday May 22, 1939. University of Waterloo Archives and Special Collections, Claire Wallace Collection, File 63.

Wallace's broadcast that day demonstrates that for as much as CBC announcers may have gushed in their commentaries, they certainly did not have exclusivity on that type of language. Nor too was the corporation the only broadcaster to demonstrate a deferential sense of loyalty to the Monarchs, as CFRB went silent between 6 PM and 7 PM on May 30, a period in which the King was scheduled to give an address from Victoria.¹²³ That non-affiliated private stations maintained a similar decorum to the CBC in their coverage of the Tour demonstrates that while the language the corporation's announcers used was rather complimentary towards the King and Queen, it was not uncommon within broadcasting circles. The success of the Tour, therefore, can be largely attributed to the extensive planning over the eight months prior to the arrival of the King and Queen. Giving expression to this view, Brockington sent a telegram to the CBC staff to convey his "unqualified grateful approval from the lips of all classes of citizens" and that "this work of you and your colleagues and your staff constitutes by far the greatest contribution ever made to the cause of national radio in Canada."¹²⁴

There is little doubt that the CBC was extremely satisfied with its efforts during the Royal Tour. In claiming that the broadcasts "made each successive stage of Their Majesties' progress across the Dominion, a living and vital part of the daily lives of millions of Canadians during those memorable weeks," the corporation boasted that the Tour showed "that the CBC has retained sufficient flexibility to adapt itself rapidly to new responsibilities."¹²⁵ A further indication that the CBC felt as though the Tour had not only be a success in allowing Canadians access to the King and Queen, but also as a public relations windfall was its desire to capitalize on the Tour's popularity over the long term. In July 1939 the Board of Governors approved the

¹²³ Claire Wallace, *Teatime Topics*, Monday May 29, 1939. University of Waterloo Archives and Special Collections, Claire Wallace Collection, File 63.

¹²⁴ Leonard Brockington Message to All CBC Employees, June 15, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2.

¹²⁵ CBC Annual Report, 1939-1940. LAC Alphonse Ouimet Fonds MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

publication of a yearbook that would explain the corporation's preparations for the Tour as well as provide descriptions of the various stops.¹²⁶ The CBC also made the decision in October to offer commemorative cigarette boxes to employees who had worked on the Tour¹²⁷ and in November the Finance Committee approved \$8,000 to create a permanent record of the broadcasts.¹²⁸ With the Second World War raging a year later, the CBC again wanted to mark the success of the Tour by putting together a series of commemorative or retrospective programmes. It was felt that marking the anniversary of every broadcast would dilute the meaning of the programmes, and therefore it was decided to air a half hour programme entitled 'A Year Ago Today' to commemorate the King and Queen's arrival on May 17 and follow that with half-hour programmes once a week through the middle of June 1940.¹²⁹

In many ways the Tour represents the end of the formative years of the CBC, a period which saw a fledgling institution go from a poorly organized, low-power radio network to a highly efficient corporation capable of covering a major event from coast to coast. What is perhaps most remarkable about the Tour is that the various elements that the Corporation had used to survive its infancy were on display. From maintaining a consensus with private stations, to ensuring strict financial control, to pursuing a policy of continental integration, the CBC's efforts during the Royal Tour were evidence that it had become a viable national broadcaster. The changes in policy, personnel, and philosophy paid off as the corporation entered the summer of 1939 in a better position than it had ever enjoyed. With a nation of appreciative listeners and

¹²⁶ Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, July 5-7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615, Microfilm Reel T-3040.

¹²⁷ Augustin Frigon to Ernest Bushnell, October 12, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 243, File 11-37-14-2. G.W. Olive's son still has his cigarette box. It is brightly painted and prominently displays that it is a souvenir from the 1939 Royal Tour. Interview conducted March 28, 2012.

¹²⁸ Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Finance Committee November 17, 1939. RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T-3043.

¹²⁹ Charles Jennings Internal Memorandum, April 25, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 244, File 11-37-14-2-1.

the knowledge that it could cover a major event, which was critical with the potential of war, the CBC understood that it had to preserve that goodwill moving forward, a task which it found rather difficult. In looking back on the Tour, for as much as it may have been organized to help secure Canada's support in the event of an international conflict, its biggest legacy may be in securing the CBC's place as a national utility after years of struggling to achieve that role.

Chapter Seven: Responding to the Outbreak of War

With the Royal Tour completed, the CBC entered the summer of 1939 in a stronger position than it ever enjoyed. The corporation had successfully used the King and Queen's visit to overcome the controversies during the early part of the year and demonstrate its relevance to national life. While this was a major achievement, it also meant that, moving forward, the corporation had to devise a set of new priorities. Since its first day in November 1936, much of the corporation's focus had been on distinguishing itself from the CRBC and earning legitimacy with a sceptical country. By no means did the Royal Tour earn the CBC universal approval, but it did go a long way in securing its place as a national institution. As the corporation entered this new phase, however, it did have to address some lingering issues associated with network expansion and the scandals that had marked the early part of the year. But at the same time, it also needed to look forward in an effort to capitalize on the goodwill generated by the Tour. Meanwhile, the situation in Europe continued to deteriorate and questions increasingly started to be asked about how the CBC would react to the ever-changing situation. And when Canada officially entered the Second World War on September 10, the corporation was left scrambling to adjust to unprecedented broadcasting conditions. If the previous three years had been about developing a national network and earning the country's trust, the period immediately following the Royal Tour was about applying the lessons learned and finally fulfilling its role as a vital national service.

The first step in that process was completing the national network of high-powered stations. While there had been hope that it would be completed in time for the Royal Tour, the Prairie transmitter was still under construction in the spring of 1939. This was disappointing to the corporation not only because of its intention to have it completed prior to the King and

Queen's arrival, but also because the Prairies represented a key area of support – particularly from rural communities. A year earlier Gladstone Murray stressed to C.D. Howe that including the Prairies in the network was critical “not only from the broadcasting angle, but from the angle of public policy generally.”¹ Howe initially expressed his support, but raised some doubts through the summer of 1938 after Gooderham & Worts brought a lawsuit against the CBC.² While the case was not resolved until 1942, Howe worried that the CBC did not have sufficient funds in the event it had to pay damages. While that was his primary reason for objecting to the new transmitter, the case also provided Howe with an opportunity to suggest that the corporation was expanding too quickly. In a letter to Murray, he argued that “last year you built two high power stations, and you have a third station [CBA Sackville] under construction for this year. It seems not unreasonable to suggest that your expansion be limited to not more than one new station per year, - this is to avoid a too rapid expansion of operating costs.”³

As it had before, the Board of Governors decided to go above Howe and appeal directly to the Prime Minister. Chairman Leonard Brockington wrote to William Lyon Mackenzie King “in a purely personal way as I feel that my own friendship for you and the highest personal regard in which you are held by us” allowed him to inquire about the Prime Minister's position on a new transmitter.⁴ Brockington highlighted the potential political ramifications of inaction to sway King, arguing that “if that undertaking is not implemented forthwith, not only will the

¹ Gladstone Murray to C.D. Howe, April 21, 1938. University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 14 File 9.

² The lawsuit claimed a breach of contract as the CRBC had leased station CRCT Toronto, which was owned by Gooderham & Worts, for a period of five years, but with the completion of CBL the CBC no longer needed the outlet. The corporation attempted to return the equipment in 1938, but the company was upset that the equipment had not been updated as a provision in the original contract called for the equipment to be kept modern. Gooderham & Worts was eventually awarded a \$25,000 settlement.

³ C.D. Howe to Gladstone Murray, July 4, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 14 File 10.

⁴ Leonard Brockington to William Lyon Mackenzie King, July 11, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Box 14 File 10.

personal position of some of us be very difficult, but the public reaction will be very bad.”⁵

Brockington sent a similar letter to Howe, who, eventually, relented and the corporation moved forward with its plans. The damage had been done, however, and construction of the Prairie transmitter was already well behind that of the Maritimes. Any hope that the two stations could open around the same time were dashed and while there was still hope that the Prairie transmitter could be completed in time for the King and Queen, it quickly became clear that that would not be possible. This was rather disappointing given that “the desirability of bringing broadcasting into the homes of the people in the more remote and lonely places was one of the main considerations which brought about nationalization of broadcasting in Canada.”⁶

With the political hurdles out of the way, the corporation could get to work on the station’s logistics, which resulted in – just like in the Maritimes – a good deal of lobbying as to where the transmitter should be built. The one difference from the east coast, however, was that geography played a more determining role in the Prairies. Given that the station needed to serve Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, it was generally assumed that a central location in Saskatchewan would be selected. Within that context, however, small communities lobbied for the station as it was believed it would be a major boon to the local economy. In December 1938 the CBC purchased 6,707 square feet of land 175 kilometres north of Regina in Watrous at a cost of \$2,976.60.⁷ Harry Fleming, Liberal MP from Humboldt, Saskatchewan, was eager that Watrous be promoted as the site of the transmitter on CBC programs and hoped that Murray would agree. Wanting to avoid a similar debate as occurred with CBA, however, Murray responded that “the acknowledgment of Watrous is likely to be infrequent. CBK belongs to the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Distribution of CBC Programmes With Particular Reference to the Prairie Provinces,” n.d. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 16 File 10.

⁷ CBC Owned and Rented Properties, February 1, 1960. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 97 File 3-16-6-3.

Prairies as a whole. The programmes transmitted by CBK normally will carry acknowledgments of their points of origin in any one of the dozen centres in which programmes will be built.”⁸

While the corporation was pleased with the station’s location, the size of the community in Watrous did lead to a major obstacle: a lack of housing for employees. Just as in the Maritimes, RCA-Victor won the bidding to build the station at a price of \$134,775.00, but there had not been any discussion of the area around the transmitter.⁹ With the station’s opening quickly approaching, it became apparent that the staff responsible for running the transmitter would not be able to find adequate accommodations. At its meeting in July, the Board of Governors discussed the issue and although several alternatives were discussed, it was eventually resolved that “the executive be authorized to arrange for the construction of suitable dwellings for the staff at Watrous, the total cost not to exceed \$30,000, the occupants pay rent to amortize the capital invested.”¹⁰

With the problem of accommodation solved, the CBC eagerly anticipated the opening of the new station. For the corporation, the transmitter not only meant that it could originate more national programs in the West and that it would “further enable listeners in the three Western Provinces to hear programmes from other parts of Canada,” but also that it had completed its initial goal of a high power national network.¹¹ Given that network expansion had been a top priority when the CBC took over from the CRBC, the transmitter at Watrous took on added meaning as a major milestone in the corporation’s development. That it had survived and

⁸ Gladstone Murray to Harry Fleming, February 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 848 File PG1-5.

⁹ G.W. Olive to Gladstone Murray, April 6, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 15 File 2.

¹⁰ Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, July 5-7, 1939. LAC RG 41 vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

¹¹ George Taggart to E.A. Weir, June 9, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 103 File 3-18-18.

expanded to include four high power regional transmitters was used as validation of its policies and confirmation of its place as a major cultural institution.

