

**DOWNSIZING THE DIAL:  
THE REINVENTION OF PRIVATE RADIO IN CANADA**

by  
Randy Taylor

Master of Arts, Simon Fraser University, 1998  
Bachelor of Education, University of Alberta, 1995

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## **APPROVAL**

## **ABSTRACT**

Private radio broadcasting in Canada has generally been examined as a component of the larger broadcasting system. This system includes television and public broadcasting, and in more recent years, the so called new media. To properly situate private radio within this larger context, the various factors that have contributed to the development of private radio as a distinct entity need to be investigated. In so doing, we can develop a better understanding of content and programming, but also communication policy and regulation in this country.

Radio is inherently a communicative medium with a framework that is constructed around the notion that communication exists between one broadcaster and a larger body of listeners. This is, of course, a reductive simplification, although it serves to illustrate the importance of the individual broadcaster as a point of origin.

This thesis begins by exploring English-language private radio, in particular, private radio broadcasters, from a cultural perspective. This is done by applying a model of analysis that includes an examination of the founders and leaders in the private radio sector and the codes and values that are transmitted and adopted by newcomers to the field.

Given that Canada's private radio stations are governed by the Broadcasting Act, the growth and development of private radio must be gauged alongside the cultural objectives specified in the Act. To that end, several key variables are examined in this paper including the use of technology and the degree to which private broadcasters have been able to affect change in the regulations that govern their use of the broadcasting

spectrum. This research also documents the dramatic influence of the US on radio programming and culture in Canada. The methodological approach includes extensive interviews with broadcasters that examine hiring practises, programming philosophy, and format development.

The thesis suggests that as a result of these forces local private radio in English-Canada has been has been redefined providing fewer community programming alternatives. The paper concludes with a discussion focused on the potential for change in private radio to better reflect the potential of the medium to communicate.

For Michele

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Never before in Canada's broadcasting history, have so many radio stations generated so much profit for so few companies while year after year listenership declines. Regrettably, this venerable medium is often viewed as a bricks-and-mortar technology. Radio research, it seems, is all too often relegated to the periphery while the academy examines other aspects of media deemed to be more advanced. This has led some to characterize radio as either the 'forgotten' or 'invisible' medium (Pease & Dennis, 1995; Lewis & Booth, 1989).

In a comparatively short time, we have seen the radio receiver evolve from a large, if not somewhat grandiose, piece of equipment tethered to a power source, to a ubiquitous instrument that is scarcely noticeable. In a parallel development, the act of radio listening has come full circle. Prior to the loudspeaker, people listened individually using primitive headphones. Then, as technology developed, it became a shared experience with people gathering around and entranced by the communal radio. Inexpensive batteries and micro-technology have enhanced the portability of radio over the years and radio has returned to its former status as an intensively personal medium.

I hesitate to use the term evolve with regard to radio. This tends to invoke notions of organic Darwinian development. Indeed, many would argue that radio in Canada has devolved over the past 100 years. For example, radio listeners implicitly referred to in the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act of 1932 were, by regulatory requirement, clearly informed of whether or not they were listening to a recorded program. This illustrates that, at least seven or eight decades ago, some degree of broadcasting honesty was

required. Today, however, radio listeners are routinely subjected to prerecorded radio programming through what can only be described as a form of technological aural legerdemain. For the most part, many radio stations, once staffed by citizens drawn from the local communities, have been replaced by distant computerized network programming. Moreover, private broadcasters go to great lengths to convince listeners this prerecorded programming is broadcast live and is of local origin. Paradoxically, this radio sleight-of-hand is undertaken using the scarce radio frequencies that the regulator still maintains as being public property and regulated in the public interest (Canada, 1991).

Private radio has the potential to be more than a jukebox. Indeed, the very technology used to dehumanize radio can reinvigorate the medium and populate the airwaves with local voices. It is hard to imagine that only decades ago highly skilled engineers were required for remote radio broadcasts. Truckloads of equipment, powered by tube amplifiers, requiring enormous electrical resources, were needed to broadcast from the field. Today, remote live broadcasts can be undertaken by most radio personnel with equipment that can be easily carried by one person.

Why, with this potential, do we not hear programming that reflects radio's greatest strengths – immediacy and the ability to bridge great distances?

My intention is to demonstrate that far from being unimportant, radio today is exceedingly relevant and holds great potential beyond its commercial value. While we have seen fit to regulate our forests and water reserves in the public interest – poorly by some accounts – the public has been jettisoned with no meaningful voice in the regulation of radio. This thesis is driven by a central theme that will show that the regulatory

process has become flawed and the once arms length relationship that existed between private broadcasting and the Canadian Radio Television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is nonexistent. I will also show that this reduction has been coupled with the adoption of particular norms and values in Canadian private radio that have originated in the US. These values have flowed from a vibrant private radio culture that elevates technology above *vox humana*. The local and live independent broadcaster is being replaced by corporate interests' intent on automating and formatting the airwaves. This transformation is redefining and in a sense reinventing local private radio. Regretfully, this process has escaped the purview of the regulator or has developed as a regulatory blind-spot. This thesis will demonstrate that this redefinition comes at a great price. Community voices are increasingly silenced in favor of the cost-effective network. Once assigned in the form of a radio broadcasting licence, a particular frequency cannot be replicated and used elsewhere in the community or adjacent region. It is a nonrenewable resource. It is axiomatic therefore that the manner, and in whose interests, this precious spectrum is administered, is a worthwhile area for study.

### ***Broadcast Culture***

I suggest that several blind-spots have hindered the study of private radio in Canada. While we have duly recorded the development of broadcasting policy, especially the rancorous regulatory debates concerning public versus private broadcasting, we have overlooked the growth of a robust culture within the private radio broadcasting sector.

The notion of private broadcasting culture in this context is as problematic as the word 'culture' itself. I am using the term in perhaps its most basic definition; the

“production and circulation of sense, meaning and consciousness” (Hartley, 2002, p.51). James Clifford has pointed out (During, 1999, pp.66-70) that “[c]ultures are ethnographic collections... learned group behaviour.” (p.66). He also reminds us that “[c]ulture collecting” is fraught with inconsistencies in the way boundaries are constructed (p.66). My intention here is to mark boundaries as clearly as possible, constructing demarcation points between what Horkeimer and Adorno labelled the ‘culture industry’ (2001) and a more ethnographic approach that examines broadcasters as a distinct group. In either case, the rise of private radio in Canada must be explored as it is set against not only the regulatory climate of the day, but also the broadcasters’ increasingly strengthened identity.

Marc Raboy’s seminal study of broadcast policy (1990) provided tantalizing glimpses of the broadcast wizards pushing and twisting the knobs behind the veiled curtain, however, his objective was to paint the much larger landscape of broadcast policy. To be sure, he acknowledged the role of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) in policy development but was unable to pursue, in my view, several important tracks. For example, with the expansion of private radio in Canada, came a commensurate strengthening in the culture of broadcasters. It was, and is, after all, a comparatively small group and bound by a shared common interest; they have developed specific codes and values. Subjective notions such as what comprised ‘good’ radio were cultivated, adapted and shared among the group membership.

The legacy of these influential broadcasters has been the rigid programming ‘clocks’ that have resulted in the myriad of cookie cutter formats found anywhere on the radio dial.

Awareness of how these values were developed and transmitted across time and space is of the utmost importance, in my view. Only by understanding the genesis of this remarkable process, can we fully appreciate the direction private radio is taking in Canada.

Examining the role of culture in private broadcasting is a challenging task, primarily because it operates more or less as a closed group. Moreover, this relatively small group is becoming increasingly smaller. It is a group that relishes its past history and its pioneers who are revered for their trail blazing contributions. The personal histories and perceived accomplishments of men such as Allan Waters, Ted Rogers, and Red Robinson are passed on from one private radio generation to the next. When these oral histories are repeated, they are coated with a veneer of pride that transcends the simple historical recitations of time and place. Rather, the facts are stitched together and woven with specific values and norms. Eventually, these standards are naturalized within the discourse and become an integral part of a belief system. I will show that, almost from the beginning of private radio in this country, these touchstones have largely been defined and constructed in the US and imported to Canada where they have become hegemonically absorbed in the profession.

Mentoring relationships in radio have been the central conduit through which culture is transmitted. With the spread of vocational schools in Canada in the 1960s, broadcast education shifted from what had been a private sector responsibility to a task undertaken by public institutions. I have therefore chosen to examine the role of broadcast education in Canada as a potential change agent. How do these educators view their respective roles? Have they become private radio culture conduits or are they able to



develop curriculum from a critical perspective that offers alternatives?

### ***Broadcast Regulation***

Ironically, in spite of the huge growth in private radio licences in Canada, ownership consolidation has left us with fewer private broadcasters – in all respects. Only a handful of companies are controlling the vast majority of transmitters, with fewer broadcasters at the grassroots level able to respond to community concerns. The days of the ‘twin stick’ radio operation where an owner was restricted to operating one AM and one FM station per market, are long gone, being replaced by ownership ‘clusters’ where networking technology reigns supreme.

It stands to reason that the way in which this influential group develops its values, and certainly its power, becomes increasingly important. When we consider that radio listening in Canada, especially among youth, is at an all time low (Statistics Canada, 2007), these questions take on heightened importance.

In his 1981 Annual Report, CRTC chairman John Meisel posed the question: “What is the role and place of regulation in our society?” Fearing that Canada may move towards a Reaganesque model of broadcasting, Meisel went on to say that “deregulation a l’Americaine is... not an option open to us.” (p.ix,x) He also issued a warning that, in his estimation, some members of the Commission continued to be too friendly with industry representatives resulting in ‘leaks’ from the CRTC on matters of policy and regulation (Canada, 1981). His concerns were proven to be well founded.

In the years following, the Commission made no attempts to discourage the appearance of ties to private broadcasting. Following Meisel’s term in 1983, a former

broadcast executive was named as the Commission's chief regulator. Following his term in office, André Bureau was honoured by private broadcasters with an induction into the CAB Hall of Fame. And barely two decades later, another CAB Hall of Fame inductee, Heritage Minister Bev Oda was responsible for overseeing the Commission. Oda was inducted in 2003. Some would suggest that information leaks, from the Commission to industry, are the least of our concerns.

Of importance here is the ability and accountability of the regulator to govern radio broadcasting in keeping with the Broadcasting Act, specifically, the declaration in Section 3 to “safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada,” hopefully with some degree of equality (Canada, 1991). Still, the regulatory record is clear and continues to substantiate Marc Raboy's 1991 claim that while the rationale for Canada's cultural policy was political in the 1960s and 1970s, it was economic in the 1980s. The economic determinants continue to hold sway in private radio regulation. This thesis will demonstrate that Canada's radio regulations, initially designed in the public interest, have been dramatically refashioned to satisfy corporate imperatives.

### ***Broadcast Technology and Programming***

The relatively small group of private broadcasters – most of them men – were given little regard by the larger business community in the early days of radio, and rose to positions of great influence in this country, to dramatically change the face of private radio. The technology, or as Leiss (1990) has observed, the ‘techniques’ of broadcasting wielded by this group have resulted in radio listeners being tuned out of the equation.

When programming and technology are combined with ongoing regulatory strategies the aural landscape is even bleaker.

In his recent book *Fighting For Air*, Eric Klinenberg devotes considerable space to the Canadian Pacific Railway disaster that befell Minot North Dakota in January 2002. The incident, which resulted in one death and thousands of injuries, occurred when poisonous gas from the early morning derailment spread into the town. Minot residents were unable to access their local radio stations for pertinent emergency information because the station control rooms were empty. Distant programming was piped in via a broadcast network and automated by Clear Channel Communications which owned all six of the town's radio stations. While Klineberg's account is a wholesale indictment of deregulation and concentration of ownership, it also illustrates advances in broadcast technology. More to the point, the Minot tragedy speaks to the uses of the technology.

Not without some degree of sad irony, the same radio waves that magically carried listeners on the Canadian prairies to the Parliament Buildings on July 1, 1927, in the first national radio network broadcast, are now used by virtual disc-jockeys to eliminate any reference to distance. Radio's greatest strength is being denuded. Radio broadcasting, as I shall argue, has lost its way. The emphasis on the language of the spoken word to communicate has been forsaken and has been displaced by an undue reliance on the radio format.

Private radio was not immune to the principles of scientific management, popularized by F.W. Taylor (1964) and introduced to white collar offices across the US and Canada. In radio, the 'format clock' became the radio equivalent of Fritz Lang's machine in *Metropolis*. Announcers decried the lack of individual choice and became

McLuhanesque adjuncts or servo-mechanisms to the format. Announcers, like the lifeless subterranean workers who were slaves to Lang's machine, became tethered to the format clock. To a degree, art was pushed aside for a false science.

A central element, and one that I suggest has not been addressed thoroughly in contemporary research, concerns private radio programming. We see the link between regulation and technology, driven by particular cultural attitudes on the part of broadcasters. As suggested earlier, the mechanism employed by private broadcasters to assist them in defining 'good' radio is a process of adopting particular values within the private broadcasting culture. These values permeate the industry. Central to this theme are the basic shared conventions that assist in defining professional programming that are communicated orally, largely through mentoring relationships.

To this extent, I will illustrate that private radio culture, with its associated codes, conventions, and rituals bears more than a striking resemblance to a religious order where, in the words of Harold Innis (1994), a belief system is constructed through "the constant sifting, refining and modifying of what [does] not fit in to the tradition... shift[s] into legend, legend into myth." (1964, p. 102)

### ***Personal Declaration***

Before proceeding with an overview of my methodology, I feel obligated in some measure to bring my personal background to the reader's attention. I bring several decades of radio broadcasting experience to this exploration. Like so many others of my generation, I was pulled into the 1960s and 1970s rock and roll vortex by my transistor radio. My professional career was launched at CFX in Victoria, BC where, as an 18-

year old board operator, I eagerly soaked up the exciting stories of the elder radio veterans. The process was of cultural immersion and informal learning that not only taught me technical skills but laid the groundwork for a specific belief system. While I may have been unclear about the significant contributions of Marconi and Fessenden, I could name the number one radio disc jockeys in Toronto and Los Angeles. Moreover, I came to believe that only private radio could be equated with professional radio. Other broadcasting models, community radio for example, fell well outside the norms associated with this belief system. This admittedly narrow frame of reference was wholeheartedly shared by my colleagues. My 40 year career path has included positions in news, public affairs, music programming, and education.