The station officially opened on Saturday July 29 with a half-hour broadcast that night. The list of speakers included the Premiers of the three Prairie Provinces (William Aberhart in Alberta, William John Patterson in Saskatchewan, and John Bracken in Manitoba), C.D. Howe, Leonard Brockington, and representatives of both the BBC and CBS.¹² In its report on the broadcast, the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* argued that the transmitter served as a symbol of the corporation's success:

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is steadily moving towards the objective of a national system envisioned at the time Canada decided upon adoption of the publicly-owned system. There has been criticism. There have been errors and faults and much yet remains to be done. And there have been some charges that it was not serving free speech. Those probably were inevitable and they will probably be made again whenever some individual or organization does not get everything he or it wants for his or its own advantage. Nevertheless the CBC has moved steadily towards the ideal that was set up some five or more years ago and its progress has been such that the criticisms that have been made seem trivial.¹³

This was the type of reaction that the CBC had hoped for – particularly after its extensive promotion of the opening. The CBC released a commemorative booklet prior to the broadcast which stated that for “those who look forward to a great increase in the cultural and educational work that radio can do in this country, to an enhancement of its unifying influence in an area of great racial diversity and to the continuous provision of more wholesome and pleasing entertainment,” the new transmitter would be “one of the greatest steps towards the ultimate achievement of that desire.”¹⁴ *Electrical News and Engineering* questioned that rationale, however, and in its September 1 issue suggested that “the unsettled condition of world affairs”

¹² CBK Inaugural Programme, Originally broadcast July 29, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 109 File 3-19-28.

¹³ Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, August 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 109 File 3-19-28.

¹⁴ CBK Commemorative Booklet, circa 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 103 File 3-18-18.

may have increased the corporation's motivation in completing the station.¹⁵ If that was the case, the publication was supportive and wrote that "radio in Canada, because of the vastness of the country and because of the scattered population, would prove invaluable in times of crisis from the point of view of maintaining national unity."¹⁶

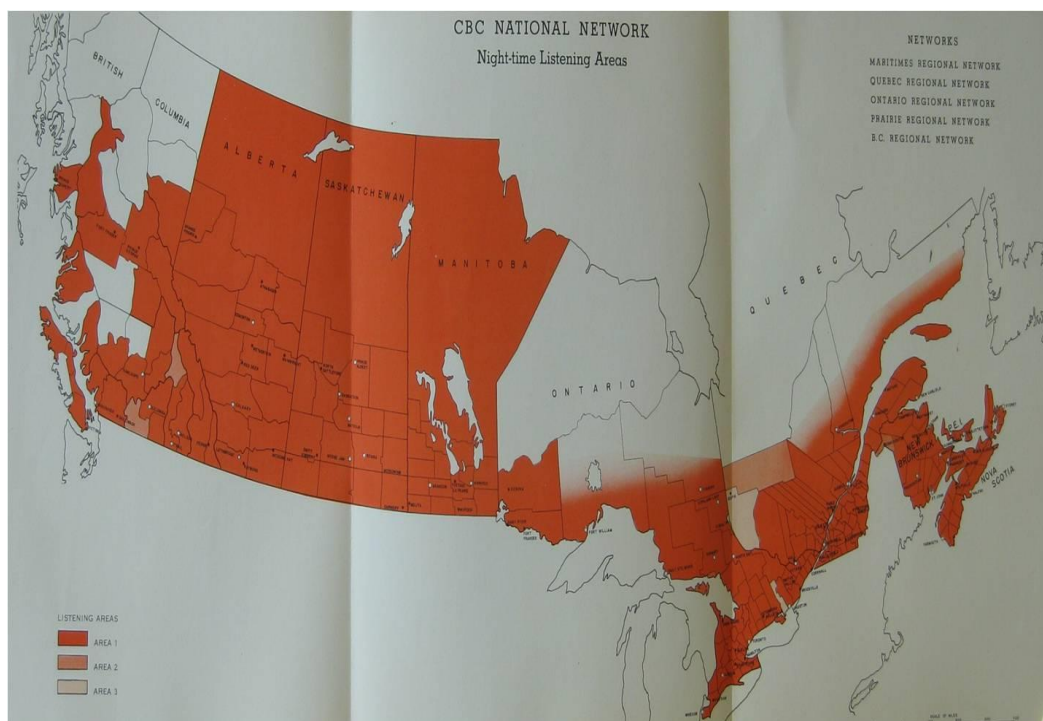


Figure 3 Night coverage map of CBC in August 1940.

Even with such lofty expectations, the early returns for the CBC were quite positive. In an effort to assess the public reaction to CBK, regional representative D.W. Claringbull travelled through the Prairies. He reported that the station's coverage was quite strong – reception was only interrupted in the Alberta Mountains between Banff and Lake Louise – and that in many rural communities CBK served as the local station. In addition, he found that the CBC's increased publicity efforts had been successful as the *Moose Jaw Times* and *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* both replaced local radio listings with CBK listings. Claringbull also noted that the

¹⁵ F.H. Wooding, "CBC Completes 50,000 Watt Station at Watrous Sask." *Electrical News and Engineering*, September 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 78 File 3-10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

transmitter had become a popular tourist destination with roughly fifty visitors daily, who he suggested be given a booklet “emphasizing that CBK operates on 540 kilocycles.”¹⁷ That enthusiasm for the new station translated to an increase in the number of radio licences across the region. Between January 31, 1939 and January 31, 1940, the number of licences in Manitoba increased by 10%, in Saskatchewan by 55%-60%, and in Alberta by 25%-30%.¹⁸ Whether the increase was the result of more people purchasing receiving sets or deciding to pay for a licence, it was clear that CBK had improved broadcasting on the Prairies.¹⁹

With the high-power network completed, the corporation wanted to promote its investment and expansion in order to capitalize on the resulting goodwill. Given that so many listeners were impressed with the remote broadcasts during the Royal Tour, the CBC decided to show off its equipment as one of the mobile units was sent on a tour of the east coast. Starting from Toronto, the unit embarked on a five-week tour that included stops in all three Maritime Provinces.²⁰ The unit covered a parade in Charlottetown, recorded the fishermen’s carnival at North Rustico, and preserved the sounds of the ocean for future use in Lockeport.²¹ The staff reported that the equipment was holding up quite well with the extensive travel, but it came close to not making it to the first stop. As it travelled to Glace Bay on Cape Breton Island, the unit slipped off the highway and perilously hung from the top of a five-hundred foot cliff, causing the

¹⁷ D.W. Claringbull to Ernest Bushnell, September 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 103 File 3-18-18.

¹⁸ Comparative Chart Showing the Increase in the Issue of Radio Receiving Licences January 31, 1939 to January 31, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 18 File 20.

¹⁹ A common complaint during the corporation’s early years was that listeners did not receive value on their licence fees. As a result, many people did not pay the fee. With the new station, it is possible that some listeners in the region felt as though the improved service justified the fee – although it should also be noted that the outbreak of the Second World War also motivated many Canadians to not only purchase a radio, but also, because it allowed for the coverage, to pay the fee

²⁰ The unit spent a total of three days in New Brunswick, three days in Prince Edward Island, and twelve days in Nova Scotia. Activities of Mobile Unit #1, July 8 to December 8, 1939. January 19, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 86 File 3-12-2.

²¹ C.W. Speer to Frank Willis, July 24, 1939; C.W. Speer to W.C. Little, August 7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 86 File 3-12-2.

crew of R.T. Bowman, Cliff Spear, and Fred Wadsworth to jump clear. The Toronto *Telegram* was one of several outlets to report that “it took several hours for 30 workmen, including a group from a construction company building a golf course in the new Highland National Park nearby, two trucks, two sets of blocks and tackle, and a tractor, to pull the trailer to safety.”²² While it was a scary incident, Bowman was able to joke in 1963 that “we made the front pages ... and that didn’t happen often to the CBC in those days.”²³

For as much as the Maritime tour served to promote the improvements the corporation had made to Canadian broadcasting, the CBC was not prepared to simply rest on its accomplishments as it actively pursued new ways to expand its coverage. One possibility was the establishment of a second national network that would not only extend coverage even further, but would also allow the corporation to further diversify its program offerings. The concept of a second national network was not new as during its meeting with the Board of Governors in March, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters raised the possibility of private stations developing their own national system. CAB attorney Joseph Sedgwick noted that such a plan would replicate the financial structure of MBS and be dependent on obtaining reasonable wire rates and, if it could be arranged, everyone from listeners to advertisers would benefit.²⁴ The CBC understood why the CAB pushed for it, but with the regulation preventing private stations from establishing networks the corporation did not have to worry and could further investigate its own options. Even before CBK opened, therefore, Horace Stovin, head of station relations, sent detailed plans to Augustin Frigon outlining the process by which the CBC could establish a new network, which “is offered, primarily, on the premise that in this Dominion a full broadcasting

²² “\$30,000 CBC Recording Truck Hangs by Axle Over Precipice,” Toronto *Telegram*, July 25, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 349 File 17-1-2.

²³ R.T. Bowman, Interview, November 7, 1963. RG 41 Vol. 401 File 23-1-3-1.

²⁴ Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, March 20-22, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

service to Canadians should encompass a scheme offering alternate programme services operated and produced under the immediate direction and control of the broadcasting authority.”²⁵

While an additional network would not be expected to increase the corporation’s commercial revenue (in part because of the self-imposed limitation on advertisements), Stovin did believe that it would address the problem of sustaining programs not being carried by all outlets. Since private stations on the basic national network could refuse to air sustaining programs in favour of local commercial features, the corporation’s sustainers did not receive complete distribution. By expanding its services, programs not aired on certain outlets “could be fed to stations on a second network” to improve coverage.²⁶ Traffic Supervisor E.W. Jackson received a quote of \$10,000 a month for duplicate network coverage of major centres and while it appeared to be reasonable he cautioned that additional fees meant that it “is not such a bargain as it might appear to be.”²⁷ While Jackson’s scepticism may have slowed the discussions, the outbreak of the Second World War a month later ended them altogether. The corporation would revisit the possibility of a second network in 1942, but for the time being all resources were devoted to the war effort.

It should be noted that it does not appear as though a second national network was seen as an outlet to air French-language programs nationally. As noted, the corporation only aired French- language talks programs the French network, which operated exclusively in Quebec during this period. The possibility of a second national network theoretically presented an opportunity to address its failure to provide spoken-word programs to French-language minorities across the country, but this did not receive much attention by officials in Ottawa. In

²⁵ Horace Stovin to Augustin Frigon, May 27, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 166 File 11-10-1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The quote was for a network covering Halifax, Moncton, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Vancouver. Donald Manson to E.W. Jackson, July 20, 1939; E.W. Jackson to Donald Manson, August 1, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 166 File 11-10-1.

fact, it was not until 1952 – well after the inauguration of a second national network in 1944 – that the extension of the French network to the West was discussed.²⁸ While it is possible to view the corporation’s decision not to air French-language programs nationally as one based on business considerations, that there were not extensive discussions on the matter within the context of a possible second national network is remarkable. A second national network presented an opportunity to serve Francophone minorities outside Quebec without alienating the Anglophone listeners who so vehemently objected to French-language programs on the CRBC. That the corporation does not appear to have recognized this opportunity gives credence to the notion that the organization was ambivalent towards francophone minorities and represents another failure to address one of its major failings during its early years.

While the completion of CBK and the discussion of a new network were used as positive developments by the corporation, there were still lingering negative issues that needed to be addressed. One of these was to resolve a couple minor issues between the corporation’s executives and its staff. For a couple of years the Board of Governors had discussed the possibility of purchasing a group life insurance plan for employees. There had been frequent delays, however, as the corporation was nervous about the financial expenditure involved. When Murray noted at the July 1939 Board of Governors meeting that 85% of employees had given their approval to a policy which involved the CBC paying only 10% of the premium, however, the plan was approved. For Murray, Frigon, and the Board of Governors, this was another step in the process of showing their appreciation to the staff. Throughout its early years the CBC used every available opportunity to praise employees for their work and dedication to the principle of national broadcasting. This was only furthered with the success of the Royal Tour – which Frigon noted was “a nightmare for some of our men” – as the staff had produced successful

²⁸ Marcel Carter to Director General of Engineering, September 5, 1952. LAC RG 41 Vol. 77 File 3-9.

broadcasts following “many months of difficult preparatory work and then 32 days of nerve racking activity.”²⁹ While the CBC offered bonuses and gifts to the staff following the Tour, it continued to strive to improve relations with its employees – although Staff Councils were not established until 1941.³⁰ While it could be argued that this was intended to discourage unionization within the corporation, there was no doubt that Murray, Frigon, and the Board of Governors were appreciative of their staff’s effort and understood the work that had been done through the CBC’s first three years.

A much more pressing issue, however, was the lingering anger from the controversial period prior to the King and Queen’s arrival in May. For as much as the Royal Tour brought positive press for the CBC, the scandals of early 1939 had not been completely forgotten. In June, Alan Plaunt wrote Murray to note that he had heard reports from Vancouver that private stations frequently accused the CBC of censorship any time a program was denied because it was deemed to contravene the regulations. He argued that “there is no doubt that...in some parts of the country we are being made to appear as an instrument of repression” and “it seems to me that the time has come finally to dispose of the impression and in a positive way to ‘sell’ our no-censorship philosophy, which, as I see it, is a very significant feature of the system we are developing here.”³¹ He suggested that a memorandum be sent to all private stations re-affirming the corporation’s position on censorship and that Brockington address the issue in a *Chatting with the Listeners* broadcast. With the prospect of war, Plaunt believed that these were critical steps as “we are, undoubtedly, entering a period of very great stress and strain and I feel, and I

²⁹ Augustin Frigon, “Radio in Canada,” Talk delivered as part of the Engineering Institute of Canada Series, November 6, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 472 File 31-9.

³⁰ Staff Councils created an outlet through which employees could express their opinions. There was a National Council that received information through local Councils and passed along information to the appropriate department.

³¹ Alan Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, June 12, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 3 File 25.

know you will agree, that it is profoundly important to strengthen our position in these respects.”³²

What emerged from these discussions was the “Statement of Policy with Respect to Controversial Broadcasting,” also known as the White Paper. The document outlined the corporation’s policies and procedures for handling controversial material with Provision 34 clearly stating the CBC’s core policy: “The Corporation does not believe in or practise censorship. It neither exercises itself, nor authorizes any private station to exercise, any restrictions on matter broadcast, other than those specifically set out in the printed Regulations issued by the Corporation in its capacity as the authority over all broadcasting in Canada.”³³ The statement also addressed, albeit indirectly, the controversies from the early part of the year. By pointing out that “the policy of the CBC is to prevent the air from falling under the control of wealth or any other power,” the White Paper explained the reason for denying George McCullagh’s request for broadcast time.³⁴ The paper also set out specific procedures for handling political broadcasts and ensuring equal time during elections, thus completing the process that had begun following the 1937 Ontario provincial election.³⁵ This was critical as “the heavy volume of political broadcasts during elections was obviously harmful to the best interests of broadcasting, eliminating as it did a great number of the normal entertainment and educational programmes.”³⁶ In addition, what would prove particularly important for the corporation moving forward was the re-assertion of its belief that “the best safeguard of freedom of discussion is a policy which permits the largest possible opportunity for the expression of varying and opposite

³² Ibid.

³³ “Statement of Policy with Respect to Controversial Broadcasting,” July 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

³⁴ See Chapter 6 for further discussion on George McCullagh. “Statement of Policy with Respect to Controversial Broadcasting,” July 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

³⁵ See Chapter 6.

³⁶ Report on the History of the CBC, December 11, 1943. LAC RG 41 Vol. 165 File 11-3.

opinions. It believes that as largely as possible all main points of view should be presented equally and fairly.”³⁷

The corporation’s commitment to this policy, however, would be tested with Canada’s declaration of war on Germany on September 10. The outbreak of war was not a surprise and the CBC already had some arrangements in place to deal with the situation. As early as September 1938 Felix Greene of the BBC sent Murray plans outlining how “an official ministry of information is to be set up” that would send official bulletins to the CBC.³⁸ Despite the planning and the likelihood of conflict, the outbreak of war did throw the corporation’s operations into flux and there was great uncertainty about everything from programming commitments to traffic procedures. In a memo to all employees, Murray conceded that the executive had not yet determined wartime procedures, but, with many employees eager to enlist in the armed forces, he noted that “as soon as the structure of our emergency organization has taken shape, there will be adjustment of staff to permit as many as may be spared to join the Colours.”³⁹ He also stressed the critical role that all employees had in the war effort:

In modern warfare, broadcasting is an essential part of the front line of defence and attack. We shall all be subject to strain and stress of war conditions and without the stimulus of danger. Nevertheless, I am confident we shall carry on with that quiet determination that is born of a consciousness not only of the importance of our task, but also the rightness of our cause.⁴⁰

The war presented an unprecedented challenge not only for the CBC, but for all broadcasters, and through the fall it was a constant struggle to meet that challenge.

³⁷ “Statement of Policy with Respect to Controversial Broadcasting,” July 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

³⁸ Felix Greene to Gladstone Murray, September 26, 1938. LAC RG 41 Vol. 905 File PG10-9.

³⁹ CBC Internal Memorandum WEM-3, Gladstone Murray to All Employees, September 12, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 438 File 27-9-5.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

One of the first obstacles presented by the war was determining how to proceed with the program schedule. As it struggled to find a balance between information and entertainment through early September, the corporation postponed a good portion of its schedule in favour of a more flexible formula. The feeling was that in this way it could better respond to the changing situation and, in the event of a major development, provide immediate updates over the national network without fear of disrupting a commercial program.⁴¹ In addition, the corporation also postponed broadcasts that were in the planning stage. For example, with the completion of the transmitter at Watrous, the Prairie Provinces were eager to initiate educational broadcasts similar to those in British Columbia. On August 28, Fred McNally, the Deputy Minister of the Alberta Department of Education, wrote Murray with suggestions for establishing educational broadcasts for the region. When Murray responded on September 6, he expressed his support for the idea but, in pointing out that such a plan would require hiring new staff, noted that “it is difficult...to say whether during this period of national emergency we shall be in a position to make any new appointments to our staff.”⁴² For the corporation, the start of the war meant figuring out what could be broadcast and how it could be broadcast – anything that did not contribute to that effort was simply not a priority. Frigon summarized the CBC’s position in the fall of 1940 when he stated that “in Canada, the unlimited possibilities of radio broadcasting are placed at the service of the nation; through radio, our war effort is activated and our national unity is fortified.”⁴³

Just as the corporation struggled to figure out what to broadcast, so too did private stations. As war became increasingly likely through the summer, private stations were asking

⁴¹ Over time the schedule was “organized that listeners might get dependable news at definitely established periods supplemented by special talks and commentaries, without disturbance to the balance of general programs of music and entertainment.” CBC Annual Report, 1939-1940. LAC MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

⁴² Gladstone Murray to G. Fred McNally, September 6, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 860 File PG4-1-7-1.

⁴³ Augustin Frigon, “Radio in Canada,” Talk delivered as part of the Engineering Institute of Canada Series, November 6, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 472 File 31-9.

questions about the possibility of censorship with greater regularity. In responding to these questions, Horace Stovin pointed out that “it is impossible to accurately forecast the set up of a censor bureau but it is possible that press and radio will both come under the chief censor appointed by the Government if and when” it is necessary.⁴⁴ Four days later, the recommendations for censorship over radio were released, which, in addition to calling for tighter adherence to the broadcast regulations, recommended that “all station managers be served with the Oath of Allegiance.”⁴⁵ In addition, the CBC’s Finance Committee met on September 8 and discussed how it would meet the financial stress caused by the war. It was ultimately determined that the corporation should cut all non-essential capital expenditures and all future expenditures be carefully examined in the context of wartime services.⁴⁶

Some of the most prominent future expenditures were the programs that had already been booked for the fall. Normally, arrangements for the fall season would be in their late stages in August, but given the uncertainty of the time, the corporation was wary about making commitments that it may not be able to fulfill. Even the annual Christmas Broadcast, which had been a staple of the corporation’s schedule since 1936, was thrown into question. When R.A. Gibson, Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, asked if “an Eskimo could be brought to [the] station to join the empire broadcast at Christmas,” Murray responded that “the sudden turn of events in Europe has altered our programmes considerably and it will be a certain time before they settle down to normal and before plans for future broadcasts are made.”⁴⁷ This

⁴⁴ Horace Stovin to Neill, September 2, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 237 File 11-29.

⁴⁵ Recommendation with Reference to Censorship of Radio Broadcasting in Canada, September 6, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 237 File 11-29.

⁴⁶ Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the CBC Finance Committee, September 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

⁴⁷ R.A. Gibson to Gladstone Murray, August 29, 1939; Gladstone Murray to R.A. Gibson, September 7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 918 File PG18-24.

level of uncertainty filtered throughout the staff as, according to Director of Women's Programs Elizabeth Long, "none of us had any idea of what would be required."⁴⁸

With all this uncertainty, it was critical for the corporation to establish how it would address the war: initially it was felt that discussion of the conflict be restricted to news bulletins. Long noted that this presented a major challenge to announcers as "every broadcaster wanted to mention war, because it was foremost in everyone's mind, and I think back on those first afternoon broadcasts to the National network that I had arranged, and realize how inadequate we all were at the time of their broadcast."⁴⁹ From the corporation's perspective, however, it could not be too careful in ensuring that not only was information accurate, but also that it did not present a possible danger to Canada. In late September, for instance, weather reports were eliminated on all stations in (and east of) Montreal. The decision, which was requested by the Navy, was made by the Department of Transport and "was for the purpose of preventing the reception of such reports by submarines of enemy ships, which might be located off the coast of Canada."⁵⁰ For its part the CBC did not express any objection to the restriction and was eager to cooperate with the Department of Transport on most wartime measures.⁵¹

Where working with the Department to control weather broadcasts was simple as local stations controlled the bulletins, determining how to deal with foreign broadcasts was a much more difficult task. This was particularly true for the American programs that continued to make up a significant portion of Canadian stations' schedules. In a 1978 dissertation, Roger Ronson pointed out that, with the United States remaining neutral, private stations were put in an

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Long, Unpublished Memoirs. LAC RG 41 Vol. 405 File 23-1-6.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The restrictions on weather bulletins initially included the print press as well, although those were eased in December. Donald Manson to Gladstone Murray, September 25, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 853 File PG1-19.

⁵¹ Any restrictions on broadcasting during the early days of the war came from the Department of Transport. While the government wanted to maintain control of information during the conflict, the CBC was not discussed in the special session of the House of Commons from September 7 to 13.

uncomfortable situation as “the public advocacy of further American programs became more difficult.”⁵² With the United States staying out of the war, the CBC was concerned that American programs may contain anti-war messages. In September, the three American networks – NBC, CBS, and MBS – mutually agreed to a set of rules governing all war broadcasts. The rules stressed that radio coverage of the situation in Europe allow listeners to be fully informed about the war. In cautioning broadcasters against airing speeches from Europe, the agreement stated that “it is essential that fairness to all belligerents be maintained and that this phase of the operations be carried out in such a way that the American audience shall be as completely and fairly informed as possible.”⁵³

This policy would have concerned the CBC as it meant that material that questioned or critiqued the war effort could be released over the national network through an American program. In an effort to monitor the material coming from the American networks the CBC had a representative – identified as Mrs. H. Swabey – in New York reviewing the situation. She reported on September 19 that she had made contact with NBC and that “they are more than willing to cooperate in any possible way.”⁵⁴ Five days later she reported that members of the MBS staff were taking her out to lunch and that the network was eager to have more CBC programs on its schedule.⁵⁵ While the reports were positive, they did not completely address the concerns over anti-war (or pro-peace) content and Canadian stations remained cautious in their approach to the American networks.