When I began teaching at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) in 1986, I began to reflect upon my personal role with regard to the belief system that permeated private radio. Was I, for example, teaching radio, or a particular style of radio broadcasting? Furthermore, was I acting in the capacity of a trainer or challenging my students to examine the uses to which their skills were directed? These questions continued throughout my academic career in adult education and communication.

When combined with the richness of the scholarly work already undertaken in the field of Canadian radio, I hope that my years as a broadcaster and educator will shed at least a glimmer of new light on the private radio discourse in Canada.

### ***Methodology***

To document the intersection of broadcast policy, regulation, technology, and culture I have utilized two distinct approaches. Firstly, I have drawn heavily upon the

historical record, an approach that, according to Innis, “is threatened on one hand by its obsession with the present, and on the other by the charge of antiquarianism.” (p. 61).

Secondly, I have attempted to situate post-war private radio within a particular cultural context using an ethnographic approach. In so doing I have examined primary and secondary-source policy and other government documents, industry trade and academic publications and conducted interviews with key figures in private radio broadcasting.

The historical record concerning private radio in Canada is somewhat limited to those who have studied the practice from a distance. While an ample discussion exists with regard to regulation, most of these accounts originate from an external academic perspective (Bird, 1988; Peers, 1965; Raboy, 1990; Siegel, 1986; Vipond, 1994, 2000; Weir, 1965). This does not suggest that the research is somehow lacking, though I suggest it is incomplete. With the possible exception of Austin Weir, few broadcasting voices exist. While regulation certainly provides a framework around which the production of broadcasting takes place – content and licence requirements come to mind – it remains a top-down exercise. Both Allard (1976; 1979) and McNeil and Wolfe (1982) provide us with a counterbalance of sorts – a look at radio from the bottom-up, from the producers perspective. Murray’s (2003) personal career account is also helpful.

I have supplemented this historical record with my own explorations stemming from a series of personal interviews with broadcasters and broadcast consultants. The bulk of these sessions took place between 2003 and 2006. This ethnographic research was necessary to document the oral transmission of broadcast culture – hiring practices for example. It was particularly important to attach an historical time-line to these discussions to demonstrate the enormous effect exerted by American radio formats on the

Canadian programmers. Given the remarkable impact of the US in this regard, I have also included material from several American sources including that from consultant Dan O'Day and from jingle producer Johnny Mann. Readers of a certain age will no doubt recall listening to the Johnny Mann Singers. Johnny Mann was best known in radio circles for his work with Bill Drake and the so-called Top 40 Drake format.

These interviews were also important in examining developments in radio technology, especially as announcers adapted to the transitions from vinyl recordings to tape, and finally to the digital realm. Naturally, certain highlights have occurred along this time-line; for example, the 1925 invention by Ted Rogers, of the AC tube which led to the 'batteryless radio' and the introduction of the transistor (Ontario DX Association, 2007; Porticus, 2007).

I have confined the scope of my work to English Canada. While the province of Quebec has a vibrant private radio industry, the majority of the major ownership groups are headquartered in Toronto. Broadcasters, such as Rogers Communications, have developed national broadcasting empires and thereby exercise greater influence upon Canada's radio mosaic.

For my examination of private radio culture, I have drawn extensively on the work of Edgar Schein (2004). While he has not explored media studies per se, he does advance various models useful in investigating the importance of codes and rituals in the transmission of cultural values.

Schein provides a model for examining how these values are incorporated with a culture. His approach includes the use of primary and secondary embedding mechanisms to reinforce group values. While others (Mills, 1956; Porter, 1968) have examined

corporate power arrangements, Schein elected to analyse other structural variables such as the founders and leaders, and the impact of role modeling and coaching, all of which are vital to the maintenance of cultural norms.

Given its lack of written cultural history, private radio has relied upon a strong oral tradition, which can be analyzed by Schein's framework. Former Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) executive TJ Allard (1979) has suggested, in his examination of private broadcasting history in Canada, that "all broadcasters have a singularly deep-rooted aversion to paper." (p.ii) He goes on to suggest that "the cautious researcher must distrust most of the written record." (p.ii) Generalization notwithstanding, the statement is telling, in that, for Allard, all broadcasters are private broadcasters. He chooses to ignore public broadcasting and its extensive written history. Barthes (1973) uses the term *ex-nominate* to describe a process whereby a concept or thing has been naturalised to the extent that it does not require naming. Allard and other private broadcasters have largely *ex-nominated* private radio in their lexicon.

This process of *ex-nomination* is one of several approaches that lend themselves very well to the Schein model. According to Schein, an organization's founders and leaders forge particular attitudes and norms which are then conveyed through embedding mechanisms to the rank and file members. Taking this approach was not without its challenges. Several of the key figures in Canadian private radio were interviewed and asked to reflect on their early influences as broadcasters, and these individuals were asked about their interpretation of private radio history. Two major themes emerged as a result of this investigation. It became clear that Canadian broadcasters, regardless of their place on the historical continuum, self-identified and used reference points that were



almost religious in nature. Second, these figures attached immense value to the knowledge and beliefs of their counterparts in the US.

I have used a two-pronged approach to broadcasting policy and regulation. While the historical record with regard to regulation, especially content regulation, is clear, the efficacy of these statutes must be assessed by linking them to appropriate policy and subsequent implementation. Moreover, it is not simply a matter of radio broadcasters following the letter of the law, but rather, whether or not they clearly identify with the spirit of the law and operate their interests accordingly. The clearest example of this distinction can be found in the initial 30 percent Canadian content regulations governing music programming on Canadian radio in the 1970s. Broadcasters grudgingly adhered to the regulatory requirements, though many chose to offload their Canadian content in non-popular time periods. Policy and regulation cannot be thoroughly examined without also considering their structural implementation, since these efforts reach the listener. I have also been fortunate to be able to discuss these issues in interviews with a former official of the CRTC.

Regulatory events in the US have also had a direct bearing on Canadian radio. I have already mentioned the Klinenberg text (2007), which builds on the work of Robert McChesney (1997; 2002). McChesney traced the process of American radio deregulation, particularly with regard to the 1996 Telecommunication Act which opened the door to historic levels of American ownership concentration. As I will show, private radio broadcasters have a long history of reading from the US radio playbook.

I have also relied on official documentation from the CRTC, especially with regard to the radio reviews of 1997 and 2006 as well as various licensing documents,

interventions, and decisions. Two primary publications serve the private broadcasting industry in Canada. *Broadcaster* is the official organ of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters and *Broadcast Dialogue* is an independent effort published by Christensen Communications Ltd. These publications have assisted in illuminating various issues of importance to private radio broadcasters.

With regard to broadcast education in Canada, I have surveyed the online presence of several major institutions that offer two- and three-year diplomas in radio. Many have ceased printing institutional calendars in favor of posting program descriptions and course outlines on the Internet. Naturally, I have drawn on personal sources from BCIT. Although anecdotal in nature, these sources provide an important necessary glimpse into how broadcast educators view radio. More importantly, the degree to which some institutions have chosen to deliver curriculum can be shown in tandem with private radio. Given these close ties, a wide classroom perspective on radio and radio programming becomes impossible. As I shall demonstrate, rather than being an opportunity for change, these institutions reinforce current norms by presenting an ideologically-closed set of broadcasting parameters.

We are on the verge of seeing the creation of the largest private radio network in Canada. Astral Media Inc. has signed a letter of intent to purchase 52 radio stations owned by Standard Radio Inc. The \$1.3 billion deal will give Astral control of 81 stations across the country (Canadian Press, 2007). Given that Canada will have its own version of Clear Channel Communications, we need to consider the Clear Channel experience in the US. In this regard, as mentioned earlier, I have drawn on the Klinenberg (2007) and McChesney (1993; 2002) texts. Dorothy Kidd (2005) has also investigated the Clear

Channel ‘effect’ which I will incorporate into the Canadian experience.

In my concluding chapter, I make a plea for what Enzensberger calls the “emancipatory potential” of radio (1986, p.89) and attempt to provide a picture of what these alternatives may look and, more importantly, sound like. I begin with a discussion of Lewis Hill, undoubtedly, the first radio revolutionary, and his creation of Pacifica Radio following the second world war (Lasar, 1999). Hill’s Pacifica legacy continues today with programs such as *Democracy Now!* (2007). A self-proclaimed refugee from commercial radio, Kate Coyer has written extensively with Pete Tridish on recent attempts to cultivate community radio in the shadow of corporate domination (Tridish & Coyer, 2005).

From the outset, it has seemed rather awkward to limit these discussions to only the written word. Radio, after all, is about the experience of listening. An inherent challenge is present in writing about an aural medium. It was akin, in some respects, to translating from one language to another and struggling to retain as much meaning as possible in the process.

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## CHAPTER TWO: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

### Introduction

This chapter will examine early embryonic influences in radio regulation, technology, and broadcast culture. The intent is not merely to assess the dramatic changes that have occurred in the field, but rather, to establish that relevant historical events contributed in meaningful ways to formulating a private radio cultural mind-set. Perhaps the greatest insight in this effort is witnessing the growth and self-confidence of private radio broadcasters. For example, the penchant of private broadcasters to circumvent regulation was not a strategy first developed to counter the Canadian content regulation of the 1970s, but rather, was first initiated decades earlier to address regulatory restrictions in advertising.

Of additional importance to this discussion, is the role of government which viewed radio as a tool for nation-building. Clearly, successive governments took their regulatory responsibilities seriously. Regulations were explicitly designed to restrict ownership, advertising, and other programming content. While much has been written that examines the ebb and flow of public broadcasting in Canada (Peers, 1969; Siegel, 1996; Weir, 1965) little exploration has determined how these debates, namely, the heated debates concerning the formation of a Canadian broadcasting system, served to ultimately strengthen the identity and the resolve of private broadcasters.

Of course, any historical discussion would be incomplete without assessing the impact of technology on radio development. I do not intend to cover territory that has been traversed elsewhere (Babe, 1990; Crowley & Heyer, 1999; Franklin, 1999) but rather, to illustrate that technology has played a vital role in private radio history.

Subsequent chapters in this thesis will focus on key aspects of American radio; in this chapter, however, I have chosen to discuss several important several circumstances in the US, with particular regard to regulation and programming content. I have judiciously edited these events in an attempt to leave only those facts that have a more direct bearing on the discussion at hand.

### *Early Radio in Canada*

Today, a full appreciation of the formative radio history in Canada is difficult to attain. Portability was non-existent. Radio listening was an anchored, solitary, and expensive exercise using headphones. If you were lucky enough to receive a distant signal, it often lacked consistent clarity. Transmitters and receivers were unreliable, finicky, and usually operated by hobbyists as part of radio clubs.

Radio was also clearly a male domain, as evident in newspaper and magazine advertisements of the early 1900s. In one newspaper ad, typical of the day, a woman is shown adjusting the garter on her stocking above the headline: “Just expressing the Christmas Wish of a Well-filled Stocking for you from CKNX, the Voice of the Community” (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982, p.109). On the front cover of *Radio News* (the year is not indicated), a young couple is pictured in the honeymoon suite of their hotel with their luggage on the floor still bearing the ‘just married’ labels. The bride sits the bed, handkerchief to her face, crying, while the husband, who has obviously unpacked one case containing the radio gear, sits at his equipment, in the solitary act of listening – earphones on his head and his back turned to his new bride. The caption reads: “Alone At Last!” (p.30) Susan Douglas (1987; 2004) has detailed similar examples of gender in



early American radio.

Unlike the radio cacophony and clutter of today, the 1920 'air' was a pristine aural wilderness. Between 1919 and 1926, only 40 licenses were issued across Canada (Allard, 1979).

Radio experiments, that is to say, the wireless transmission of the human voice, as opposed to telegraphy, began in Canada in 1920 within months of similar trials undertaken in Great Britain and the US (Peers, 1969). Far from initially seeing this new technology as a tool for nation-building, Canadian government involvement was more practical.

Widespread problems of Canadian reception, originating with American frequencies, were being reported and complaints were made concerning content, which was difficult to consistently produce. Licensing, which will be discussed momentarily, was also problematic when it became apparent that thousands of radio listeners were evading payment of the one dollar annual license fee. Jurisdictional issues were also undefined. In the mid-1920s, the government of Manitoba was operating two radio stations and the University of Alberta was broadcasting educational material on CKUA. Hobbyists and educational broadcasters notwithstanding, the radio landscape was comprised of private interests. Indeed, the largest practitioner was the Canadian National Railways which went on to form the first radio network in 1928 (Peers, 1969; Raboy, 1990; Vipond, 2000; Weir, 1965).

Two major events occurred in the 1920s that seemed to move the federal government's involvement in radio beyond jurisdictional issues. In 1927, the Association of Canadian Clubs proposed a national network broadcast to celebrate Canada's 60<sup>th</sup>

birthday; a challenging endeavor to say the least, given that a single stand-a-lone network transmission system did not yet exist. A total of 9 telephone companies, 2 railroads, and 23 radio stations joined forces, using some 23,000 miles of wire for the July 1 broadcast. More than 40,000 people gathered for the broadcast on Parliament Hill. MacKenzie-King later proclaimed that:

For the first time in the history of Canada the words spoken on Parliament Hill and the sound of the chimes and bells, the greatest carillon in the world were carried instantaneously... May we not predict that as a result of this carrying of the living voice throughout the length and breadth of the Dominion, there will be aroused a more general interest in public affairs... (Weir, 1965, p.38).