⁵² Roger Ronson, “Canadian Broadcasting Policy and the Private Broadcasters: 1936-1968,” Department of Political Economy, University of Toronto, 1976. LAC RG 41 Vol. 411 File 24-23.

⁵³ National Association of Broadcasters Press Release, “Radio Networks Adopt Rules for War Broadcasts,” September 11, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 175 File 11-17-6-1.

⁵⁴ Mrs. H. Swabey, “Reports of New York Representative,” September 19, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 488 File 2-3-3-10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

It should be noted that the American networks' willingness to open their offices to the CBC and coordinate during this period can be seen as evidence of the close working relationships that had been formed over the previous three years. Since 1936 the CBC had adopted a continentalist perspective in order to gain concessions in international agreements and develop mutually beneficial connections with broadcasters throughout North America. With the United States staying out of the war in the fall of 1939, there was a possibility that tension over potential anti-war programs being sent to Canada would fracture these relationships. That the American networks did not dismiss the corporation's concerns and instead opened their operations to some CBC oversight demonstrates the value they placed on Canada's national public broadcaster. It would have been easy to dismiss the CBC's concerns and balk at a corporation representative in their offices, but clearly the networks did not want to alienate the corporation and hoped to preserve their relationships with the CBC. While the American networks complied with the overall American policy of tacit support for the Allies, there were programs advocating neutrality airing in the United States after Canada declared war.⁵⁶ Through its efforts in promoting continental integration in North American broadcasting, the corporation had forged and maintained positive relationships that, in the early days of the war, ensured that those messages, and anything else that could be seen as compromising Canada's war effort, did not make it to the national network through American programs.

⁵⁶ Sidney Pash, J. Garry Clifford, and Robert H. Ferrell discuss the United States' position towards the Allies prior to its entry into the war in their respective essays in *The United States and the Second World War*. See: J. Garry Clifford and Robert H. Ferrell, "Roosevelt at the Rubicon: The Great Convoy Debate of 1941," in *The United States and the Second World War: New Perspectives on Diplomacy, War, and the Home Front*, edited by G. Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 10-37; Sidney Pash, "Containment, Rollback, and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1933-1941," in *The United States and the Second World War: New Perspectives on Diplomacy, War, and the Home Front*, edited by G. Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 38-67.

What was a much bigger concern than American programs, however, was foreign language broadcasts. Just before the start of the war, A.B.M. Bell recommended amending the regulations to include a requirement calling for all foreign language programs to obtain approval prior to broadcast. In explaining the reason for the requirement he noted that “it is easy for broadcasters, by speaking in languages other than English or French, to avoid Regulation requirements and detection alike.”⁵⁷ Three weeks later, stations were advised that, as part of the regulations stemming from the war, “spoken word broadcasts in Canada in languages other than French and English are prohibited until further notice.”⁵⁸ This regulation was primarily aimed at small private stations, generally based in communities with significant non-English or French speaking populations, which aired foreign language programs. In addition, this was part of a larger directive where stations were encouraged to further their review of scripts because of the possibility of announcements being used as code messages. Stations were cautioned to be vigilant as “there could be relayed information likely to prejudice the defence of Canada or the efficient prosecution of the war.”⁵⁹ The policy did not just apply to the spoken word, however, as foreign music was also suspect. In June 1940, Stovin informed all stations that “the works of contemporary German and Italian composers or of those whose compositions might be too closely associated in the mind of the listener with either the Italian or German nation should not, I think you will agree, be broadcast.”⁶⁰

It should be noted, however, that there had been debates over the advisability of foreign language programs throughout 1939. In January the Canadian Corps Association wrote C.D.

⁵⁷ A.B.M. Bell to Horace Stovin, August 31, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 147 File 9-11-1.

⁵⁸ CBC Circular Letter No. C3, Horace Stovin to All Stations, September 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 154 File 9-34.

⁵⁹ CBC Circular Letter No. C11, Horace Stovin to All Broadcasting Stations, October 10, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 74 File 3.

⁶⁰ CBC Circular Letter No. 99, Horace Stovin to All Station Managers, June 26, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 33 File 1-9.

Howe to urge “that legislation be enacted to prevent any language other than French or English [from] being used on any Radio Station in Canada.”⁶¹ In February the Canadian Legion reported hearing complaints about foreign language programs and cautioned that it would be easy for a speaker to deviate from their submitted continuity “and swing into speeches which are decidedly disloyal and calculated to stir up controversy and sectionalism.”⁶² When the Acting German Consul gave a speech over CKAC Montreal, the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire passed a resolution recommending that foreign language programs be prohibited.⁶³ In each case it was noted that there was no regulation preventing foreign language broadcasts and, in certain cases, foreign language features were welcome on local stations.⁶⁴ Another impediment to any regulation was that several of these programs were sponsored. When some listeners complained about Yiddish being heard on CBL Toronto, Augustin Frigon did not want to create a precedent by prohibiting the programs and noted that the “sponsors have been very nice about it and have accepted it.”⁶⁵

With all these restrictions put in place because of the war, the CBC needed to revise its schedule in order to not only fill broadcast hours but also to meet the demands of a public eagerly awaiting news and information from Europe. In an effort to meet that demand, the Special Events Department developed a series of programs with the cooperation of the armed forces. When troops were leaving for Halifax in November, the CBC was granted permission to broadcast the departure, which R.T. Bowman said led to “some good broadcasts, particularly as

⁶¹ T.M. Medland to C.D. Howe, January 5, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 154 File 9-34.

⁶² J.C.G. Herwig to Gladstone Murray, February 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 154 File 9-34.

⁶³ Mrs. L.B. Smart to Gladstone Murray, June 9, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 154 File 9-34.

⁶⁴ Rural communities of eastern European immigrants on the Prairies were often cited as major beneficiaries of such broadcasts.

⁶⁵ Augustin Frigon telegram to Gladstone Murray, February 28, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 154 File 9-34.

the soldiers march to the station and board their trains.”⁶⁶ Another feature was *A Day in the Life of a Recruit*, a forty-five minute program that aired in November and was also sent for broadcast on the BBC.⁶⁷ These programs not only served to provide information about the military but also fulfilled the corporation’s promise to cooperate with the government’s war effort. As Howe stressed in a letter to Brockington, “our common purpose must be to co-ordinate all activities of Government for the prosecution of the war, and to avoid confusion.”⁶⁸ In addition, the corporation increased “the number of network broadcasts of an Empire nature” in an effort to strengthen its imperial relationships.⁶⁹ In this regard, the corporation could be criticized for serving as an outlet for government propaganda, an accusation that had frequently been levied, but in the context of the early days of war there were few who questioned the decision. With the nation mobilizing, the CBC felt as though it was simply filling its role in that struggle.

Part of that included providing time to members of the government to discuss Canada’s war effort. On October 31, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King gave a talk over the national network entitled “Organization of Canada’s War Effort.”⁷⁰ Over the course of the next nine months, twelve other talks would be given by various cabinet members to outline different aspects of Canada’s wartime agenda. In a similar vein, the CBC agreed in December to make periods available for broadcasts to assist the War Loan Drive.⁷¹ And in January 1940, Stovin sent the scripts of forty-six spot announcements promoting War Savings Certificates to private stations across the country. Under normal circumstances the spots would have been in violation

⁶⁶ R.T. Bowman to Ernest Bushnell, November 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 251 File 11-39-1.

⁶⁷ Charles Jennings to Frank Willis, November 16, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 251 File 11-39-1.

⁶⁸ C.D. Howe to Leonard Brockington, September 13, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 14 File 15.

⁶⁹ T.W. Baker to Controller of Programmes for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, March 21, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 379 File 20-3-10.

⁷⁰ William Lyon Mackenzie King, July 29, 1940. Dominion of Canada Report of Debates House of Commons; First Session Nineteenth Parliament, 2090.

⁷¹ Ernest Bushnell to Gladstone Murray, December 19, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 744 File 18-15W-12.

of the regulations, but Stovin added that “we are pleased to advise you that, in view of the fact that these sustaining announcements are regarded in the nature of public service, the restrictions on spot announcements...are waived for them.”⁷² These were all part of the corporation’s war policy which stated that it would actively contribute to the nation’s war effort. As was noted in the 1939-1940 Annual Report:

Immediately upon the outbreak of war on September 1, the Press and Information division prepared to assist Canada’s war efforts by giving maximum publicity to all broadcasts concerning these efforts. During the first months of the war, numerous pictorial and story releases were circulated, calling attention to prominent speakers on the air, to feature programs broadcast in connection with Canada’s war effort, and to the CBC’s staff with the mobile unit overseas.

For the CBC, serving an active role in the war mobilization effort was part of its continued emphasis on public service.

The Talks Department had a more difficult task, however, as it attempted to address the war in a balanced manner without seeming critical of the effort. In order to find that balance, the department tried to find informed and respected speakers to discuss the conflict, both in the European and domestic contexts. One of the more notable of these was Matthew Halton, at the time a reporter for the *Toronto Star* in England. D.C. Buchanan knew Halton and wrote him on behalf of the CBC to ask that he put together a special script for broadcast in Canada. After assuring him that officials at the *Star* had approved the idea, Buchanan noted that “the talk, which we cannot afford to take directly by beam because of the excessive costs, can be recorded in London and shipped to us along with your manuscript.”⁷³ In his response, Halton, who bemoaned his decision to lease a home by saying “for six years I had been prophesying war – and then let myself in for an expensive house practically as war was being declared,” agreed to

⁷² Horace Stovin Memorandum to private broadcasting stations, May 23, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 744 File 18-15W-13.

⁷³ D.C. Buchanan to Matthew Halton, November 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 204 File 11-18-11-47.

put together a script and expressed interest in the possibility of doing more.⁷⁴ The talk was sent to Buchanan the same day and was received so positively that when Halton was in Washington the following summer, arrangements were made to have him as a regular contributor to various talks programs. Halton would go on to become one of the more celebrated war correspondents for the CBC and is highlighted in the Canadian War Museum for his coverage of the Battle of Ortona in December 1943.⁷⁵

While Halton was praised for his coverage of the situation in Europe, the corporation was also eager to have commentary from a domestic perspective. Two weeks after Canada's declaration of war, Gladstone Murray wrote to Montreal reporter Leslie Roberts to gauge his interest in doing a series of talks focusing "particularly upon the North American continent."⁷⁶ Roberts was intrigued with the idea but felt that an interview format would be better as it would allow representative Canadians to express their opinion on the war.⁷⁷ For Roberts, the interview technique was critical as "such a series is urgently needed at the present time because the aims of the democratic nations involved in the present European struggle can be best presented to the people of North America in general by Canadians, in view of the close and manifold relationships which exist between the Dominions and the United States."⁷⁸ With the CBC attempting to save money wherever possible, Roberts' devotion to the idea was tested when Murray informed him that he would not be paid for the series and that "the best we can do... is to attempt to cover your expenses, realizing that you will be at considerable loss in your own

⁷⁴ Matthew Halton to D.C. Buchanan, December 15, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 204 File 11-18-11-47.

⁷⁵ In the Canadian War Museum's exhibit on the Italian Campaign, Halton is identified as "the senior war correspondent with the CBC's Mobile Recording Unit. His chilling account of Ortona made the battle known worldwide."

⁷⁶ Gladstone Murray to Leslie Roberts, September 25, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 480 File 11-18-11-94.

⁷⁷ The term 'representative Canadians' meant that geographic diversity had to be maintained while people in a wide variety of jobs could present different points of view.

⁷⁸ Leslie Roberts Memorandum to Gladstone Murray, October 29, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 480 File 11-18-11-94.

income because of preoccupation with this work.”⁷⁹ Despite this, Roberts signed on and the weekly series made its debut from Toronto on November 17.

While the corporation was happy that Roberts agreed to do the series without financial compensation, it was clear that difficult financial decisions needed to be made throughout the organization. The requirements of war brought new expenses for the corporation – one of the biggest being the addition of stations to the national network. In 1943, Chief Engineer Gordon Olive argued that “with the intensive development and excellent provision of equipment that was made necessary for the Royal Visit broadcasts, the CBC found itself in a splendid position to carry on its increased responsibilities at the outbreak of the Second World War,” but that did not mean that further improvements were not required to adequately meet the war’s demands.⁸⁰ On September 13, for example, Hume Lethbridge of CKLN Nelson, British Columbia received a letter informing him that “from time to time your station may be required to carry programs in the national interest,” the cost of which would be covered by the CBC.⁸¹

While expanding the network’s coverage was seen as a vital part of the war effort, it only represented a small portion of the corporation’s added expenses. When the Finance Committee met on September 8, it estimated that additional operating expenditures on account of the war would amount to \$300,000.⁸² These estimates were for the whole of the conflict, but by March 1940 the CBC had spent \$85,372.68 directly as a result of the war – a total that did not include

⁷⁹ Gladstone Murray to Leslie Roberts, November 14, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 480 File 11-18-11-94.

⁸⁰ Gordon Olive, “Radio Communications,” *The Engineering Journal*, May 1943. LAC RG 41 Vol. 356 File 19-6-1.

⁸¹ This was part of a wider push to include more stations for programs of national importance. The Finance Committee estimated that this would cost around \$40,000. Horace Stovin to Hume Lethbridge, September 13, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 105 File 3-18-46.

⁸² The estimate included: \$2,000 for flood lighting, \$50,000 for guards or military protection, \$17,500 for extra staff, \$2,500 for an additional teletype, \$10,000 for telephone, telegraph, and cable, \$50,000 from lost commercial revenue, \$5,000 for travelling, \$50,000 for duplicate lines, \$50,000 for the emergency extension of network time, \$23,000 for unforeseen contingencies. Minutes of the Ninth Meeting of the CBC Finance Committee, September 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

capital expenditures for improvements to the national network that had been approved earlier in the year.⁸³ In October, the Board of Governors approved \$20,000 for improvements to CBO Ottawa, \$5,000 for the expansion of CBF Montreal, and approximately \$80,000 to re-establish CBM Montreal in Marieville, Quebec.⁸⁴

It should be noted, however, that despite the additional expenses the corporation refused to allow commercial sponsorship of wartime programming. When advertising agencies began to lobby for the opportunity to sponsor *With The Troops* in the spring of 1940, the Board of Governors passed a resolution stating that “the policy enunciated at the time of the Royal Visit prohibiting commercial exploitation of the Royal Visit, either directly or indirectly, be extended to include the prohibition of all commercial exploitation of Canada’s armed forces either here or abroad.”⁸⁵ This meant that there needed to be stricter control over expenses. In October, Murray sent a memorandum to all department heads outlining the need for thrift during the war. He reminded them that during the Great War people “were called upon to express patriotism in the form of thrift and economy,” which in certain cases meant writing on both sides of paper and re-using envelopes.⁸⁶ While “it may be that similar heroic measures will not be necessary this time,” Murray cautioned employees that “we are required to induce the practice of thrift by persistent critical examination of all commitments, even before those commitments are made.”⁸⁷

⁸³ Minutes of the Twelfth Meeting of the CBC Finance Committee, June 1, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3043.

⁸⁴ CBO Ottawa renovated its studios and modernized its broadcasting equipment. CBF’s office space was extended. Re-establishing CBM included \$45,895 for a transmitter, \$24,750 for the antenna tower, and \$9,000 for the land. Minutes of the Twelfth Meeting of the Board of Governors, October 16-17, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the Fourteenth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, April 15-16, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

⁸⁶ Gladstone Murray memorandum to All Department Heads, October 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 438 File 27-9-5.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

In this way the corporation was searching for any possible savings – whether they be internal or external spending. In the summer of 1940, for example, the CBC made arrangements with Trans-Canada Airlines to provide corporation staff with a 15% discount, thus reducing travel costs.⁸⁸ Because the corporation had a history of strong fiscal management (reporting budget surpluses through its first three years), however, any cuts or restrictions to the budget were not as drastic as may have been expected. In fact, it could be argued that they did not even represent a major burden for the CBC as it was able to continue reporting budget surpluses throughout the war. For Murray and Treasurer Harry Baldwin, the corporation's ability to immediately respond to the requirements of the war without depleting its resources was validation of its financial policies through its first three years. Earlier in the year there had been questions about the advisability of maintaining a surplus, but in the fall it was seen as an asset and strength of the organization.

As the Second World War intensified in Europe, the CBC continued to stress its significance to the domestic war effort. In October, Frigon addressed the Rotary Club of Montreal where he highlighted the changes in communication since 1914, “when the only sources of information were the ‘extras’ published by newspapers,” and noted that with the expansion of radio “it appears that we are living in a very much changed world.”⁸⁹ Frigon lamented that “this great opportunity which is offered to humanity to promote peace and goodwill is too frequently used to broadcast discontent and promulgate war,” yet remained optimistic as “the public is master of the situation and some day, when people stop listening to propagandists and will be wise enough to distinguish between truth and falsehood, radio will

⁸⁸ George G. Wakeman to Alan Plaunt, July 2, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, July 2, 1940.

⁸⁹ Augustin Frigon, “Radio in Wartime,” Address delivered to Rotary Club of Montreal, October 24, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 431 File 27-1.

concentrate on making the world a better place to live in.”⁹⁰ The CBC believed it was working towards this end by informing the public about the war and “breaking down internal barriers and prejudices.”⁹¹ While the CBC had spent its first three years trying to unify the country through radio, the war brought added significance to that effort and a greater awareness of the corporation’s place in national life.

But just as the CBC started to settle into its wartime routine, new questions were being asked about its operations and sustainability. While this was not a new phenomenon for the corporation, the source of these questions and criticisms meant that they needed to be taken very seriously. At the Board of Governors meeting in July, there was discussion as to the advisability of conducting a survey of the CBC’s staff and operations. Despite the fact that the Parliamentary Committee had issued a positive report, it was felt that a thorough internal review would be beneficial. The issue had actually come up at the Finance Committee meeting in April where it was suggested that Alan Plaunt collaborate on the survey. Less than a year earlier, Plaunt had notified Brockington that while he would continue to serve on the Board of Governors, he planned on taking a step back from the corporation. In his letter announcing the decision, he wrote that “I have been willing, in the promotional period, to do anything and everything that appeared necessary. But that period is now concluded.”⁹² Plaunt also noted that other obligations required his full attention and admitted that “the establishment of a national system has been my main preoccupation for a long – perhaps too long – time.”⁹³ At the meeting in July, therefore, Plaunt was initially reluctant about the idea, reiterating on several occasions that he would not

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ CBC Monthly Guide, October 1942. LAC RG 41 Vol. 57 File 2-3-10-2.

⁹² Alan Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, October 12, 1938. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 8 File 9.

⁹³ Ibid.

participate unless he had the Board of Governors' full support.⁹⁴ After receiving assurances that not only did he have complete support but also that he was essential to the project, Plaunt agreed. The resolution authorizing the review also confirmed that James Thompson of Clarkson, Gordon, and Dilworth Chartered Accountants, would prepare a supplementary report.⁹⁵

In addition to securing any documents Thompson requested, Plaunt travelled across the country to visit the various production centres. Early in the process, however, Plaunt's frustration with the corporation started to show. In a letter to Donald Manson he wrote that "I am rather shocked that you, like [Murray] and [Brockington], have got to the point of taking my participation at all times (and, really, any old time) for granted" and suggested that "that, I suppose, is the penalty for having all these years, laid myself open to assist whenever my assistance appeared necessary. That was done...because one was unwilling to take any risks involving the baby (of which you and I were the joint obstetricians!)"⁹⁶ He added that once he was completed with the report "I shall certainly arrange an utterly different (and, incidently [sic], more self-respecting) relationship, or, which is more probable, retire completely."⁹⁷ Plaunt's open discontent with the corporation was an alarming sign given his place as one of the principal champions of public broadcasting in Canada. He was a highly respected individual in the industry whose opinion carried plenty of weight. Ira Dilworth, for instance, wrote Plaunt in August after the two had met in Vancouver and said that "nothing has encouraged me more since I joined the Corporation, than my conversations with you. I feel that out of your consideration of

⁹⁴ Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, July 5-7, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Alan Plaunt to Donald Manson, July 18, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 8 File 17.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

the whole setup of the Corporation you will be able to make a report which, if acted upon, will result in a real advance for the CBC.”⁹⁸

Even if Plaunt remained a respected figure in broadcasting circles, he was becoming more controversial for his political beliefs. In 1933 he had helped found the New Canada Movement, which sought to bring rural youth together in order to “discover and support the measures necessary to bring about a ‘New Deal’ for Canada.”⁹⁹ What created more controversy, however, was his role in founding the Neutrality League, which led to tension with some members of the corporation. Michael Nolan argues that Plaunt’s position on neutrality was not surprising as it was simply the manifestation of his belief that Canada had the right to determine its own foreign policy – a position which had long guided his actions, including his position on radio.¹⁰⁰ Even if the position was to be expected, it still served to cause a rift between Plaunt and some of his colleagues, in particular Gladstone Murray. In September, Murray wrote C.D. Howe to address Plaunt’s accusations that the General Manager had engaged in a smear campaign because of Plaunt’s position on neutrality. Murray was not pleased with the allegations and reminded Howe that he had recommended that Plaunt be appointed to a second term on the Board of Governors, saying that “I have a real admiration for Mr. Plaunt as a young Canadian of definite views and integrity and loyalty.”¹⁰¹ Despite that admiration, Murray hoped to clear his name “from the ridiculous accusation” and stated that “my problem with Mr. Plaunt is in terms

⁹⁸ Ira Dilworth to Alan Plaunt, August 19, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 2 File 4.

⁹⁹ Memorandum for Prospective Members of the New Canada Movement, n.d. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 10 File 5.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Nolan, *Foundations: Alan Plaunt and the Early Days of CBC Radio* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1986), 151-173.