The Prime Minister's recognition of radio as a potential instrument in nation-building most likely began a full year earlier while he was on a fact-finding trip to Great Britain. MacKenzie-King met Gladstone Murray, a Canadian, who was in charge of the BBC's publicity department. Murray would later figure predominantly in the movement to nationalize radio in Canada. Upon his return to Canada, the Prime Minister delivered a speech detailing his BBC experience. It was written by his personal public relations advisor, Charles Bowman, then the editor of the *Ottawa Citizen*. Bowman was also involved in the nationalization campaign and penned a series of articles for his paper arguing that:

The problem to be decided is whether private vested interests are to be allowed to become established in a new public service, which by its very nature can only be satisfactorily operated for the public benefit under public control (Peers, 1969, p.36).

Bowman went on to warn that following the “chaotic conditions of radio broadcasting” in the US, it “would seem the height of folly on the part of Canada to allow this great service to drift into similar conditions.” (p.36) Bowman would later assist in directing the affairs of the 1928 Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, the Aird Commission.

### ***Radio Regulation: 1920s***

Although the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries was the first government authority to regulate Canadian broadcasting under terms of the 1913 Radio-Telegraph Act, many radio pioneers were hobbyists who built their own transmitters (Peers, 1969). Indeed, many of these young men went on the air, albeit in a limited capacity, without a license (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982). The ‘wireless’ grew in popularity and reliability. By 1928, more than 60 radio stations were across Canada operating with little regulation from the license inspectors, many of whom had been hired as a result of their previous experience as hobbyists (Duffy, 1983; McNeil & Wolfe, 1982; Lorimer, 2004).

Marine and Fisheries required these broadcasters to complete the first radio license (Form W-69). Several of the 22 sections of the document are of particular interest: Section 4 prohibited the collection of money and Section 12 required broadcasters to keep an accurate record of content (the first program logs) and required

that “all operators at the said station shall be British subjects.” (Bird, 1988, p.33)

A close examination of Form W-69 shows the regulations of the day to be draconian. For example, broadcasters were required to turn their equipment over to the State when asked, and to allow “The Minister or his authorized officers” to “enter upon the herein licensed station.” (p.34) More to the point of this discussion, however, is the stipulation in Section 19(b) that “the allotment or the wavelengths specified... does not confer as monopoly of the use of such wavelength” and that “except with the consent in writing of the Minister, the licensee shall not assign or sublet this license.” (p.34)

Remarkably, in 1923, with a prescient stroke of the regulatory pen, the government of the day recognized the importance of public responsibility, monopoly, and ownership in radio broadcasting. For some, however, such as the private broadcaster and lobbyist TJ Allard (1979), it was a “forbidding atmosphere.” (p.13)

A report to Parliament from Marine and Fisheries (Bird, 1988) listed 68 stations on the eve of the Great Depression in 1928, with 32 “of such very low power as to be purely local in character.” (p.38) These stations were deemed to be “intermittent” (p.38) and very few of the 36 major or “permanent” stations appeared to have been independent broadcasters, as illustrated in Table 1:

**Table 1: Major Radio Station Ownership (1920s)**

Radio manufacturers and dealers	13
Other manufacturers and retail stores	4
Newspapers	8
Government companies (CNR and Manitoba)	4
Grain brokers	4
Miscellaneous	3

(Bird, 1988, p.36)

When the licenses owned by manufacturers, dealers, and newspapers were combined, they comprised 69 percent of the total. By virtue of their designation as ‘permanent’ they were accorded preferable frequencies and power when broadcasting to the estimated 400,000 receivers in Canada at that time (Bird, 1988).

Of these preferred broadcasters, several were on their way to establishing themselves as what we would be labeled today as ‘heritage’ radio stations, outlets that remain on the air today (Table 2).

**Table 2: Future Heritage Radio Stations**

CKCK Regina	CKWX, Vancouver
CFQC, Saskatoon	CHNS, Halifax
CJCA, Edmonton	CKAC, Montreal
CFCL (later CJVI) Victoria	CFRB, Toronto
CFCF, Montreal	CHSJ, St. John

(Bird, 1988)

Although a license was technically required, these operators were largely ignored by the regulator of the day (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982). A radio license issued by the Minister of Marine and Fisheries was certainly not difficult to obtain. In rural Western Ontario, WT “Doc” Cruikshank built a radio transmitter by following a *Popular Mechanics* article in 1921. He would broadcast the local church service, and then carry the transmitter under his arm and continue broadcasting from his home. “We didn’t even know you needed a license for broadcasting... It was very simple to get though... All I did was write a letter and pay ten dollars.” (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982, p.108; also see Allard, 1979, p.41-42).

In the 1920s and 1930s, commercial private broadcasting was at best a haphazard exercise undertaken part-time. Unlike the larger urban counterparts, these were small, rural, often family-run businesses. Bill Borrett, founder of CHNS Halifax, the first private station in Nova Scotia, said, “We’d come on the air at eight in the morning. Sign off at nine, do the office work and then go out and sell. Sometimes, we’d sign-on again at noon and sign-off again at six or maybe we’d stay on the air till eight.” (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982, p.54). It was not unusual to have two stations, such as CKMO and CKWX-Vancouver, share the same frequency. In Sydney NS, Charlottetown PEI, and St. John’s NF, the prime motivators for early commercial broadcasting were religion and selling radio receivers. It was common for radio stations to broadcast Sunday morning church services, rotating weekly from one denomination to another. Nathan Nathanson, who launched CJCB in Sydney in the mid-1930s, did not come to broadcasting as an enthusiast, but as a businessman:

We were in the music business... selling radio boxes... We needed a local radio signal that could be heard because outside [distant] reception was a very indifferent thing. One day it came in and the next day it didn’t. A local station would fix that (p.47).

Larger businesses also saw the potential of radio. In Red Deer, the Alberta Pacific Grain Company found it cheaper to deliver current stock market prices by commercial radio rather than to send five daily telegrams to hundreds of grain elevators with current prices. When the market crashed in 1929, CKLC was no longer needed (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982).

Two clear patterns can be seen in these examples. Content was vital and the need

for content was naturally directly proportional to the number of hours broadcast. We need to remember that 1920s radio was live and local; radio then was, by today's standards, exceedingly labor intensive. Second, the content needed to be sold. Not coincidentally, these two issues were at the root of the forthcoming public debates concerning radio. Nevertheless, attitudinal lines were already being drawn in private radio with regard to any type of regulation.

We lack the benefit of quantitative research from radio's early days in Canada that could precisely measure these attitudes, but I suggest some reasonable conclusions. Most early broadcasters, that is to say, broadcasters in the 1920s and 1930s, fell into one of three categories. They were either technically competent professional wireless operators, enthusiastic amateurs (often members of radio clubs), or businessmen. What seems apparent from the limited historical record is that the amateurs often developed the electrical expertise from the technical people, many of whom were trained by the military. Both groups were sought out by business interests to build and maintain the broadcasting facilities. For example, many of the early broadcast engineers were 'signal men' from the war who found a natural interest in broadcasting. Others were members of radio clubs and as such, were beginning to self-identify as experts. In any case, imbued as they were with arcane radio knowledge, they were the technocrats of their day.

### ***Ownership Groups***

Allard (1979) claims that the period between 1919 and the mid-1940s saw the development of "only three dynasties." (p.44) He lists them as 1) Taylor, Pearson, and Carson (TPC), 2) the Sifton family, and 3) the Roy Thomson group.

## *TPC*

Harold R. Carson, a Calgary auto parts dealer, joined with his partners to buy part ownership in CJOC Lethbridge in 1924. It can be said that Carson was the first broadcast consultant as he leveraged his business knowledge in a unique manner. Rather than purchasing shares in a radio station or buying a station outright, Carson offered to manage the outlet. Management included programming and hiring responsibilities (Allard, 1979; McNeil & Wolfe, 1988; Peers; 1969). Originally, TPC depended on local advertising for its stations, however,

on a trip to the United States Carson found that in similar American stations about forty percent of their business came from national advertising. Carson concluded that he should have someone in eastern Canada looking after his accounts there (Peers, 1969, p.350; also see Allard, 1976, p.45).

By creating United Broadcast Sales, TPC became one of the first 'rep houses' and by 1941, national advertising comprised half the air time sold on TPC stations. By this time, TPC had become the All-Canada Mutually Operated Stations (Allard, 1979; Weir, 1965). Another TPC holding, All-Canada Radio Facilities Ltd., bought the Canadian broadcast rights to several of the most popular American radio programs of the day.

According to Peers (1969), TPC owned or controlled several stations across Canada (Table 3).



**Table 3: Taylor Pearson and Carson (TPC) Stations (1941)**

CJOC Lethbridge	CJVI Victoria
CFAC Calgary	CKCK Regina
CJAC Edmonton	CJRC (CKRC) Winnipeg
CKWX Vancouver	CKOC Hamilton
CJCS Stratford]	

(p.287)

Eventually, All-Canada (TPC) expanded its management to include a total of 11 stations. Interestingly, the All-Canada presentation to the Massey Commission was described as being “to the *right* of the CAB [Canadian Association of Broadcasters] in its fundamentalist free enterprise thinking.” (Raboy, 1990, p.100) (emphasis added) Its brief stated that: “Radio broadcasting is a medium of mass communication and is not a public utility... [t]he right to use a broadcast channel should be like the right to use the land.”

(p.101)

### ***The Siftons***

The Siftons were influential in the prairies. In the 1930s, they owned a number of stations: CKRC Winnipeg, CKCK Regina, and CKRM Regina, which was eventually sold to Saskatoon interests. The Siftons also owned CKOC Hamilton. Sir Clifford Sifton was the founder of the Winnipeg Free Press and became Minister of the Interior in the Sir Wilfred Laurier cabinet. Control of the company went to his sons, Victor and Clifford (Allard, 1979).

Broadcaster Wilf Collier recalls that the Siftons initially did not invest heavily in CKCK:

The control room, which also housed the transmitter was roughly 9 by 12. Everything was squeezed into that space, including two 78 RPM turntables... All the walls were lined with straw pressed into bales about four inches thick with drapes hanging in front of them (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982, p.128).

Not until the Regina station was taken over by TPC in 1936 did it become “a real commercial operation.” (p.128) TPC operated a total of three stations for the family (Peers, 1969).

The Siftons exemplified cross-media ownership. As well as the *Farm Weekly*, they operated the *Regina Leader* and both radio stations in Regina. Elsewhere in Saskatchewan, the Siftons owned the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* and the *Free Press Prairie Farmer* in Winnipeg. It was, as Frank Peers (1969) suggested “a situation without parallel in Canada.” (p.349) With regard to the Regina monopoly, broadcaster T.J. Allard (1979) defends the family suggesting “the Regina situation was distasteful to the Siftons who immediately tried to dispose of CKRM [but] there were no takers.” (p.47) The Siftons created Armdale Communications in 1960 but left their broadcasting businesses, which eventually included television interests, in 1997 (Murray, 2003).

### ***Thompson***

Roy Thomson, known primarily for his newspaper holdings, established radio stations in North Bay, Kirkland Lake, and Timmins ON. In 1942, he partnered with Senator Rupert Davies of the *Peterborough Examiner* and set up a station in Peterborough. By the end of the war, Thomson’s Northern Broadcasting managed or had interests in several other stations including Kingston, Rouyn, Val d’or, and Amos (Peers,

1969).

Under Thomson, Jack Kent Cooke cut his broadcasting teeth. Thomson hired Cooke, then a Colgate-Palmolive salesman, in 1937. Cooke took over Thomson's broadcasting interests leaving the print side of the business to Thomson. Thomson later invested in media overseas where, in reference to his Scottish television station, he proclaimed "the license was equivalent to a license to print money." (Allard, 1979, p.50) Between the \$200 down payment for his first newspaper in Timmins in 1934, and his death in 1976, Thomson amassed 40 daily newspapers and 12 weeklies in Canada and a further 71 dailies in the US. He died a billionaire (Siegel, 1996).

Geographically, the 1940s radio landscape was becoming increasingly dominated by TPC or its progeny in BC and Alberta, the Siftons on the prairies, and Roy Thomson in Northern Ontario.

As radio matured, this specialized class began to share a more professional bond. Indeed, the historical record (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982) shows clear examples of the emergence of distinct codes and conventions specific to radio. This is especially apparent in the lexicon. By 1931, terms such as "down in the mud," for low reproduction volume and "adenoid tenor," an announcer with a 'tight' voice, were commonplace. Several of these radio terms have endured over the years. For example, the commonplace term today used to describe a glitch in computer software is a *bug*. This term was first used in the *RCA Radio Parade* magazine in 1931, where a bug was described as "trouble in equipment caused by something not immediately obvious." (p. 29) Interestingly, a hierarchy was beginning to form within this group. Some positions were given elevated status and were signified accordingly. The master control radio engineer was often

referred to as “The King,” who naturally sits on “the Throne” at the master control desk (p. 29).

Susan Douglas (1987; 2004) cites several examples of the flowery and romantic language used to describe radio technology and the inventor-heroes who mastered it. There was “a conviction that technological and social progress were intertwined in an ever-upward-moving spiral.” (Peers, 1969, p.7) Douglas further suggests that experimentation with wireless was “the professional aspirations and leisure activities of a subculture of middle-class men and boys who found in technical tinkering a way to cope with the pressure of modernization,” (Douglas, 1987, p.xxii; also see McNeil & Wolfe, 1982)

### ***Aird and the CRBC***

The Aird Commission is important for several reasons. It is the first broadcasting cultural policy exercise and as such, created a template of sorts for subsequent hearings to follow. Moreover, as Mary Vipond (2000) and others have indicated, the Aird proceedings began the agonizing debate concerning public and private broadcasting in Canada amid calls for a nationalized broadcasting system.

The Commission traveled in style when “Sir Henry Thorton placed at its disposal a private railway car to facilitate its operations with greater comfort and dispatch.” (Weir, 1965, p.107) The Commission heard 164 verbal submissions in 25 Canadian cities (Canada, 1929). The Commission concluded that Canadian radio should be nationalized, operated, and maintained through license fees, rental of time for sponsored programs with *indirect* [emphasis added] advertising, and a federal subsidy.<sup>1</sup> Mike Gasher (1998)

suggested that though the Aird Commission recommended nationalization, it was by no means a unanimous decision. Gasher's review of the Aird public intervention documents in the National Archives shows the submissions to be inconclusive on the questions of a state-operated system. In any event, the plan to nationalize broadcasting won the day perhaps because the Aird Commissioners may have stacked the deck to predetermine the call for a state system, a point not lost on the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (Vipond, 1994; Gasher, 1998; Allard, 1979).