¹⁰¹ Gladstone Murray to C.D. Howe, September 14, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 10 File 5.

of his distance from actuality; his remoteness from the tempo of this radio business; his inclination to reach conclusions or incomplete data.”¹⁰²

The personal animosity between the two may not have caused major problems, but Murray’s claim that Plaunt’s conclusions were based on incomplete data raised serious questions about how the survey would be received at CBC headquarters. Plaunt submitted his final report on September 30 and noted that while the information was mostly collected before the start of the war, the recommendations “attempt to indicate both the changes which are required if the Corporation is to render its maximum service in the war emergency, - indeed if it is not to break down due to serious internal deficiencies – and its long-term requirements if it is to survive and develop as an important national institution.”¹⁰³ Plaunt was thorough in his examination of the corporation’s operations and critical in his conclusions. He argued that further capital investments should be postponed until the corporation was in a position to increase its allowance for program production by \$500,000. While he found that most departments were adequately staffed, the Program Department needed to do a better job recruiting new talent as, in general, the production staff “badly requires overhauling.”¹⁰⁴ He was also critical of decentralization, arguing that Toronto should be the centre of English-language production, with Ottawa remaining the head office and Montreal serving “as the logical place” to centralize other services.¹⁰⁵ He also called for salaries to be adjusted based on actual responsibilities – which he believed would lead to “the elimination of legitimate discontent” – and for “careful management

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Alan Plaunt, “Report on the Organization and Personnel of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Prepared by Alan B. Plaunt at the Request of the Board of Governors in Accordance with its Resolutions of July 6, 1939,” September 30, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 47 File 2-3-3.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

and a reasonably efficient collection of licences” in order to increase the corporation’s revenues.¹⁰⁶

A week earlier, James Thompson submitted his report. And while perhaps not as critical as Plaunt’s, it too made suggestions for ways to improve the corporation’s day-to-day operations. Thompson primarily focused on the CBC’s structure and recommended that there be greater definition of responsibilities, particularly for management, “in order that the administration may be carried out smoothly and effectively.”¹⁰⁷ In addition, Thompson suggested that tighter financial controls be put in place and that the treasurer “be designated as financial controller, with enlarged duties and responsibilities.”¹⁰⁸ This was significant because until that point financial control was largely the responsibility of the General Manager. In addition, Thompson recommended that “the duties of the assistant general manager be enlarged so that he can assist the general manager in the administration of all departments and activities, having in mind the national character of the organization.”¹⁰⁹ By reducing the authority of the general manager, these recommendations could be seen as indictments on Murray’s performance in that role. From Plaunt’s perspective these steps needed to be taken immediately, otherwise “both the Corporation’s future and its effectiveness in the war period will be seriously jeopardized.”¹¹⁰

If Murray was dubious about Plaunt’s methodology, that scepticism did not filter into the Board of Governors, which initially responded positively to the recommendations. Following its meeting in January 1940, René Morin informed Plaunt, who had missed the meeting because of health concerns, that the Board was receptive to many of the suggestions and that the Finance

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ James Thompson, “Report on the Structural Organization and the Financial Administration of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation,” September 23, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 47 File 2-3-3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Alan Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, September 30, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 8 File 18.

Committee had already passed a resolution to enact stricter financial controls. He cautioned, however, that “you know too well how the Board functions to expect that such important recommendations as those which you make will be acted upon through decisions of a radical character abruptly taken.”¹¹¹ Plaunt responded by saying that “my own relationship to the Corporation necessarily depends on decisions to be taken at the forthcoming meeting.”¹¹² When no action was taken on his recommendations at the next – or subsequent – meetings, Plaunt grew increasingly irritated with the Board and, by the fall of 1940, had had enough with the CBC. On August 30, 1940 he wrote Morin, by this time Chairman of the Board, to officially resign from the corporation. In explaining his decision he wrote that:

I cannot continue, as a public trustee, to accept responsibility for an executive direction and internal organization in which I have long ceased to have confidence: I have been obliged reluctantly to conclude that the Board as a whole is unwilling to face the realities of this situation; two, that because of major deficits, rapidly becoming chronic, the Corporation is not properly organized adequately to fulfill its function in the war emergency or in the post-war period; three, that in these circumstances, it is unlikely to survive and develop on the lines conceived by Parliament; and finally, that having done my utmost to persuade my colleagues to take decisive action, I am left with the last resource of resignation in order to underline the need for it.¹¹³

The decision was met with some surprise and disappointment by corporation employees. Austin Weir, who had also worked at the CRBC, regretted that Plaunt was leaving at such a critical time, saying that “I am not sure whether [nationalized radio] ever needed you more.”¹¹⁴ James S. Thomson, a recent appointee to the Board of Governors, said that he deplored the decision

¹¹¹ Rene Morin to Alan Plaunt, January 23, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 3 File 12.

¹¹² Alan Plaunt to Rene Morin, January 20, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 8 File 19.

¹¹³ Alan Plaunt to Rene Morin, August 30, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 406 File 23-2-2.

¹¹⁴ E. Austin Weir to Alan Plaunt, October 25, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 5 File 5.

because Plaunt was “too valuable a member of the Board to go out in this fashion. The place to fight for your views is from within.”¹¹⁵

Perhaps one of the reasons why the reaction was so strong was because the corporation had lost Leonard Brockington a year earlier. With the start of the war, Brockington left the corporation to serve as a special assistant to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, writing in his resignation letter that “in assuming the important responsibility presently entrusted to me, I know you will agree on the wisdom of my resigning from the Chairmanship of the CBC.”¹¹⁶

Brockington recommended that Plaunt replace him as Chairman, but René Morin was selected instead. The loss of what was widely considered a strong and stable leader served to further concern members of the corporation who were worried about what Plaunt’s departure would mean for the public broadcaster. Despite pleas to return, Plaunt did not entertain the possibility of continuing his work with the corporation, not only because of his ideological differences, but also because of his health. The illness that had prevented him from attending the Board meeting in January was cancer. A year after his resignation, Plaunt died in Vancouver. Brockington penned an obituary for the *Free Press* in which he credited Plaunt for the development of radio in Canada: “The building of the chain of radio stations which the Canadian people today take for granted was his work. His was the original idea of a great public service ministering to Canadian unity the happiness of the Canadian people.”¹¹⁷ Brockington also praised Plaunt for his

¹¹⁵ James S. Thomson to Alan Plaunt, September 16, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 4 File 23.

¹¹⁶ Leonard Brockington’s Letter of Resignation, September 13, 1939. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 14 File 15.

¹¹⁷ Leonard Brockington, “Alan Plaunt,” *Free Press*, September 20, 1941. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 18 File 13.

dedication to the cause, pointing out that because of his wealth he could have enjoyed a life of leisure, but instead “he preferred to use his time, his gifts and his money for noble purposes.”¹¹⁸

While Plaunt died in 1941, in many ways his relationship with the CBC died two years earlier. His report on the corporation’s operations was his last major contribution as the rest of his time on the Board was spent lobbying for the implementation of his recommendations – most of which was done from a distance because he was too ill to travel. And with Brockington officially ending his relationship with the CBC at the same time, the corporation marked Christmas 1939 without the active contributions of two of the biggest figures from its first three years. As Knowlton Nash has written, without Plaunt and Brockington “the CBC board was less aggressive” and “to private broadcasters, the CBC leadership no longer seemed invincible.”¹¹⁹ Despite the dangers ahead, the corporation reflected on a year which included the triumph of the Royal Tour, the disappointment of scandals, and the uncertainty of war. For the CBC it was a transformational year that saw 29,889 broadcasts over 10,473 hours – the most it had ever done.¹²⁰ The corporation entered 1940 in the midst of a war that had fundamentally altered the way in which people listened to – and the way in which broadcasters programmed – radio.

Just as it had changed the landscape of broadcasting, the war had also shown where the corporation had been and how it had developed through its first three years. The war required a national network – the CBC had built one. The war required cooperation from American stations – the CBC had successfully entered the existing North American broadcasting structure. The war required remote equipment with experienced operators – the CBC had them from the Royal Tour. The war required the assistance of private stations – the CBC had worked hard to maintain

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Knowlton Nash, *The Swashbucklers: The Story of Canada’s Battling Broadcasters* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2001), 111.

¹²⁰ CBC Annual Report, 1939-1940. LAC MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

a congenial relationship with the CAB. The war required general broadcasting standards – the CBC had established regulations. The war required informed commentators – the CBC had built a strong Talks Department. The war required money – the CBC had a surplus and strong reserve funds. The war required care with controversial subjects – the CBC had learned through its censorship scandals. So while the initial scramble caused by the war threw the corporation into uncharted territory, it was able to rely on its experience to meet the demands. In order to survive the entirety of the war the corporation would continue to adapt and change – a need highlighted by Plaunt’s report – but it had time to find its way because it was in a position to immediately respond to the challenge. As an Ontario eighth-grader wrote in her school newspaper “the radio is knitting people closer together.”¹²¹ This was the role the CBC had set out to play when it started on November 2, 1936.

¹²¹ June Whan, “The Influence of Radio on Public Opinion,” *The Pelham Pnyx*, Vol. VIII, no. 8, April 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 400 File 23-1-3.

Conclusion

The corporation hoped that its success through the 1930s would continue as it turned the corner to the 1940s. Despite the internal tension that marked the end of 1939, the CBC looked back on its early years fondly. It had successfully overcome many of difficulties inherited by the CRBC, distinguished itself internationally, and legitimized its role as Canada's national broadcaster. By no means did it have universal approval in Canada, but it had taken the concept of a national public broadcaster and made it a reality. While the same could be said of the CRBC, it could also be argued that the commission's structural and administrative failures damaged national broadcasting's reputation to the point where the success of a new system was doubtful. When the CBC took over in November 1936 it was faced with a private sector that was largely disappointed with its dual regulatory and programming functions, a listening public that had generally rejected its predecessor, and a Minister who tended to vehemently disagree with its decisions. Add that to the fact that it started with a scattered national network that half the country could not access, an unsustainable wire line contract, and a lingering problem of American and Mexican interference, and there were serious questions over whether it could succeed. Over its first three years, the CBC proved that, indeed, it could.

Having built a national network, maintained a strong financial record, increased public relations efforts, and improved its programming, the CBC felt confident that it could continue to meet the demands caused by the Second World War. Where the reaction to the immediate uncertainty was swift, a sense of normalcy slowly seeped into its wartime operations. For as much as the war demanded a good deal of the staff's attention, the day-to-day issues of network connections, scheduling, and booking talent still needed to be done. Similarly, organizations that had lobbied the corporation through its first three years did not cease with the start of the war.

For example, at its January 1940 meeting, the Board of Governors heard from the Lord's Day Alliance about the issue of airing sporting events on Sundays. The group had long objected to the practice and was again called to action after the CBC aired a Sunday World Series game in October. The Board agreed and passed a resolution prohibiting sports broadcasts on Sundays, although it did allow that "if ... the world series baseball, or other major sporting events are carried by the CBC and it so happens that one of the games falls on a Sunday, then permission may be granted for this to be carried on a subsidiary hookup not including any CBC stations."¹

Increasingly, however, there were questions over who would execute such policies as the war created uncertainty with respect to the corporation's staff. As employees started to leave for the military, CBC administration worried that those who remained were overworked. To address this, Maurice Gaboury was hired to serve as the corporation's Welfare Officer. The memorandum announcing the appointment informed the staff that Gaboury "will visit all the CBC centres periodically and will be available for consultation and advice to all groups and individual members of the staff."² As employees continued to leave, however, the corporation was left scrambling. Exemptions to military service were granted for employees who were deemed essential to the corporation, but this did not solve the problem. In July 1942, Murray was warned that staff shortages were coming and that "it shall be necessary for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to replace, wherever possible, its physically fit male employees of military age with women."³ Further complicating matters was that the war required more staff, as the number of CBC employees grew from 513 on March 31, 1939 to 657 on December 31,

¹ Minutes of the Thirteenth Meeting of the CBC Board of Governors, January 22, 1940. Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) RG 41 Vol. 615 Microfilm Reel T3040.

² CBC Internal Memorandum No. 136, Augustin Frigon and Gladstone Murray to Heads of Divisions, Regional Representatives, and Station Managers for communication to all staff, August 28, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 53 File 2-3-8-2.

³ L. La Flèche to Gladstone Murray, July 20, 1942. LAC RG 41 Vol. 49 File 2-3-6.