When the Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting tabled its report following the Aird proceedings, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) was created, headed by newspaperman Hector Charlesworth. The Special Committee's recommendations were instrumental in defining the 1932 Radio Broadcasting Act (Vipond, 1994; Raboy, 1990). Thus began a disconnect pattern concerning policy and policy implementation in Canadian radio broadcasting.

While the Committee clearly sought to empower a radio commission to regulate Canadian radio and indeed, "take over all broadcasting in Canada" (Bird, 1988, pp.729-731) and create a nationally integrated network, much appeared to be lost in the translation as the report moved to the legislative stage. The 1932 Act was lacking clarity and concision. The Act, for example, did not set out precisely how and when a chain of high-powered radio stations would be created by purchasing existing private stations and creating new broadcasting facilities. The biggest impediment to creating a nationalized system was a reliable funding stream – an issue that continues to dominate public broadcasting today (Vipond, 1994; Romanow, 1996).

The CRBC not only regulated but actively competed with private broadcasters, by

levying license fees and engaging in indirect advertising. The subsidy, highlighted in the Aird recommendations, was dropped. The license fee, set at \$2.00 per radio receiver, was ostensibly to support the CRBC's new national radio network, though the money was directed into Ottawa's general revenues which opened the door to political influence. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the collection of these fees was problematic. The Canadian Radio League, instrumental in the success of the Commission and by far the loudest voice for a state-owned public system was unsuccessful in its bid for a \$3.00 license fee, which was deemed to be politically unwise (Weir, 1965; Vipond, 1994; Allard, 1979).

Because of the lack of consistent funding and clear direction, in its four year run, the CRBC fell well short of its original network goal. Only seven stations were created, three of them leased from private broadcasters. Where the Commission lacked a physical broadcasting presence, it attempted to distribute programming content using private stations. On July 1 1927 the first national radio broadcast was launched (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982).

### ***Content and Regulation in the 1930s***

Private broadcasters found much to take issue with in the CRBC Rules and Regulations (Bird, 1988, pp.124-132). In Part IV of the regulations, 'Station Operation,' commercial licensees were told they may have to share their frequency with other stations if required by the CRBC (p.129). Each time a record or 'mechanical reproduction' was to be used, the announcer was required to make an announcement clarifying to the listener that the following was not a live, or 'real,' performance. The

regulations were specific:

The exact form of the announcement is not prescribed, but the language shall be clear and in terms commonly used and understood. The following are examples of statements sufficient for the purpose:

- (a) “This is a recorded program.”
- (b) “This is a player-piano record.”

(Bird, 1988, p.130)

Program content was now regulated, albeit with a broad definition. Programs from foreign countries were limited to 40 percent. Nevertheless, as long as the foreign program advertised goods manufactured in Canada, and included a Canadian address, the program was deemed to be Canadian. Presumably, this information could be added by a local station carrying a US network program. Licensees were told that, when requested, they had to give priority to “Canadian programs originating within Canada” and in an interesting choice of words “give right-of-way to such programs as in the judgment of the Commission are of national importance.” (p.131)

Advertising content was limited in scope and scale. Only 5 percent of a program’s length could be advertising. The regulations stated “for example, in a quarter hour program, forty five seconds only may be given up to advertising matter.” (p.131)

Furthermore:

No station shall broadcast advertising spot announcements between the hours of 7:30pm and 11:00pm. No advertising spot announcement shall exceed one hundred words. Spot announcements shall not total more than three minutes in any one hour (p.132).

Moreover, the broadcasters faced further limits when they were told their copy “shall not mention or suggest prices in connection with any advertising programs or announcements.” (p 131) Some regulations, such as those cited in Section 2, under ‘News Broadcasts,’ appeared designed to cast a wide net over almost any eventuality: “The broadcasting of editorial opinions of a controversial nature is prohibited.” (p. 132)

Although cultural policy was not clearly delineated in the 1932 Act, the wording reflected an awkward attempt to regulate not only the amount of Canadian content, but also factors concerning what was socially acceptable. The restrictions on advertising prices are a particularly good example of the latter. Clearly, for many amateur-turned-commercial broadcasters, who had been operating at will and unfettered by any firm regulatory encumbrances, the world was changing. Still, the adaptation appears not to have been a problem. For example, when Hugh Mills reluctantly took on a Saturday morning kids show as ‘Uncle Mel’ on CHNS Halifax, he said:



We had an 'official' brand of milk for the [Uncle Mel's Safety] club everything from syrup, to bread and peanut butter. People didn't understand what advertising on radio was all about so when they heard me refer to a brand of peanut butter, they thought I mentioned it because I liked it. We were advertising milk from the Maple Leaf dairy... A friend told me... his own grandchild was refusing to drink Oxford Dairy milk because he wanted to drink only 'official' milk (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982, p.60).

It wasn't unusual for private broadcasters to circumvent the regulations, perhaps not in letter, but certainly in spirit:

At first we couldn't mention prices on the air. We'd say "Northwest Laundry are doing wet wash for the price per pound of an ice cream cone." We had different ways of getting around it (p.115).

Another broadcaster, this one from BC, said:

One stupid thing was that you couldn't run an announcement after seven-thirty at night. Another thing you couldn't do was quote prices. We used to get around that in a small way by saying "Buy so-and-so's chocolate bars. They are less than a streetcar ticket. The streetcar ticket was five cents. If you were a men's haberdashery you could talk for five minutes about how good a suit was and that you mustn't miss this bargain, and that the price was unbelievable. But you couldn't mention what the price was. It was a lot of baloney (p.158).

It is reasonable to assume any early regulation needs to be placed into the context of radio as it existed at that time. On this point, Allard (1979) is correct when saying that,

in those formative CRBC years, Canadians listened primarily to private broadcasters, including those operating in the US. The level of commercial content at that time was apparent to anyone armed with earphones.

In Toronto, during the mid-1920s, listeners heard CKGW, owned by Gooderham & Worts, popular distillers at the time. CKOW, which was largely sponsored by Carnation Milk and of course CFRB, which continues today, began as the Rogers Batteryless station. In St. John's NF, radio station VOAS was the Voice Of Ayre And Sons, named after the owners. In Cape Breton, the 'J' in CJCB was for Jennie, owner Nathan Nathanson's wife (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982, p.47).

Whether it was the Lux Radio Theatre networked into Canada from the US or the major made-in-Canada productions such as The CN Hour, CIL Opera House, or The Imperial Oil Hour broadcast on CFRB (p.76), broadcasting was already well on its way to becoming commercialized. Private broadcasters and listeners alike were defining notions of 'good' radio and 'professional' radio.

Indeed, Canadians were inundated with American programming. For example, on CFRB, "all of the soap operas with the exception of three or four produced during the war, were made by the advertising agencies. There were a couple of local shows, but the rest came out of New York or Chicago daily and live." (p.93) Naturally, these were sponsored programs. They were also well received (literally and figuratively) in Canada. In some cases, private stations would go to great lengths to carry US programs. In Moose Jaw, before CHAB became affiliated with the Dominion Network, announcer Sid Boyling said:

One of the people in the city had a good radio and we hooked up with his radio by telephone and whatever stations he got were carried by us. We would get “Amos ‘n’ Andy, “Jack Benny” and all the other big shows. We did this for about a year, then the government stepped in and stopped us (p.140).

In Hamilton ON, CKCL, located at 900 on the dial, often interfered with WBEN in Buffalo at 930, which carried the popular Sunday night “Amos ‘n’ Andy” program. Broadcaster Lee Ramsey said that though CKCL did not air the program, CKCL was still inventive:

Local people wanted to hear it, so one of our salesmen got a brilliant idea. He went out and sold 15 minutes of blank air to one of the lumber companies. We signed off [early] so people could hear Amos and Andy [on WBEN]... the lumber company thought it was great because it seemed as though they were sponsoring Amos and Andy. (p.98)

The private stations were defining radio, not in terms of future potential to unite the country, but rather in terms of programming. As Marc Raboy suggested “By the time public broadcasting was in a position to create its own, different programs, the audience’s taste had been formed” (1990, p.61).

For many of these broadcasters, putting bread on the table came before any notion of Canadian cultural imperatives. When Walter Dales talks about his early days at CKBI in Prince Albert SK, he is not recalling romanticized notions of the glory days of radio: “I went into broadcasting out of sheer necessity. We weren’t a well-educated bunch. Usually it was guys like me who just came off the streets. It was the early part of the

depression.” (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982, p.142) For Dales, calls for radio regulation and nationalization were certainly beginning to form dividing lines. According to Dales, groups such as the Canadian Broadcasting League,

convinced a lot of editors that radio was a real threat to their survival and that they ought to favour radio becoming not an advertising medium but a public service.

So the newspapers started to say radio was too important an educational vehicle to be in the hands of private exploiters. That’s what they called us – exploiters.

(p.142)

These events are telling in several respects. The notion that the spectrum, that is to say, the radio frequencies, were public property and only licensed temporarily to private broadcasters appears to have been ignored by the broadcasters. Instead, this growing sector simply assumed that a license to broadcast conferred ownership; to the extent that station call letters took on a personal sense of identity.

The first radio regulations governing both content and technical issues were met with disdain by the private broadcasters. Not surprisingly, any restriction upon programming was deemed a personal attack. In some cases, it’s clear these restrictions were viewed simply as minor irritants that could be easily circumvented.

Although networks were the sole domain of the public broadcaster and prohibited in the private sector, various methods, albeit local and limited in scope, were often employed to allow American material to be heard. Indeed, the very definition of *local* was not predicated on programming, but rather the point of origin of the signal. The information bound within the programming was deemed almost irrelevant as long as it was broadcast in Canada. Not without some irony, decades later, after regulating

programming specifically with regard to content, the regulator returned to this broad CRBC definition of local, and once again disregarded the content.

That said, CRBC required a degree of honesty from broadcasters who were told to inform listeners whether they were listening to material that was live or prerecorded. Although attempts were also made to restrict direct price-and-item advertising, private broadcasters were clearly successful in avoiding that regulatory requirement, at least in spirit. These patterns were followed in the years to come, though, at least in the 1930s, some concern was shown about intellectual honesty in radio given the regulatory requirement to identify prerecorded material.

### ***The Canadian Radio League (CRL)***

The achievements of the Canadian Radio League (CRL) have been well documented. Peers (1969) and Weir (1965) have outlined these in great detail and documents have also been left by those responsible for creating the CRL (Bird, 1982; Spry, Potvin, & University of Regina, 1992). Of interest is the effect of the League upon private broadcasters, who felt that those advocating a public system were simply “do-gooders” (McNeil & Wolfe, p.158).

The League enjoyed widespread support from trade unions and educators such as EA Corbett who was adapting radio as a tool for adult education in Alberta. By skillfully relying on friendly sources in newspapers, the CRL developed an admirable public relations network and dominated the policy agenda concerning radio for the next decade, much to the chagrin of the CAB (Peers, 1965; Raboy, 1990; Allard, 1976; 1979).

This was highlighted in the Canadian Forum, a national CBC discussion program,

where, over a one month period, the CRL's Graham Spry and CAB supporter John Gibbon wrote articles from each perspective, using the Radio League as their focal point. Gibbon, public relations manager for the CPR attempted to draw a parallel with newspapers claiming that "In North America most of the newspapers and magazines are purchased as much for the advertisements as the editorial content." He continued by adding that with regard to the advertising, "the majority of the readers (namely the women) read little else in a newspaper other than the department store advertisements..." (Bird, 1982, p.60) Later however, Gibbon offered a small retraction by claiming, "I am ready to admit that some of the direct advertising permitted, particularly on the smaller local stations, is offensive." (p.61) He suggested the remedy was simply for the listener to go elsewhere. On the opposing side, Graham Spry cloaked his argument in strident nationalism. "There is no agency of human communication," he said "which so effectively unites Canadian to Canadian and realizes the aspirations of Confederation, as radio broadcasting." (p.64)

My intention is not to fully delve into the colorful debates between the ardent supporters of public and private broadcasting. Rather, of particular interest here is the formation of broadcast culture in the private sector. Radio League proponents were advocating a principle or perhaps a vision of what Canadian broadcasting had the potential to become. This differed dramatically from the vision of CAB members, in their minds at least, that was not based on lofty hypothetical principles, but grounded in the business of day to day radio.

When one reads the Allard account of the Canadian radio history, the author dramatically distinguishes between those 'in' radio and deemed to be at the front lines,

and others. According to Allard, the Aird Commission was chaired by a man who “once owned a radio but later threw the damn thing out.” (1979, p.62) Furthermore, Allard maintained that the Commission itself was “the first of a long line of public inquiries destined to bedevil and emasculate the development of broadcasting in Canada.” (p.60) Public or state broadcasting, according to Allard, was being pushed on the public by “a phantom army” (p.59). In later years, to be discussed below, Allard was barely able to hide his contempt for chairman of the House of Commons Broadcasting Committee:

Dr. J.J. McCann – whose totally paranoid hatred of private broadcasters is still a major mystery – began belching rumblings about the dangers of “multiple ownership... McCann’s diatribes... received vigorous support from CCF leader M. J. Coldwell (p.177).

One could argue that his was but one voice, however, since Allard held several executive positions with the CAB from 1948 through to 1978, it would not be a great leap to suggest that his views were represented by the organization he helped lead. Moreover, Allard’s early attitudes in broadcasting were formed in large measure through his work for the Taylor-Pearson-Carson group.

As the issues surrounding public and private broadcasting were argued before the House Broadcasting Committee in 1947 and the Royal Commission on National Development of the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission) two years later, the debates saw the private broadcasters circling their wagons against a perceived attack on their broadcast rights (Litt, 1992; Raboy, 1990).

The legacy of the Radio League, with regard to private radio, is twofold: not only did Graham Spry and colleague Allan Plaunt keep the public not-for-profit vision of radio

on the policy agenda, but they also helped coalesce and strengthen the identity of private broadcasters.

One only has to remove the CRL from the picture to imagine the rampant growth of private radio that would have resulted in Canada at that time. This is clearly evident in the history of US radio, which will be briefly discussed below.

### ***Political Economy and Technology: 1900s***

In this section, I will highlight developments in broadcast technology from a political economy perspective. This is important to establish the relationship that existed between governments and broadcasters as well as the various laws, patents, and technologies of the day. Later, as the discussion moves into the following decades, specific technical advances in hardware, such as automation, become more apparent. In Chapter Five, I discuss broadcast technology in detail.

I have structured this discussion around early developments in the US and Canada. Although aspects of the early years in Canada have already been detailed, I deliberately moved some of these points to the current discussion to provide an easier comparison between developments in Canada and the US.

My approach also contains the underlying assumption that technology operates in a value-free environment. It is always tied to ideology in one form or another. William Leiss (1990) explored this point and offered a worthwhile model that explores technology and “techniques” (of technology). He suggested that technology is an all-encompassing term that tends to be represented as naturalized evolution in society. Techniques, on the other hand, never occur independently from determinations of who can use them and for



what purpose (Leiss, 1990, p.31). He argued that technologies are comprised of a myriad of techniques which, when combined, are designed to accomplish specific means and ends. Furthermore:

Just as techniques are incorporated into technologies, so are the latter in turn incorporated into wider frameworks that I call “modes of social reproduction” These are the predominant forms of institutional organization in economy, politics and social relations. (p.32)

Broadcast technology easily falls within this model reminding us that specific developments are always only component parts of a larger schema, as Leiss suggests.

Without much effort, one could be swept away with the romanticism of the invention of radio. Nevertheless, the efforts of Fessenden, DeForest, Marconi and others are too easily brought to mind with stereotypical trademarks. While Marconi is generally thought of as *the* inventor, Reginald Fessenden is singled out as ‘the Canadian’. Often, a pervasive sense is felt that it was sole strength of spirit and intestinal fortitude that resulted in the invention of ‘the wireless’. Missing from this historical discussion are other notable factors such as the surrounding technology and the political economy.

Susan Douglas (1987) has argued that, in the mid-1800s, the US was not only enthralled with science but idealized inventors as heroes. She submits that American radio history usually begins with KDKA in Pittsburgh, eclipsing altogether the “twenty year gestation period” of radio (Crowley & Heyer, 1999, p.229). This period deserves our attention because it lays the groundwork for the historic broadcasts that followed, and assists in clarifying many of the subsequent technical developments.

## *Marconi*

Marconi always had the intention to “make the thing pay” (Douglas, p.16) and the transition from laboratory to marketplace is a story that is largely told through the various patents and licenses that were granted. Indeed, all of the inventor-heroes: Marconi, Fessenden, and Deforest, were drenched in the get-rich-quick entrepreneurial spirit of the day (p.62).

The Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company was incorporated in 1900, after Marconi (and his mother) turned down an offer of £10,000 for his original patent. The family business, Marconi Wireless, secured worldwide patent rights for wireless transmission.

At this juncture, following the incorporation, Marconi’s desire to turn a profit moved him from the sphere of potential social and cultural benefits, to one of free enterprise. Marconi’s desire to market his invention was bolstered by his seemingly innate ability to place himself in front of the press. He staged several publicity stunts, including establishing a wireless link from one of the Queen’s residences to her Royal Yacht. Arguably, his greatest public relations campaign was launched in 1899 when Marconi Wireless reported the results of the America’s Cup race. Within days of the race completion, Marconi was being portrayed in the popular press as a “public benefactor” (Douglas, 1987, p.29), thus solidifying his place in American society as an inventor-hero, at a time when many immigrants to the US were viewed with suspicion.

The transition from wireless telegraphy to radio, or radio-phonng, as it was called, seemed to occur quickly, perhaps because for many years, especially between 1915 and 1922, newspapers neglected the technology (Crowley & Heyer, 1999). By 1922

however, *Radio Broadcast* magazine was devoted entirely to radio. These magazines helped imbue the medium with a sense of awe and wonder, borrowing from the ethereal language used to describe wireless telegraphy years earlier. Foremost among these accounts was the role of the wireless in the Titanic disaster (Duffy, 1983; Kern, 1999). While the press and public were growing increasingly enamored with wireless, the 1920s were also replete with corporate involvement. Even among the inventors themselves, occasional legal rifts surrounded the patents and copyrights (Douglas, 1987).

### ***AT & T***

The American model of radio became mired in corporate wrangling almost from the beginning. RCA (Radio Corporation of America) was formed by Westinghouse, AT&T, and General Electric, in 1919. The intention was to buy-out American Marconi and get control of its patents. Although a few voices were calling for government ownership of radio, this was not favored by a majority of Congress or the military (Peers, 1969; Douglas, 1987).

In the partnership, AT&T was the only group not making money by manufacturing receivers. However, in a cross-licensing agreement in 1920 AT&T was to get money from the sale of transmitting equipment, having acquired patent rights from Lee DeForest. Additional revenue was to be generated by leasing cable lines. AT&T pulled out of RCA in 1922, but set up New York radio station WEAJ as a 'toll' station. The first instance of radio time being purchased, was a 10-minute talk given by a real estate developer in exchange for \$100. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover claimed it was "inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service... to be

drowned in advertising chatter.” (Peers, 1969, p.9)

Seeking to maintain control, AT&T claimed the 1920 cross-licensing deal gave it sole permission to charge ‘tolls’. Furthermore, AT&T believed it could prevent those who bought its transmitters and leased its cable lines from also charging tolls. By 1923, WEAF was programming with a long list of sponsors while RCA, Westinghouse, and GE were blocked from selling ad time. Public criticism followed and by 1924 stations buying AT&T transmitters were also allowed to ‘broadcast for hire’ (Peers, 1969; Douglas, 1987; Wurtzler, 2003).

By 1925, several important questions were settled. By now, AT&T’s small commercial network of three stations had grown to 26. Advertising was funding the network. RCA set up the National Broadcasting Company (NBC), to enter the network broadcasting business in 1926. RCA, GE and Westinghouse owned 50-30-20 percent of the stock, respectively. By this time, ATT was induced to sell WEAF after a legal opinion held it did not have an exclusive right to ‘broadcast for hire’. WEAF was sold for \$1,000,000 to NBC which was now well into in the network business (the red and blue networks) and CBS arrived in 1927.

After four national conferences, it was decided “broadcasting in the United States should be supported by industry, rather than by revenue secured by taxation.” (Peers, 1969, p.11) Radio talks aimed at direct sales, such as the aforementioned real estate developer, had been frowned upon. WEAF eventually came to an understanding with the government that outlawed direct ads. Nevertheless, ‘institutional advertising’ (indirect advertising) was deemed legal.

The ban on direct ads eventually fell by the wayside when CBS and NBC

followed the WEA model to finance their operations with advertising (Peers, 1969; Douglas, 1987; Wurtzler, 2003).

In 1927, largely as the result of Hoover's continuing concern, the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) was formed to license stations, regulate frequencies, and determine power and broadcasting times. Licenses were for three years and could be revoked for cause. The Act was revised in 1934 and the Commission was renamed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) (Peers, 1969; Douglas, 1987; Wurtzler, 2003).

Wurtzler (2003) and McChesney (1993) have detailed how American radio has historically come to terms with issues surrounding public versus private broadcasting. McChesney (1993) detailed how corporate domination and weak regulation combined to "rapidly crystallize a system dominated by two national chains supported by commercial advertising." (p.29) With the solidification of private broadcasting as the norm, the culture of private broadcasting within the radio discourse was strengthened.

Bolstered by the corporate sector, with Westinghouse, GE, and RCA leading the way, the Americans were able to fund a massive build-up of radio infrastructure while Canada lacked comparable corporate investment. Canadian radio, for the most part, was comprised of small- to medium-sized businesses (Vipond, 2000, p.38).

### ***The American Shadow***

When one considers the American influence upon Canadian radio development, several points are evident. Clearly, in the formative years, that is to say, up until the mid-1930s, the influence seemed to stem from cross-border US programming content, rather than the programming organization and execution. However, in later years, into the 1950s

and 1960s, the structure of American programming, especially formatic influences, were adopted in Canada. This latter point is further explored in Chapter Three.

An all-too-common paradigm, held out to ostensibly explain many of the differences between Canadian and American broadcasting, is that Americans gravitated naturally towards an early free-market model. Of course, this is a gross simplification but perhaps not entirely unfounded.

Robert McChesney (1993) persuasively suggested that the adoption of a private market-oriented model of US radio resulted from a lengthy drawn-out battle for control between private broadcasters and not-for profit advocates. He referred to the former as “the radio lobby” and to the latter as “broadcast reformers” (p.6). While stating his bias at the outset, which was clearly articulated elsewhere, his case is still strong (McChesney, 2002; 2003).

He bases his discussion on two points: first, the market-model was anything but ‘natural,’ and second, the American people did not arrive at this system by a democratic consensus.

McChesney argued that key legislative and regulatory changes between 1928 and 1935 laid the foundation for the eventual control of radio. Many of these changes, such as the US Radio Act of 1927 and the formation of the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), and later the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), have been discussed elsewhere (Douglas, 1987; 2004).

In the same way, Canadians did not fully come to grips with a clearly delineated radio policy as a result of the 1926 Aird Commission, and the US 1927 Radio Act ignored any fundamental discussion of ideological policy (McChesney, 1993). The Act

was pragmatic and functional, implemented to solve the more pressing problem of poor frequency allocation which resulted in “the chaos of interference and the howls... [of] radio reception”. The Act also created the Federal Radio Commission, which acted primarily as a radio spectrum “traffic cop” (p.18).

Several important points need to be made with regard to early FRC regulation. First, the commissioners deferred almost entirely to the technological high priests of the day – the radio engineers. Second, decisions were predicated on the FRC mandate of “public interest, convenience or necessity” (p.26). Vague terms at best; however, having created 40 clear channel frequencies, the FRC determined that it was “obviously in the public interest” to turn these frequencies over to the private stations who “had the equipment to take advantage of these slots.” (p.26) After all, if a private station had the capacity to serve the ‘public interest’ by virtue of the size of its transmitters, would it not seem reasonable to accord the broadcaster the best possible frequency?

In a notable distinction, the FRC also stipulated that radio served ‘listeners’ and not ‘users’. In other words, broadcasting was not a common-carrier, similar to other public utilities. Of course, this opened the door even further to the market-model.

The frequency reallocation took place in 1928 according to what was termed General Order 40. Rather than setting aside a specific number frequencies solely for the purpose of not-for-profit radio, to clearly delineate spectrum use, the FRC mandated a sharing of frequencies. As a result of General Order 40, non-profit stations, sharing frequencies with their private counterparts, were required to relinquish the best hours in the ‘public interest’. Naturally, this made fund-raising exceedingly difficult because listeners were never assured of a reliable consistent signal when they tuned in. As a

result, many labor organizations, church groups, and educators were eventually forced off the air leaving 100 percent of the license in the hands of private owners (McChesney, 2003).

### ***NAB and American Radio***

Not unlike its brethren to the north, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) was also developing a sense of ownership, literally and figuratively, with regard to radio. Unlike its Canadian counterpart, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB), American private radio was exceptionally well organized in the late-1920s and early-1930s. US private broadcasters used their trade journal *Broadcasting* to both update fellow broadcasters and lobby the government. Nevertheless, the NAB's publication *Broadcasters' News Bulletin* was decidedly more political (McChesney, 2003; Douglas, 2004). Interwoven within these pages were the stated norms and values of private radio. Not only do we see an emergent sense of belonging, but also a clear sense of superiority not unlike the statements from private radio interests in Canada who railed against the Canadian Radio League and other 'do gooders'.

American non-profit broadcasters are referred to as "misguided pedagogues," "zealots [who] want to justify the jobs they are holding" and "professional reformers" (McChesney, 2003, p.47). One would almost expect such rhetoric, however, in a more telling statement, the NAB referred to the National Committee of Education on Radio (NCER) as "Interests that have stood passively by and were *unwilling to bear the trials of pioneering*" (emphasis added) (p.49). Although reluctant to first see any potential in radio technology and happy to leave it to the hobbyists and 'amateurs,' the NAB, with



revisionist tactics, saw itself and no one else, as pioneering explorers.

Ironically, as the NAB was reinventing itself in the US, one of the true radio pioneers, inventor Lee DeForest, was testifying before a parliamentary committee in Canada. DeForest, brought to Ottawa in 1932 by the NCER's Canadian counterpart, the Canadian Radio League, referred to US radio as "a vulgar, cheapjack show designed solely to coax dollars out of the pockets of the public." (p.88)

As in later years, the CAB referred to private broadcasters in Canada as 'community stations' (Peers, 1969; Babe, 1990), and the NAB also began to fashion language aimed at naturalizing their foothold on American radio. For example, the non-profit stations were labeled as "propaganda" stations (p.27). WCFL, owned by the Chicago Federation of Labor, was consistently singled out by envious private broadcasters, no doubt because it had a strong signal that provided a great reach with little or no interference. The NAB and the private stations also succeeded in labeling or branding (to use a more contemporary term), the very nature of how US radio was defined.

Private interests succeeded in equating private radio with "The American System" of broadcasting, or alternatively, "The American Plan" (McChesney, 2003, p.100). This approach solidified the notion that the US was singularly responsible for adopting this particular model of radio. "The United States" they said "has an uncanny way of finding for itself what is best for itself." (p.113) Even the BBC adopted the term, "the American system of broadcasting," which it said, "clearly springs from a specifically American conception of democracy." (p.100)

The not-for-profit sector did not go quietly and several attempts were made to

reallocate frequencies and revamp FRC regulations. At one point, they attempted to beat the for-profit broadcasters at their own game calling for “A New American Plan,” however, in the long-run, it was a losing battle (p.114). The ‘reform’ groups in the US, such as the NCER and for a time, the American Civil Liberties Union, were never able to clarify for the American public the difference between ‘state’ and ‘public’ broadcasting. From the beginning, the private radio lobby was able to define both terms as a ‘government monopoly’ on radio. Not coincidentally, within six years of General Order 40, the number of non-profit stations dropped to only “2 percent of the total US broadcasting time.” (p.31) This early entrenchment of private radio in the US would lead to the rapid development of format radio in later years.