1941.⁴ This larger staff also meant that the corporation needed more space and in May 1940 it rented 14,700 square feet of new space in Toronto.⁵

In a lot of ways, it seemed as though the corporation was coping with the challenges presented by the war, but, as was noted in the White Paper of 1939, “broadcasting is a changing and expanding art.”⁶ The CBC’s adaptation to war conditions may have seemed smooth at first, but it soon started to struggle with the demands. Gladstone Murray’s drinking and expense account increasingly drew suspicion and he was out as General Manager in 1942.⁷ At the same time, accusations that the corporation was an elaborate propaganda machine intensified. In its 1941 Annual Report the CBC acknowledged that it was supportive of the war effort, but viewed it differently from those who believed it was spreading propaganda:

the principal tasks of the Corporation during this period were to keep Canadians fully and accurately informed as to the progress of the war in all its phases, at home and abroad, and to do what it could to link the war effort more closely to the life of the individual Canadian in order to inspire his confidence, to strengthen his daily effort, and to stimulate his growing desire to play the fullest possible part in his country’s struggle.⁸

This public acknowledgment that the corporation was actively encouraging support for the war was a significant change from its pre-war policies. The CBC had been extremely careful in trying to ensure that conflicting viewpoints were offered on all political or public policy issues, but that seemed to change with the war.

⁴ W.H. Brodie’s notes for 1942 Parliamentary Committee, January 8, 1942. LAC RG 41 Vol. 288 File 14-1-6.

⁵ The corporation rented the fourth and fifth floors of Prudential House, located at 55 York St. The cost of the rental was \$1,225 a month. CBC Contract with Prudential Assurance Company Limited, May 1, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 93 File 3-16.

⁶ Statement of Policy with Respect to Controversial Broadcasting, July 8, 1939. LAC RG 41 Vol. 32 File 1-1.

⁷ The details of Murray’s departure can be found elsewhere and do not represent a critical element of this study. It should be noted, however, that the circumstances surrounding the end of his tenure do not take away from his accomplishments with the corporation or his effectiveness as General Manager during the CBC’s formative years.

⁸ CBC Annual Report, 1940-1941. MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

Knowlton Nash argues that the war represented the beginning of a sea change in Canadian broadcasting, whereby private stations started to eclipse the CBC as the most influential force in the industry. This decline was particularly disappointing to long-time supporters of public broadcasting, including Alan Plaunt. Four months before his death he wrote to Brooke Claxton “because I am deeply depressed about the latest CBC developments.”⁹ Furthering foreshadowing the corporation’s struggles, Donald Buchanan, who had been promoted to Supervisor of Public Affairs Broadcasts in July 1939, added his name to the list of long-time staff members who resigned. In his November 1940 resignation letter Buchanan lamented the changes in the organization and claimed that “since September 1939 expression of opinion has been tolerated on only a few topics of a cultural nature, and on one or two of economic and social concern, and even then I have had to strive from month to month to gain the admission of these few tolerated exchanges of opinion into the programme schedules.”¹⁰ Over time, more people started to agree with Buchanan’s perspective and the corporation was forced into a defensive position. Rather than proactively address concerns over its operations, which had been a hallmark of its formative period, the CBC found itself the subject of increased scrutiny and suspicion during the war.

While this hurt the corporation’s reputation, it managed to maintain the support of a majority of Canadians. In November 1942, the Toronto *Star* published results of a Gallup Poll in which 56% of respondents approved of publicly-owned radio, 23% disapproved, and 21% were undecided.¹¹ The most supportive region was the Prairies; Quebec and Ontario were the least

⁹ Alan Plaunt to Brooke Claxton, April 25, 1941. University of British Columbia (hereafter UBC) Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 8 File 23.

¹⁰ Donald Buchanan resignation letter, ca. November 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt Box 17 File 1.

¹¹ “Gallup Poll of Canadians,” Toronto *Daily Star*, November 21, 1942. LAC RG 41 Vol. 45 File 2-3.

supportive, and rural Canadians were more satisfied than their urban compatriots.¹² Despite the support, the corporation understood that it could not rest on its laurels and had to proactively address the brewing discontent over its war policies. An internal memo to the Board of Governors a month before the Gallup Poll claimed that “the average radio listener in Canada takes the CBC somewhat for granted” and regards “the paying of even the small annual fee of \$2.50 as an imposition.”¹³ To counter this, it was suggested that the corporation do a better job informing people of its operations because “the dissemination of such information would give the people of Canada a much needed grasp of the importance of CBC to them and to the country” while also resulting in “less sniping from many quarters such as the press and parliamentary members.”¹⁴

Despite some of the difficulties that arose during the war, the corporation was still able to look back on its formative years with pride. Regardless of the problems associated with the 1940s, the CBC was in the strongest position it had ever been when Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King announced that Canada had declared war against Germany. As the *Winnipeg Free Press* editorialized following Plaunt’s resignation, “our national broadcasting system under their [the CBC Board of Governors] direction, has reached a high level of public service.”¹⁵ After all, the group had overseen the expansion of the national network from 49% of the population to 90%, the growth of the staff from 133 to 572, and the increase in programming from 1,303 hours to 10,473 hours. It had not been easy, however, as along the way it had

¹² When broken down by region: Maritimes – 57% satisfied, 15% unsatisfied, 28% undecided; Quebec, 50%, 27%, 23%; Ontario, 50%, 29%, 21%; Prairies, 67%, 17%, 16%; B.C, 65%, 21%, 14%. When broken down by population: Farm areas, 64%, 14%, 22%; Under 10,000, 55%, 24%, 21%; 10,000 to 100,000, 58%, 25%, 17%; Over 100,000, 52%, 27%, 21%.

¹³ Internal Memorandum to CBC Board of Governors, October 19, 1942. LAC RG 41 Vol. 46 File 2-3-2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “CBC Governors Regretful Over Plaunt’s Retirement,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 26, 1940. UBC Archives and Special Collections Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 18 File 12.

overcome opposition from privately owned stations, complaints over commercials, and multiple censorship scandals. It was not perfect, but the CBC had legitimized itself and demonstrated the value of national broadcasting in Canada, which is what was hoped for in the fall of 1936. As Robert Falconer, President Emeritus of the University of Toronto, wrote to Alan Plaunt in April 1936, despite the difficult conditions, “patriotic Canadians must strongly hope that any re-organization ... will result in providing our people with an instrument of social and intellectual development.”¹⁶

From *Northern Messenger* to *The Happy Gang* to *National Forum*, the CBC believed it had been successful in doing so with its programming. And with its expanded network, solidified financial structure, and improved public relations, it had also been successful with its administration. Internally the corporation was pleased with its progress and, despite some tension within the Board of Governors, felt it was in as strong a position as it ever had been as the objectives laid out in 1936 had largely been achieved. There were times when it may have seemed like the corporation was going too far – occasionally the cost-cutting measures could have been seen as somewhat draconian – but there was a sense that it was just being careful. As Edgar Stone stressed in a letter describing the expenses sponsors should be responsible for during programs, “our experience so far has taught us that we cannot be too careful in enumerating and charging for everything that is necessary to make a successful production and adequately protect the CBC.”¹⁷ That attention to detail had been prioritized in all aspects of its operation and had put the corporation in position to serve as the primary source of information on the events in Europe through the fall of 1939.

¹⁶ Robert A. Falconer to Alan Plaunt, April 8, 1936. UBC Alan Plaunt Collection Fonds of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, Box 2 File 6.

¹⁷ Edgar Stone to George Taggart, February 6, 1940. LAC RG 41 Vol. 102 File 3-18-6.

The story of Canadian broadcasting in the 1930s is one of constant struggle. Whether private or public, radio stations in the Depression served as a much-needed escape for listeners suffering from the economic calamity while at the same time toiling to ensure their own survival. Surviving meant something completely different for the CBC, however, as the expectations placed on the public broadcaster were not the same as its private compatriots. From developing programs for a national audience to establishing wire line connections to building regional stations, the corporation faced challenges that were unique to Canadian public broadcasting while at the same time serving a regulatory role. The CBC confronted challenges that were unprecedented in broadcasting and, despite not always being successful, managed to emerge from the 1930s as a resilient and uniquely Canadian institution.

It has often been said that Canadian broadcasting is a compromise between the American and British models – that Canada took the public broadcasting element of the British system and the commercial component of American radio and combined them to create a hybrid broadcasting structure. Such an interpretation is too simplistic, however, as it ignores the geographic, political, financial, and social issues that shaped Canadian radio. While there was an early hope that the CBC could be modelled after the BBC, that the Canadian broadcaster served a country with a quarter of the population of Great Britain despite having to cover over forty times more land meant that the British system could not simply be imported to Canada. This meant that even though both the BBC and CBC were initially funded from licence fees, the CBC earned less revenue and had greater expenses related to network coverage. In addition, the BBC enjoyed a radio monopoly in Great Britain. Had it chosen to, the Canadian government certainly could have established a monopoly, but as Vipond notes the existing infrastructure and stations

made that extremely difficult.¹⁸ When that is coupled with the negative press that certainly would have followed the closure of existing stations, it becomes clear that a monopoly was not a realistic option for Canada in 1936. That being the case, the CBC had to cultivate relationships with existing private stations, many of whom were skeptical about the prospect of a national public broadcaster. Even if Gladstone Murray was able to use some of his BBC experience in public relations during his time at the CBC, it was clear that the experiences of the two organizations were different.

Similarly, the notion that Canada adopted the commercial component of the American system discounts the different broadcasting environments in each country. For instance, because of the larger American population, private American stations had access to greater commercial revenues. Those stations did not, however, have a large national network competitor that also served as the country's broadcasting regulator. These factors fundamentally shaped early radio in Canada and the United States and led to the industry growing differently in each country. Even if the principle of commercial broadcasting existed in some form in both Canada and the United States, equating the experience in both nations is difficult given the diverse conditions in which they developed.

This is not to suggest that American broadcasting did not affect the Canadian experience. The CBC did have to address the significant presence of American programming in Canada in its formative years. After all, one of the major motivations for organizations like the Canadian Radio League to push for a national broadcaster was to combat the ever-increasing number of American programs that aired on Canadian stations. Rather than create a regulation prohibiting these programs, as some people had lobbied, the CBC instead decided to capitalize on their

¹⁸ Vipond's seminal work on early Canadian broadcasting outlines the structure of Canadian broadcasting prior to the establishment of a public national network. Mary Vipond, *Listening In: The First Decade of Canadian Broadcasting, 1922-1932* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992).

popularity to legitimize its own position. The corporation began airing the most popular American programs in an effort to have listeners tune away from private stations and to the CBC. The thinking was that if people went to the CBC for *Amos 'n' Andy*, they might stay for the Canadian programs that followed. In that way, the CBC hoped to become the destination for Canadian radio listeners by offering the best programs. Even if some nationalists were upset that the corporation aired American content – and there were questions over whether people did indeed stay to listen to the Canadian programs – the strategy worked as the CBC started to garner more attention in the press and earn more commercial revenue. The biggest benefit for the CBC, however, was that by airing programs from the three American networks, it was able to cultivate relationships that eventually led to its programs airing on NBC, CBS, and MBS. For the CBC, this was a sign that its programs had achieved a level of quality that had never been accomplished in Canadian radio.