### **Summary**

The events of this period in Canada and the US, with regard to radio, are important for appreciating the development of private radio in both countries. In this crucible of the 1920s and 1930s, various elements reacted with one another to produce the template for later years, especially for the influence of US broadcasting in Canada.

The private sector in the US succeeded in defining American radio as not only the method *of* choice, but the model that *offered* choice. Therefore, it was not only democratic by definition but, by axiom, any opposing, non-profit, alternative was inherently un-democratic. In Canada, however, the Canadian Radio League (CRL) was well-organized and amply funded in its battle with private radio (Peers, 1969; Raboy, 1990). The non-profit sector in the US had more in common with the CAB in many respects, which was loosely organized in the late-1920s and early-1930s, with a

membership roster of less than 20 stations. According to TJ Allard (1976) the Association had only a little over \$500 in the bank when its members met in 1931. By February 1932, the CAB was crumbling as an organization, and was even discussing “the advisability of continuing [as an] Association” (p.12).

In Canada, steps were taken to preserve frequencies for public broadcasting, largely as a result of the efforts of the Canadian Radio League and, to some degree, the lack of organization on the part of the CAB. The more powerful frequencies in the US were allocated to the private sector based on the regulatory perception of public interest. Over time, public radio in the US was allowed to almost completely fade out.

A key outcome in this process was the rapid expansion of American radio networks by the private sector. These large networks had unfettered access to Canadian listeners given the enormous space on the radio spectrum at the time. However, in Canada, public broadcasters had access to network broadcasting, leaving the private broadcasters with smaller transmitters. To be sure, as regulator, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) relied heavily on private stations as affiliates, to strengthen network broadcasts and provide greater access to the population when necessary. The arrangement was quid pro quo. Smaller stations required content which was expensive to produce, and the CRBC needed access to the transmitters to broaden the national reach.

Early regulation of radio in Canada was a benign effort at best. The federal government, beginning with Marine and Fisheries and later, the CRBC, lacked the necessary resources to effectively track whether or not regulations were being followed. As before, some broadcasters did not bother with the formality of a license. In the

beginning, these regulations were largely jurisdictional efforts; however, they began to take on additional cultural significance when content, such as advertising and prerecorded programming, was regulated.

Unlike Canada, the American private broadcasters were able to (re)define the debate with regard to advertising. By the mid-1930s, advertising was seen in government circles as a benign listener-supported funding mechanism. It was not viewed, at least not consistently, as a revenue stream for broadcasters. An FRC report, *Commercial Radio Advertising*, was commissioned by the US Congress to develop policy on advertising and found that “The American system of broadcasting is predicated upon the use of radio facilities as a medium for local and national advertising.” (McChesney, 2003, p.148) Rather than viewing commercials as an adjunct to, or a necessary evil in, radio, it was almost as if radio existed solely as a vehicle for advertising.

Of course, not only ads for soap and automobiles were being heard in Canada, but the very idea of consumerism itself. In stark contrast to the British public model and, to a degree, the Canadian public and private hybrid, American broadcasters were able to seamlessly integrate advertising and programming.

The big-ticket radio network programs routinely incorporated sponsors into their entertainment material in proto-product placement schemes. Jack Benny began his broadcasts with “Jell-O Everyone” (Douglas, 2004, p.121). The audience not only accepted the product as a sponsor but came to expect and, more importantly, anticipate the variety of ways in which actors could work the sponsor lines into their scripts. Far from existing independently as market items, gelatin, soap, and gasoline became further subsumed into American and, to a degree, Canadian culture. Moreover, this process

provided the fuel to drive the ideological notion of consumption as democracy. Purchasing-power was voting-power. It was not only the American way of broadcasting, but the American way of living, which continued pushing towards the machinations of Fordism and Taylorism and the endless production and consumption cycle. Once fully integrated into the culture, the ads hailed individuals with the question: “What to buy?” but, in a larger context, the more important question posed by consumption was: “What to dream?” (Ewen, 1976, p.109; Marchand, 1985)

Once it transcended the hobbyist stage, the Canadian government realized that broadcasting held promise as a tool for nation-building that was akin to the railroad. Regulation moved beyond jurisdictional issues, such as frequency allocation, to issues encompassing content and nationalistic objectives. As early as the 1920s and 1930s, we see government attempts to block American programming on radio as a restraint on free speech and free choice. By then, as Marc Raboy (1990) suggested, the cat was already out of the bag.

In this developmental milieu, we see the rise of broadcast content policy and the concomitant attempts by private broadcasters to circumvent regulations with creative work-a-rounds. This is especially evident in the restrictions concerning advertising in the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, even as initial non-Canadian content limitations were put in place in the 1920s, the regulator was prepared to be generous. With regard to the 40 percent ceiling on foreign programming, for example, a one-hour networked program from the US, such as *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, would be classified as Canadian as long it was sponsored by a Canadian business. Central to these developments was the emergence of a distinct culture in private radio.

We have seen how private interests in American radio were well organized as a lobby group when the debate concerning radio began. This also suggests that private broadcasters were taking steps to formulate their own sense of occupational identity to fight a supposed regulatory enemy. In both countries, the NAB and the CAB nurtured a sense of identity and belonging in their memberships. Naturally, Canadian broadcasters would listen to these ‘big’ network programs originating in places like New York and form judgments about professionals and programming. Indeed, Harold Carson’s 1924 journey to the US was the first documented case of Canadian private radio, in this case TPC, replicating American radio in Canada. As an important distinction, Carson not only purchased American programming for All-Canada but replicated a structural component of the US system and integrated it into the Canadian system.

McChesney (2003) spoke of “the interest of the US commercial broadcasting industry to keep alive the mythical interpretation of its origins.” (p.254) On one hand, the CAB had fallen victim to internal east-west squabbles which may have weakened its internal structure in the formative years, but on the other hand, it retained a sense of cultural identity with regard to radio (Allard, 1976, 1979; Raboy, 1990). Private broadcasters are the pioneers and the professionals. In his recounting of CAB and private radio history, Allard (1976, 1979) frequently lavishes praise on the individuals he viewed to be the ‘pioneers’. As for the Association itself, he said, “Like all bondings not created by blood ties, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters was born out of need, by loneliness” (1976, p.1) and that it was often “misrepresented or vilified.” (p.45)

Private broadcasters in both countries clearly saw themselves not only as unique ‘pioneers’ in communication and technology, but also as members of an elite, almost

religious, group. Radio announcers became celebrities, personally endorsing certain products. By virtue of their presence on the radio, they were deemed to be trustworthy and believable. Private broadcasters on both sides of the border singled out non-profit broadcasters or their supporters as being either “antisocial elitists and snobs” (McChesney, 2003, p.117), or members of “a power elite [that] favours what it considers high class – the opera, the ballet, the symphony, the lecture.” (Allard, 1979, p.273) Allard (1979) ascribes almost super-human qualities to the enemies of private radio, claiming that the CRBC “came about simply because Graham Spry and Alan Plaunt wanted it”, saying that they were members of a group that “saw nationalized broadcasting as a road to the seats of power.” (p.269)

Clearly, the efforts of the Canadian Radio League and its sympathizers, in and out of government, served to reinforce the bonds shared among private broadcasters who viewed themselves, not as elites, but as instruments to shepard the voices of the common man. By positioning themselves in direct opposition to the League, they began to self-identify not only by what they were, so to speak, but more importantly, by what they were not. They had a common ideological enemy. These broadcasters thus began to take ownership, literally and figuratively, of the private airwaves. The mission, in their minds at least, was a just cause.

As one might expect, any form of regulation was seen to infringe upon the private radio domain, even though these regulations were clearly articulated and well known before many broadcasters obtained a license. For those broadcasters who were already on the air, new requirements such as the 1932 Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, were introduced, with little acknowledgment that the broadcast frequency was a public

resource having certain expectations about its use. Indeed, for the first time, we learnt that that if listeners were offended by programming on one station, they should, as CAB supporter John Gibbon suggested, simply go elsewhere.

By the close of the 1930s, the CAB was still losing regulatory and public relations battles, though that would soon change. In the following chapter, I examine what is arguably the Association's most important period in its history. The CAB not only succeeded in reorganizing itself on a bureaucratic level, but became an insurmountable force in broadcast policy-making.



**CHAPTER TWO: NOTES**

1. As a word of explanation concerning 'direct' and 'indirect' advertising, direct advertising was time purchased on a radio station for the express purpose of selling goods or services. Indirect advertising involved a sponsor purchasing a particular program and, by way of opening and closing announcements, take credit for bringing the particular program to the audience. Examples can be found in Peers (1965, p.28).

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## **CHAPTER THREE: THE SOLIDIFICATION OF PRIVATE RADIO**

### **Introduction**

The 1950s and the two decades that followed witnessed what may have been the most dramatic changes to the Canadian private radio landscape. In this chapter, I document the rapid rise of private radio culture, the regulatory climate, and the increasing influence of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. These events are tightly interwoven and, when combined with other factors such as ownership consolidation, take on an increased importance.

The legacy of the regulatory climate spanning these 30 years has been nothing short of remarkable. The content regulations of the 1970s contributed in no small measure to the formation of a vibrant music industry in Canada. Nevertheless, as I shall demonstrate, the regulatory steps initiated by the Bureau of Broadcast Governors (BBG) in 1958 and later the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) in 1968, began on firm footing, only to eventually stumble. This occurred as a result of the heightened vigilance of the private broadcasting lobby.

Private radio did well under the BBG, which operated under a dual, private and public, broadcasting system. By the late-1950s, the newly-elected Conservative government was clearly predisposed to favouring private radio. The earlier precepts of a broadcasting system dedicated to nation-building were pushed aside. The incoming Liberal majority in 1963 did little to reverse the situation in the private sector, instead pushing the CBC into a national unity mandate (Raboy, 1990). National unity became a major focus of the 1968 Broadcasting Act, which created the Canadian Radio Television Commission (CRTC). By this time, the private broadcasting lobby was well organized in

Ottawa.

### ***Rise of the CAB***

The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (Massey Commission) convened in 1951 and post-war concerns surrounding governmental abuse of power had mostly subsided. Although the Commission also debated issues of national culture and identity, private broadcasters were quick to invoke the spectre of state control of radio. Some took their argument out of the Commission hearing room and onto the airwaves. CJCA Edmonton followed one evening newscast with an unlisted and unIntroduced commentary against public broadcasting (Bird, 1988; Litt, 1992). By this time, 119 of the 136 licensed stations in Canada were owned by private interests; 93 of them were represented by the CAB (Litt, 1992).

The CAB's public relations mechanism was in full swing when the Massey Commission began its hearing. By all accounts, the apex of this grandiose effort was the Association's 1946 run-up campaign and appearance before the Standing Committee on Broadcasting (Allard, 1976; Peers, 1969; Raboy, 1990; Weir, 1965). The CAB divided its briefing into two phases. In a pattern that became its trademark in the following years, the first half of the presentation,



addressed the extent to which its member stations sought out, developed and assisted in the advance of Canadian talent; gave specific and numerous examples of local creative programming; special programming for minority audiences and... dealt in detail with the absurdity of adverse criticism that had been made of the private sector by ill-informed commentators (Allard, 1979, p.186).

The Association's presentation, in the words of TJ Allard (1976), was "determined and aggressive" and addressed four major issues (p.29). First, the group argued, "freedom of speech on the air should be a right," (p.29) and also, that this right should be administered by an independent regulatory body. The Association's third point was that this agency should be clearly defined and fully funded by parliament. Finally, the CAB called on the Committee to refine the CBC's role by maintaining its position as the provider of a national broadcasting system, but eliminating its regulatory power over independent stations." (p.29)

The CAB found this final point to be the most offensive. While, in theory, a single system of broadcasting existed in Canada, in reality, the Association's point of view was quite different. The CAB saw the CBC as both regulator and an audience competitor. It would be natural, according to the private broadcasters, for the CBC to make important regulatory decisions that would favour the national broadcaster and leave the small private outlets at a disadvantage.

CBC Chairman Dunton Davidson described the CAB's strategic advertising campaign and subsequent presentation as "probably the most intensive publicity campaign ever waged by a group of interests for fundamental changes in certain laws of Canada." (Raboy, 1990, p.87) Allard (1976) claimed that the CAB presentation, delivered

by Frank 'Tiny' Elphicke, was a performance that "would have made him an outstanding ambassador, politician or movie star." (p.186)

The Association, much to the chagrin of the CRL, was adopting Radio League tactics. Not only was the CAB now cloaking itself in locally-based community values, it was attempting to portray private radio not as a business enterprise, but as a public service medium. Moreover, the Association was doing its best to hijack the 'public broadcaster' label from the CBC. Indeed, as Raboy (1990) pointed out, the CAB was loathe to frame its members as private broadcasters, instead preferring the label of 'community' broadcasters. On the other hand, the CBC, rather than being signified as the public broadcaster was referred to as the 'state' broadcaster by the Association.

The historical record is unclear on whether the CAB met officially or unofficially with its American counterpart. In any case, the language and framing employed by Canadian private broadcasters bore more than a striking resemblance to the symbolism used by the NAB years earlier, and discussed in the previous chapter.

Even with the onset of television, private radio was doing well financially by the close of the 1940s. Several ownership groups and personalities were becoming dominant. In Toronto, Rogers Majestic Corp. Ltd. jettisoned its manufacturing interests as CFRB became increasingly profitable and Jack Kent Cooke purchased CKCL (later becoming CKEY). Two new stations were licensed in Montreal and CKNW went on the air in New Westminster. In Winnipeg, two stations were added to the dial (Peers, 1969). As an indicator of the profitability of private radio, the Cooke purchase in Toronto of CKCL was of only a 1000 watt station with bargain basement studios and equipment. Nevertheless, it sold for half a million dollars (Peers, 1969).

The post-war economy of the 1950s was robust, and private radio was prospering. The growing number of private stations left some members of the Massey Commission with a sense of uneasiness, so that early debates began to be concerned with the concentration of radio ownership – horizontal, vertical, and cross-media. One enterprise that was attracting particular attention was the aforementioned All-Canada group. All-Canada Mutually Operated Radio held shares in no less than 11 private radio stations, 10 of which were in Western Canada (Allard, 1976; Litt, 1992; Raboy, 1992; Weir, 1865).

All-Canada Mutually Operated Radio appeared to be the first private radio broadcaster to structure its affairs vertically with regard to carriage and content. It also controlled All-Canada Radio Facilities Ltd., which sold syndicated programs to the All-Canada group and to other private stations. All-Canada Radio Facilities imported syndicated programs such as *The Green Hornet* and *The Lone Ranger* from the US (Peers, 1969).

For its part, the Massey Commission, which issued its report in 1951, supported the continuance of the CBC as the sole broadcasting regulator and dismissed most of the grievances advanced by the private sector. Indeed, it went further and suggested that the CBC was, in fact, too lax in its regulation of private broadcasters (Litt, 1992).

### ***Regulation***

The Massey Commission's recommendations came under scrutiny six years later when the Fowler Commission was formed largely to address both the financial struggles of the CBC and the dramatic growth in television (Raboy, 1990).

Once the Fowler Commission recommended a 'mixed' public and private

broadcasting system in its 1957 report, the Broadcasting Act was revamped a year later creating the Board of Broadcast Governors. The 1958 Act moved private broadcasting, now fully involving television, from a complementary to an equal position in proximity to the CBC. Where the earlier Aird and Massey Commissions sought to entrench broadcasting as fulfilling a three-part, entertainment, education, and entertainment function, the Fowler Commission “added a fourth function: to sell goods.” (Raboy, 1990, p.127)

In the 1958 Broadcast Act (1958), Canadian content regulations were articulated in Section six, to provide a fascinating picture of how early cultural regulation was initially introduced in Canada (Bird, 1988, pp.729-731). Rather than impose, or be seen to impose, a heavy regulatory hand, legislators seemed to be careful in attempting to balance the interests of both public and private broadcasters. The regulations also applied to television. Canadian content was defined using basic precepts set out in the 1952 amendments. The salient clauses were:

- 6.(1) During any period of four weeks, not less than 55% of the broadcast time of any station or network shall be devoted to programs that are basically Canadian in content and character.
- 6.(4) For the purposes of this section, “programs that are basically Canadian in content and character “ shall, inter alia, include:
  - a) any program produced by a licensee
    - (i) in his studio, or using remote facilities, and
    - (ii) to be broadcast initially by the licensee:
  - b) news broadcasts

- c) news commentaries
- d) broadcasts of events occurring outside Canada in which Canadians are participating
- e) broadcasts of programs featuring special events outside Canada and of general interest to Canadians (Bird, 288).

Advertising content was also addressed, by linking the number of ad minutes permitted with the length of the radio or television program:

8. (1) No station shall broadcast any program of the length set out in Column (1) the advertising content of which exceeds the time set out in Column (2).

(1) Length of Program (Minutes)	(2) Length of Advertising Message (Minutes and Seconds)
5	1:15
10	2:10
15	3:00
20	3:30
25	4:00
‘	‘
60	7:00

(Canada, 1958)

### *Early Canadian Content Issues*

Several important points need to be addressed with regard to radio and television. In a manner of speaking, radio had dropped off the radar. Television, especially US programming, was of great concern to regulators, as much as Amos ‘n’ Andy had been in the earlier years of radio.

Although the Act encompassed radio, Canadian content, certainly as it was defined in 1958, was not a ‘problem’ for radio broadcasters.

Private television broadcasters developed the first Canadian content ‘work-around’. Since the regulations measured Canadian content over a four-week period, with no specific time-frame, broadcasters could preserve their 7pm and 11pm ‘prime time’ slots for American fare. This ghetto-ization became a consistent pattern, followed by all private broadcasters – radio or television. As Austin Weir (1965), a CBC manager, pointed out, “it was found that programs of “Canadian content” were being mainly scheduled by some stations in hours of minimum audience so that maximum-audience evening time could be reserved for imported American programs.” (Weir, p.372) The regulations were amended in May 1962, in two important areas. First, the prime time loophole was closed to prevent the ghetto-ization of Canadian content.

Stations were required to ensure that material of ‘Canadian content and character’ was broadcast between 6pm and midnight. Nevertheless, the amendments also provided for extended commercial allowances for Canadian programs, by adding a third column under Section 8:

Table 4: Extended Advertising for Canadian Programs (1962)

(1)	(2)	(3)
Length of Program	Length of Advertising Message	Length of Advertising Message
(Minutes)	(Minutes and Seconds)	(Minutes and Seconds)
5	1:15	1:25
10	2:10	2:30
15	3:00	3:30
20	3:30	4:10
25	4:00	4:50
30	4:30	5:10
60	7:00	9:00

(Canada, 1962)

The Bureau of Broadcast Governors (BBG) was embarking on a regulatory path that would be well travelled by its successors; appearing to tighten the regulations on one hand, but holding out rewards with the other. By adopting this stance, the BBG was beginning to acknowledge that the financial health of the private sector was important (Raboy, 1990). Of course, the larger issue looming on the horizon for both broadcaster and regulator was to develop a concise definition of ‘Canadian content’. In the early-1960s, it was clearly ‘anything but restrictive’ (Weir, 1965, p.373). This point was illustrated several years later when the Fowler Committee (not to be confused with the commission in the 1950s) found the definition to be sadly lacking (Bird, 1988). The Fowler Committee’s primary recommendation in 1966 called for the creation of what it called the Canadian Broadcasting Authority (CBA). This provoked further outrage from private broadcasters who railed against what they deemed to be “a one-man dictatorship” (p.353) and who saw this as a potential return to the days of CBC regulation of private

broadcasting. The Association also saw, standing in the regulatory shadows, the spectre of more content regulations, which it said would “drive a majority of Canadian listeners and viewers to US stations.” (p.354)

As we take stock of these various policy discussions, we also must set them against the social climate of the day. Notions of national identity, media power and access, especially with regard to television and technology were just a few of the primary motives driving broadcasting policy. Although not specifically detailed in writing, few would argue that these ideas were not present ‘between the lines’ of the 1968 Broadcasting Act. The Act created the Canadian Radio Television Commission with “total delegation of authority over programming.” (Raboy, 1990, p.175) Unlike its predecessor, the CRTC was given more regulatory power over both private and public broadcasting. Under the BBG, the CBC had been left on its own, while the Broadcast Governors focussed on the private sector. The 1968 Act that created the CRTC ensured that, in the words of Secretary of State Judy La Marsh “both the [CRTC] and the CBC will be governed by a common definition for the purposes of the national broadcasting service.” (Bird, 1988)

### ***The Davey Report***

As the turbulent 1960s were drawing to a close, it came as no surprise that issues of political economy and media ownership fell under scrutiny. In March 1969, the Canadian Senate created a special committee to:



report upon the ownership and control of the major means of mass public communication in Canada... to examine and report upon the extent and nature of their impact and influence of the Canadian public... (Canada, 1969).

Under the chairmanship of Keith Davey, the committee represented a diverse group that, for the first time, addressed the combined issues of technology, culture, and access. Davey was no stranger to private radio, having once been a radio salesman in Toronto (Bird, 1988). Not surprisingly, fears of American domination of Canadian media were rampant in fuelling discussions of “the survival of our nationhood.” (Canada, 1969) The committee met 43 times, listening not only to the traditional and mainstream media but to alternative media as well. Marc Raboy commented that the Davey report was “one of the first official displays of legitimization for the oppositional press current of the period.” (1990, p.201)

Private broadcasters were doubtlessly experiencing some degree of awkwardness during the Davey hearings. After all, they were sharing the stage with a number of colourful groups that seemed more than comfortable speaking their minds. Unlike previous hearings, where the primary ideological adversary was public broadcasting, the private sector now had to contend with a series of newcomers. Radio and television community broadcasters and all manner of “social animators” (p.202) were recognized by the committee.

The CAB presentation clearly did not impress the Davey Committee members, who termed the Association’s stance as “Neanderthal” (Bird, 1988, p.509). While acknowledging that nothing was fundamentally wrong with private broadcasters forming a lobby, such as the CAB, the committee went so far as to suggest that:

The organization needs to be overhauled. It needs to stop thinking of its role as simply that of staving off regulation, and to start developing a positive, creative policy of information and research... [which] might persuade broadcasters to start thinking of the audiences they serve as people or communities, rather than as “markets” – the term invariably used by broadcasters appearing before us in describing their operations. (p.516)

It became apparent that the Association chose not to heed the Davey Committee’s advice. Shortly after Keith Davey filed his 572 page report, the CRTC launched its ambitious Canadian content regulations. Private broadcasters reacted with predictable outrage. The title of an article in the March 1970 edition of the CAB’s *Broadcaster* magazine was succinct: “No Virginia, a Canadian is not free to decide what he will watch on television or listen to on radio” (Bird, 1988, p.454). The CRTC was now unwittingly replicating what the Canadian Radio League had done years earlier, by setting itself up as the common enemy of all private radio broadcasters. This, I suggest, increasingly strengthened the culture of private radio. Moreover, as shall be demonstrated, the Commission was an easy ideological target for newcomers to private radio who were too young to remember the private versus public radio battles of years gone by. Where the pioneers in private radio saw public broadcasting as a double threat (competitor and regulator), those that followed focussed on the regulator as the ideological enemy.

The CAB dusted off an earlier anti-regulation strategy and attempted to frame its response around freedom of choice and democracy. The regulations were nothing less than “a shaft pointed right at the heart of the democratic system which is our national life blood.” (p.454) While the regulations called for limits to advertising, it was clearly the

new content rules that provoked the CAB. “Why must there be more Canadian content?” “Why must there be less American programming?” (p.456) In a public and CAB membership appeal, the Association executive made pointed attempts to portray the regulators as out of touch, saying: “The CRTC can hardly be described as a group of people who have had, through the course of their various careers, extensive contact with the mass of Canadians.” (p.457)

In responding to the Commission’s call for private radio and television broadcasters to become more involved in using the airwaves to remedy the social ills of society, the CAB made it clear that it was private broadcasters, and not the CRTC, who were on the side of the ‘average Canadian’:

Has it ever occurred to them, secure as they are in their \$25,000-a-year-with-expense-account jobs, that the average guy who sweats his guts out in some plant for eight hours a day, doesn’t want to be bothered...? If he had to, he would probably go stark raving mad. (p.457)

The CAB called upon its members “by employing their own stations” to rally the public to “if necessary, bring [the CRTC] crashing down and replace it with a group of people there to carry out their wishes and not those of a group of fanatical idealists.” (p.458) The Association’s relentless attacks on the CRTC came with an internal price. CFTO in Toronto and CJOH, Ottawa resigned from the Association while a third station also went on record as dissenting from the group’s platform. Although the CAB’s call to its membership for a regulatory uprising went unanswered, it successfully gained some ground in its content battle.

The CAB was accused of fighting any form of Canadian radio that was

“something other than a form of strip-mining” (p.509) while “doing the minimum required of them by law, and no more.” (p.511) Nevertheless, it was the last time that a government sponsored committee studying broadcasting or mass media pointedly attacked the CAB.

### ***Early De-Regulation***

The examination of Canadian content regulation in the 1970s yielded two important aspects that are often overlooked. First, we can see how private radio programmers were able to consistently out-manuever the regulator with regard to broadcasting Canadian content; and second, and in some respects more importantly, we can see how the regulator avoided firm intervention.

The original proposal for the radio regulations (Canadian Radio Television Commission, 1970) called for a 30 percent Canadian content rule for AM radio implemented in two steps. To qualify initially, a song had to meet one of 3 conditions; the song needed to be principally performed by a Canadian; the music and lyrics were required to be written by a Canadian; and the performance needed to be recorded in Canada. This is generally referred to as the one-part Canadian Content (CanCon) stipulation. The plan was to phase in a second, two-part, qualifying category, a year later. An important stipulation was that the music had to be played daily during each four-hour period between 7am and 11pm.

Once the content hearings were finished, by late-May 1970, it was clear that at least some of the CAB efforts had paid off. The Association managed to convince the CRTC to allow for the 30 percent content calculation by analyzing the whole day and not

each four hour period, as was first proposed. The broadcast day was extended by two hours – 6am to midnight – and the additional, two-part, content qualifying factor was delayed by an additional year, until January 1972. Besides holding Canadian citizenship, artists were deemed to be Canadian if they were landed immigrants or if they lived in Canada during the six months immediately preceding involvement in the recording being considered (Bird, 1988, pp.482-483).

At first glance, these amendments would appear eminently reasonable, however, upon closer examination, several important questions arise. Without a doubt, meeting the initial content regulations were a challenge for private broadcasters. The Canadian music industry, as we know it today, with its complex infrastructure of recording, publishing, and performing was virtually nonexistent. The private radio business was doing well, despite the fact that FM radio was several years away from full development (Audley, 1988; Bird, 1998). Private broadcasters were profitable and the business imperative required them to maintain the status quo.

While gauging the CAB's role thus far is relatively straightforward, I would argue that the CRTC's position is less clear. At the least, the Commission's decisions did not appear to be consistent with its stated mandate under the Broadcasting Act. When we examine the initial content regulations, and compare them to the amendments, we need to investigate where and more importantly why, the changes were made.

For example, the amendment delaying the phasing-in of the two-part Canadian content rule is understandable. Canadian material was lacking, especially in popular music formats such as Top 40. Doubtlessly, moving from one-part CanCon to two-parts CanCon within a year would have been a struggle. What is less obvious, however, is the

(re)calculation of the broadcast day and the time-frame used to arrive at the 30 percent level and how these amendments would serve the interests of Canadian talent. I would argue that the two amendments were designed to work hand in glove, with a dual purpose.