The corporation used the fact that its programs were part of the American networks' schedules in promoting itself as a world class broadcaster. It told listeners that its programs were on par with their American competitors and that, as such, claims that Canadian radio was not nearly as good as American were unfounded. The great irony in promoting its programs in this way, however, was that the CBC was admitting that the American networks were the gold standard of broadcasting. In casting itself as a compatriot of the American networks, it could be argued that the CBC was labelling itself as a junior member of the North American broadcast fraternity. By having to look to the United States to legitimize its programs, the CBC may have unwittingly ceded a certain amount of authority on programming. Even if Canadians were listening to more Canadian material, they would still look to the United States for confirmation of a program's quality.

Such a view discounts an important aspect of the corporation's relationships with American networks: they were part of the corporation's larger policy promoting the continental integration of radio. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s Canadians had been listening to American programs while simultaneously complaining about signal interference from stations throughout North America. The CRBC had not been able to resolve these issues, which meant that when the CBC took control of Canadian broadcasting in November 1936 it had to find its place within North America's existing broadcasting structure. To that end, the corporation actively participated in international conferences, worked with other North American broadcasters to curb wavelength interference, and fostered positive relationships with American networks.

Early on, the corporation's success in expanding the national network gave greater strength to arguments that Canada deserved greater access to exclusive wavelengths. Following Canada's success at the Havana Conference in 1937, the CBC was emboldened and began to assert itself internationally. Over time, the corporation developed a reputation as a world class organization through its successful broadcasts of events like the 1938 International Broadcasting Union World Concert and the 1939 Royal Tour. As its offerings continued to improve, the corporation sent an increasing number of programs to American networks for national broadcast in the United States. The corporation could also foster greater cooperation throughout North America with the establishment of the Voice of Newfoundland in 1939, an organization designed largely in the CBC's mould. This continentalist strategy meant that when the Second World War erupted in September 1939, the corporation could collaborate not only with the BBC, but also with the North American networks with which it had maintained trusting and constructive relationships.

For the CBC, adopting a continental approach to its operations was a critical aspect of fulfilling its mandate as a national broadcaster. The corporation's nationalist efforts were not focused on programming, but rather on linking the majority of Canadians together through a national radio network. While there were certain programs that encouraged national pride, they were rare. Instead, the CBC believed that the existence of a robust national network would offset any potential disgruntlement with its programs. Therefore, the initial focus on building stations and expanding the network put the CBC in a better bargaining position in international wavelength negotiations by demonstrating that it needed exclusive channels for its network. This also gave the CBC greater authority to address interference issues with individual stations throughout North America and, in the process, improve the reception of its stations in Canada. In a similar vein, the CBC used the international recognition of its programs as evidence of the quality of Canadian radio. That major events were enjoyed worldwide and regular programming aired nationally in the United States helped change the perception that Canadian programs were generally poor, an opinion held by many Canadians in 1936.

It should be noted that the corporation was tacit in adopting its continentalist strategy. The policy was never directly stated – either on the air or internally – as it revealed itself through the CBC's decisions and priorities during its first three years. Through its international efforts on wavelength allocation and programming, the CBC was able to grow its network, improve its facilities, and promote itself to Canadian listeners. It may seem counter-intuitive to suggest that the corporation could be nationalistic through a continentalist strategy, but that is what happened. In the original discussions surrounding the creation of a national public broadcaster, Alan Plaunt acknowledged that such an organization would have to carry American programs in order to be successful with Canadian listeners. This was true, but the sentiment could have gone further in

promoting the international efforts required to make Canadian broadcasting a success. Even if the CBC's mandate was limited to domestic matters, it needed an international gaze and a policy with respect to the continental integration of broadcasting. Radio wavelengths do not recognize borders and, in certain ways, neither did the CBC. Through a strong continental approach, the corporation became a successful national institution.

Part of that continental cooperation was motivated by another theme to emerge from the CBC's early years: the corporation's persistence in trying to escape the shadow left by the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission. The CRBC's tumultuous existence had cast doubts on the viability of public broadcasting in Canada – from its poor coverage to its controversies over language and its ineffective leadership, the commission never developed into the national broadcaster that Prime Minister R.B. Bennett envisioned with the passing of the 1932 Radio Broadcasting Act. Of course, part of the CRBC's difficulties came from Conservative party involvement in commission operations – most famously during the 1935 federal election. This meant that when the CBC took control of Canadian broadcasting on November 2, 1936, not only did it face the monumental task of creating a national network while regulating existing stations, but it also had to overcome the skepticism of a country that had just experienced the demise of a national public broadcaster. To that end, the CBC quickly initiated plans to expand the network, maintain independence from Parliament, and ensure proper fiscal management.

Over time, the commission's shadow slowly started to fade and the CBC's re-branding efforts transformed into a persistent public relations campaign. The corporation was constantly distributing press releases and having senior staff deliver radio addresses explaining its operations in an effort to earn support among Canadians. The focus of these efforts eventually shifted from outlining how the CBC was different from the CRBC to the steps the corporation

had taken to improve Canadian broadcasting. The CBC would highlight its technical, operational, logistical, and administrative improvements to prove to Canadians that it was an effective organization that served a much-needed public function. At the same time, however, these campaigns were also used to confront criticism that was launched towards the CBC over its handling of private stations, controversial material, or the licence fee. While there were concerns that the corporation was not as transparent as some people would have liked – that the first internal memo threatened disciplinary action against employees who shared corporation information with outsiders is a sign of that – the CBC was acutely aware that the public perception of its operations were critical to its long-term survival.

Just as critical to its survival were the CBC's plans to expand the national network. The CRBC reached just 49% of Canadians and the CBC understood that if it wanted to successfully convince people that public broadcasting could work in Canada it needed to serve the whole country. Despite the fact that the initial plans were curtailed, the CBC did build four regional transmitters in its first three years while also adding private affiliates to the basic network. Facilitated in part by a revised wire line contract, by Christmas 1939 the CBC had expanded to the point where 90% of the Canadian population could pick up a corporation station. With more Canadians purchasing radio licences, the corporation's expansion coincided with an increase in radio listenership, thus allowing more Canadians than ever before to hear Canadian programs.

While network expansion meant that national programs could reach more listeners, it also meant that the CBC could diversify its regional offerings. Various sustaining programs were developed for specific regional audiences while advertisers could choose to air programs on regional networks. For as much as this may have presented the CBC with an opportunity to shape its offerings based on the audience, it could also be argued that the development of

regional networks served to keep the country separated. During its tenure, the CRBC was surprised by the strong backlash to airing French-language programs nationally – particularly in the West. To avoid a similar fate, the CBC established a French-language network in Quebec so that it could serve the local francophone community without receiving the criticism that accompanied national French-language programming. There was some disappointment within the corporation – especially from Augustin Frigon and other top level francophone employees – that it could not do a better job of serving Francophone listeners outside Quebec, but the CBC believed it was a necessary compromise in ensuring the CBC could maintain as much national support as possible. For a neophyte organization that was overly concerned with maintaining a budgetary surplus, the CBC was unwilling to risk the potential discontent from airing French-language programs nationally while also being unimaginative in finding alternatives to serve Francophone listeners outside Quebec. Just as it had with smaller communities like Prince Rupert, the CBC prioritized its finances over serving listeners who were still expected to pay the licence fee. This did call into question the effectiveness of corporation's 'national' function, but, given the CRBC's difficulties, catering to regional tastes and limiting the exchange across the country allowed the corporation to appeal to local audiences while reserving the national network for programs it felt would please a nationwide audience.

Pleasing everyone is an impossible task, however, and the corporation received its share of criticism – perhaps no more than for its handling of controversial material. Accusations of censorship were a regular feature of the corporation's early years as the CBC denied requests for airtime and suspended some announcers. In each case, the corporation argued that it was merely upholding the regulations, but that did not stop some listeners from claiming that the corporation was biased. The use of religious programs for political discussion was often at the root of the

problems, but the amount of airtime provided for divergent perspectives was also a contentious issue. CBC officials were concerned that those with money would monopolize the available time for partisan purposes and instituted policies prohibiting the purchase of time for personal political views while also ensuring equal time among parties during campaigns. Questions over exactly which parties should be entitled to that time led to further complaints, but in general the corporation could be commended for its handling of controversial and political programs during its early years.

That it could absorb the occasional backlash that came from its handling of controversial material is due in large measure to the strong leaders that guided the corporation through its early years. This started with General Manager Gladstone Murray, who brought his public relations experience from the BBC and prioritized improving the public image of national broadcasting. He was joined by Assistant General Manager Augustin Frigon, who put together the CBC's initial plans for network expansion, in instituting a proactive attitude within the corporation. The public broadcaster would be active in improving all aspects of Canadian radio in order to earn the trust of private stations and the general public. Combine that attitude with Leonard Brockington's steady chairmanship of the Board of Governors, and public broadcasting was given a reprieve with Canadian listeners. The change in management also helped holdovers from the CRBC days who had been hamstrung by the commission's inherent inefficiencies and tension between the commissioners. Chief Engineer Gordon Olive guided the CBC through its technological upgrades, traffic manager E.W. Jackson organized the national network, and Austin Weir worked on improving relations with private stations. In addition, regional directors like Frank Willis and J.R. Radford were able to develop local talent while Elizabeth Long was charged with developing women's programming. Harry Baldwin and W.H. Brodie were hired to

ensure the finances were in order and that proper language was used on the air, respectively. It was in this atmosphere where people like Bob Bowman and Terrance Wiklund could grow and become the guiding forces behind the 1939 Royal Tour, arguably the most important series of broadcasts in the corporation's history.

Within these diverse tasks, there was a common purpose that CBC employees shared. They understood the public service element of broadcasting and were strongly committed to serving listeners. They believed that Canadians deserved a world class broadcaster and worked hard to make that a reality. Their accomplishments, failures, triumphs, and trials shaped Canadian broadcasting in the 1930s and can still be felt today. In addition to serving the nation, however, they also served each other. A common refrain in memoirs of those who worked in early radio is how a family atmosphere surrounded the industry. Even when there were heated disagreements, there was a kinship that permeated early radio. In conducting interviews with some of his former colleagues in the 1970s, Alphonse Ouimet remarked that "I am always pleased to note how much goodwill, I would even say affection, there seems to be between people who have toiled together for many years, even when their association was marred by continuing conflicts such as in the case of Ernest Bushnell and myself."¹⁹ Regardless of whether people agreed with their decisions, it was impossible to deny their commitment to the CBC and, perhaps most importantly, Canadian listeners.

The themes that emerged from the corporation's early years – relations with American networks, escaping the CRBC, positive public relations, network improvements, accusations of bias, and strong leadership – all contributed to the CBC's main goal in the late 1930s: becoming a legitimate broadcasting organization. Canadian radio historiography has neglected this period in favour of the war years, but the service the corporation provided Canadians would not have

¹⁹ Alphonse Ouimet interviews, LAC MG 30 E481 Vol. 45.

been possible without the growth and experience of its first three years. This period was critical to the CBC as the corporation took a scattered system and turned it into a vital source of information. Through these years the CBC strained to earn a place as one of the best broadcasters in the world. It would not do anything that did not contribute to that goal – or at the very least attempt anything that it felt would detract from that end. Earning the respect of its supporters and opponents, competitors and compatriots, and listeners and non-listeners was the top priority for the CBC. There was an understanding within the corporation that in order to legitimize its operations in the minds of Canadians, it needed to earn their trust. There were obstacles to overcome and it was not easy, but the corporation did enough between November 1936 and September 1939 that when war erupted in Europe, the corporation was the first destination of many Canadians for updates on the situation. The war may have been the moment when Canadians turned to the corporation like never before, but without the growth of its first three years this would not have been possible. Indeed, it was its formative years that legitimized its operations and cemented the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's place in national life.

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