Standing on its own, the amendment that redefines the beginning and end of the broadcast day, adding additional hours from 6am - 7am and from 11pm - midnight, would seem to be exposing more Canadian talent to a wider audience. Nevertheless, this was only the case if the 30 percent calculation was carried out every four hours, as originally proposed. In other words, the 6 - 10am morning period would be the initial block requiring at least one-third CanCon. Similarly, the 8pm - midnight period would comprise the final block.

When considering the second, and apparently 'associated' amendment, the Canadian content distribution possibilities became dramatically altered. By eliminating the requirement for content averaging every four hours, broadcasters would be in compliance, as long as, over the broadcast day, one-third of their musical selections met the Canadian content criteria. This flexibility meant that if a broadcaster truly believed the audience should hear Canadian music, those selections could be programmed into peak listening hours, such as the morning and afternoon 'drive' slots. Naturally, if the radio programming philosophy dictated the opposite, that Canadian music was somehow inferior, then the CanCon could be buried in off-hours, late at night or very early in the morning. This would then reduce the requirement for the balance of the day.

If the CRTC wished to ease the CanCon administrative burden, Commissioners still had other options. The 30 percent quota could be reduced and no changes made to

the previously mentioned amendments. In this scenario, broadcasters would have fewer selections; however, this music could potentially reach a wider audience when calculated every four hours, from 7am - 11pm. alternatively, the content bar could be set higher, but restricted only to those hours of the broadcast day when, statistically, audience listening was greater, such as the peak morning and afternoon drive periods. In both cases, more stringent requirements could have been phased in over time.

Based on more than two decades of earlier submissions to the many broadcasting commissions and committees, the CRTC must have known that the CAB would develop work-a-rounds for radio in the same manner as it had for television only a few years earlier. Knowing this, the Commission appears to have willingly provided private broadcasters with a regulatory tool to circumvent, at least in spirit, the Canadian content regulations. If the issue was solely related to the lack of available Canadian music, a justifiable argument given the formative development of the country's entertainment industry three decades ago, the Commission had other means for regulation at its disposal. Supply was not the only problem being addressed by the CRTC. It willingly provided radio stations with a built-in strategy to avoid playing Canadian music in peak listening periods.

## **Summary**

As we reflect on the development of Canadian private radio broadcasting in the 1950s and in the decades that followed, we can observe several important and converging events that forged particular attitudes. The broadcasters were becoming a force to be reckoned with. Having failed to successfully make its case for an independent regulator

before the Massey Commission, the CAB found the incoming Conservative government more receptive. Clearly, the CAB had become more adept at lobbying, after its presentation to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting in 1947.

By the time the Fowler Commission solidified the place of private radio in 1958 and the Bureau of Broadcast Governors was replaced by the CRTC, many familiar patterns were emerging. Television broadcasters had become adept at ghettoizing Canadian content in peak viewing hours – a skill easily transferred to radio. It was also difficult for the regulator to ignore the CAB's increased political clout especially when a former CAB president, Don Jamieson, who “was involved in frequent negotiations” with BBG on behalf of private broadcasters, left the CAB to launch a political career (Allard, 1976, p.65). Jamieson was appointed to several federal Liberal cabinet posts, including Industry, Trade and Commerce. The distance between the regulator and the regulated was closing.

Nevertheless, the ascension of format radio and the format programmer, at this time, was the indispensable key for understanding private radio. Communication with the listener, as practised by an individual announcer, was deemed to be less important than implementing a prepackaged formula, as developed by Americans who, by birthright, were deemed to have more experience. Programming, with concomitant developments in technology, left the realm of solitary performance art and entered the domain of science. A radio station manager could no longer adequately perform programming tasks and the Program Director was deemed to be the expert. Certainly, the influence of Program Directors superseded that of the announcer, who still remained the traditional first line of contact with listeners. Private radio therefore began its inexorable slide away from local



community content towards the regimented packaged format.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE ASCENSION OF FORMATICS**

### **Introduction**

Thus far, I have explored the earlier historical influences that contributed to the development of private radio as a singular force in Canada. In this chapter, I further examine content, which is challenging since, unlike books that might have been written five decades ago and which are still readily accessible, we cannot resurrect radio programming. To be sure, archived examples might exist for diligent researchers, but generally, the newscasts, music, and announcements that were delivered back then have long since disappeared into the ether.

We need to remember that the promise of radio as articulated by the Canadian Radio League and others was not based on fanciful ideals. Radio, public and private, played a central role in the community. Live presentations, whether performed live by local actors or musicians were the norm. A radio station could instantly respond to the needs of the community in the event of a disaster, and the announcers were seen as members of the community. However, these important characteristics were about to change. The art of communicating and its associated skills became a science, practised not by rank-and-file broadcasters, but by a select few who were deemed to possess certain knowledge of what was known as the format – the packaging of programming elements according to particular precepts that required strict adherence on the part of the announcer.

As the 1960s approached, private broadcasters in Canada developed an almost narcotic reliance upon the US in format importation and programming philosophy. More than 40 years later, this trend continues. I shall demonstrate that these events are due to

two factors: 1) the unique characteristics of Canadian geography that exposed younger broadcasters to American radio and 2) a tightly knit cultural community within radio that reinforced these particular values.

### ***Pre-Format Programming***

The stock and trade of early radio was learning to communicate, how best to interpolate the listener as an audience member, an individual, and of course, as a consumer. This challenge fell to the radio personalities who were “the heroes... crooners, comics and avuncular politicians, people who know how to ‘reach out and touch’ their audiences.” (Peters, 1999, p.215) Throughout the 1930s, this was accomplished primarily by creating and later re-creating, the live event. Radio audiences were imported into the studios to further enhance the theatrical vaudevillian presence. Radio plays and soap operas became mainstays in most homes. By the 1940s, radio manufacturers clearly understood that the profit was greater in audience building for advertising, rather than in David Sarnoff’s original notion of simply selling radio receivers.

Radio, as it existed until the 1950s, was programmed in definitive blocks of programming, not unlike today’s television schedules. Unlike the consistent programming of today, the norm was to have vastly different programs follow one another. A cooking program, for example, might follow a craft show. Children’s shows were also popular. What was unique about this programming content, when compared to today’s, was the reliance on live talent. Actors, poets, and musicians regularly performed on particular programs (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982; Murray, 2003). A radio station was known for the variety it offered listeners. In the years to follow, with advances in

technology (to be discussed later), stations could play recorded music with some flexibility, and thus broke the reliance on local live talent. Although still block programmed, these stations offered listeners variety; an easy listening program could follow a country and western or a classical program. No definitive format was followed, and in large measure, a station's programming was driven by what could be sponsored.

As one might expect, CBC programming was directed toward achieving national goals, even though it was also block programmed (Weir, 1965). The contrast between public and private radio programming following the second world war was highlighted by Paul Litt (1992) in his examination of the Massey Commission, where much of the debate was centered on 'high' and 'low' culture.

It is impossible to reflect on Canada's private radio broadcasting experience without also considering the US. The myths, values, and norms associated with the culture of American broadcasters considerably influenced the development of the Canadian industry. These formative values developed south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel were slowly grafted to radio in this country well before what Michel Filion calls the "Golden Age of Public Radio" (Dorland, 1996).

Simply put, the Americans had more experience. In 1925, 62 licenses were issued in Canada (not all of them actively broadcasting) while in the US, 555 stations were on the air, 138 of them broadcasting with more than 500 watts or more. More than half of these enterprises were located close to the US-Canada border, easily reaching into Eastern Canada. Canadians were saturated by the US model of private radio, which was dictated in large measure by population, demographics, and economies of scale given the size of the country. Indeed, well into the 1940s, three of the largest radio stations in

Canada (CFRB Toronto, CKAC Montreal, and CKWX Vancouver), were linked to American networks (Peers, 1969). Remarkably, some of the early American programming was shamelessly duplicated in this country. By this I mean it was not simply contractually purchased and rebroadcast in its original form, but the programming structure was copied and made to appear more ‘Canadian’.

### ***The Maple Leaf Ballroom***

In 1935, Martin Block brought the “Make Believe Ballroom” to WNEW New York, based on a similar program that had been underway in Los Angeles. Block created the illusion of a grand live musical broadcast with ornate settings using records for background crowd noises and the music (Douglas, 2004). Nine years later, Jack Kent Cooke purchased CKCL in Toronto, renaming it CKEY (Peers 1969). Cooke may not have frequented Los Angeles to hear the original Make Believe Ballroom, but he was certainly familiar with New York and the radio programming there. The Make Believe Ballroom on WNEW was cloned on CKEY as the *Maple Leaf* Ballroom (Canadian Communications Foundation, 2007). The similarity of the titles is telling, and when the differentiation is clear when both titles are written, the distinction is less obvious when the titles are spoken. In fact, a survey of much of the historical Canadian literature concerning radio continues to erroneously identify Cooke’s CKEY program as the Make Believe Ballroom. This event is important for another reason, to be addressed in more detail shortly. Replicating American programming made perfect sense to Cooke who believed that:

An American is basically the same as a Canadian – motivated by the same impulses, exposed to the same influences of literature, music, the theatre, movies and radio... by ‘non-Canadian’ [radio] material the CBC is obviously referring to American material. In the first place, what is wrong with American material? If we are ever to have a Canadian culture, it will come as a result of full exposure to what is undoubtedly the fastest rising culture in the world today – that of the U.S.A. (Litt, 1992, p.71).

Cooke was treading on ground first broken by fellow Canadian, Harold Carson, in 1924, as previously discussed. Like Carson, Cooke refashioned American programming. Block’s program, and its progenitor in Los Angeles, introduced the ‘disk jockey’ as an important factor in radio programming, as radio content moved away from primarily network material to local content.

Canadian private radio executives, bent on improving their bottom–line, could not help but turn their ears to the south to gauge what ‘was working’ and what was not, especially as television further fragmented the radio audience. Cooke’s New York to Toronto Make Believe Ballroom cloning therefore introduced a similar style of radio in Canada. Thus began format programming – not a welcome innovation for some:

Broadcast culture could have remained starkly impersonal... Announcers could have remained in the paradigm of telephone operators, passive channels for connecting other people, which was in fact more the model for the BBC. Instead, a policy of “unmitigated bleat” ensued (Peters, 1999, p.216).

Evaluative Canadian radio norms, such as professional, funny, serious, and



boring, were beginning to be defined in large part according to the American radio model. As radio programming in the US moved away from the block style of design, the notion of the hourly, more consistent, format ‘clock’ was introduced in Canada. Broadcaster Red Robinson said that his first experience was the Westinghouse format, implemented by CHUM in Toronto in 1958:

RT: So when did you have an experience with a format?

RR: A year after CHUM went [rock and roll], I was at CKWX and they were doing it so well. Making so much money off the show... but the Westinghouse format created in the States [was] picked up by what was then called Taylor-Pearson-Carson, then became Selkirk and now it’s Rogers... it was a steal from the American format.

RT: So, the WX format was replicated from that model?

RR: Oh, totally. It was Westinghouse.

RT: How did you react going from free form to a clock?

RR: Well, we weren’t tight clocks with the Westinghouse format. The Westinghouse format had headline news; you played fewer records than in my universe before that and it wasn’t tight. The next stage was the tightest part, which was the Drake formula (personal communication, 2004).

The break from block programming using concepts imported from the US also had a prominent role at another Vancouver station. According to Robinson:

RR: It’s never mentioned but it wasn’t just Top 40 rock and roll. In San Francisco there was a station called KABL – ‘cable’. KABL started playing what I call ‘easy listening’ music. We’re talking about [The] Frank Chacksfield [Orchestra].

RT: And Hugo Winterhalter?

RR: Yeah and we were talking CHQM here in Vancouver. That was the KABL format. It was KABL San Francisco (personal communication, 2004).

Once it was established in Vancouver, the CHQM-KABL format spread to Victoria. Broadcasters Barry Bowman and Gordon Cruse both recalled CFAX owner and general manager Clare Copeland duplicating the CHQM system in Victoria (personal communication, 2005). CFAX, however, approached this format more scientifically. A diagram of the KABL-CHQM-CFAX clock is shown in Appendix 3 to accompany the following discussion.

### ***The CFAX Clock***

As stated in at the outset, my radio career began with the CFAX-CHQM-KABL format in 1970. I now provide a brief overview of this format in the hopes that this digression will serve to introduce the following discussion of radio programming. This model is also important for two additional reasons: 1) it is an example of early automation and 2) it illustrates the ascendancy of the format over the individual.

Apart from its obvious reference as a timepiece, the clock serves as a roadmap of sorts in radio programming, providing an easy means to get from one segment to another. In this particular format, commercials, or spots, were placed equidistantly at the :10, :20, :40 and :50 minute points following the top of each hour. In each commercial cluster, two spots were scheduled, separated either by a station promotion (SP) or a public service announcement (PSA). PSAs are clustered in the :10 and :40 spots, and SPs occur at :20 and :50 locations. Music was played at either side of the cluster. Since the PSAs and the SPs are not paid advertising, no spot was played directly adjacent to another. Because

two announcements were never scheduled back-to-back, radio sales executives could promise potential clients that their spot would stand alone and that at least one song would be played either before or after their commercial.

With regard to the music, as Red Robinson indicated earlier, the music format was Easy Listening or what also became known as Middle of the Road (MOR). All of the music on CFX was prerecorded on either ¾-inch reel-to-reel tapes or on individual tape cartridges. Each cartridge, or 'cart,' would hold one song. Music was played in couplets of two songs, followed by a prerecorded voice track that back-announced the selections. The format allowed for two or sometimes three additional songs, on music carts, to be run between the top and bottom of the hour. Thus, the clock (Appendix 3) illustrates three songs in three sets, between :00 and :30 and only two songs in the sets falling between :30 and :00.

The on-air music library consisted of close to 300 reel-to-reel music tapes. These 10-inch reels held approximately 26 songs, recorded at 7½-inches per second and placed in couplets. Each music segment began with an instrumental, and was followed by either a male, female, or group vocal. The song announcements were placed on a matching voice-track, another reel-to-reel tape, though smaller. The announcements, for obvious reasons, were also in couplets. Each music couplet had to align with its corresponding voice track.

With reference to the clock, the top of the hour news would end, and be followed by an instrumental song, and then a vocal. A prerecorded announcer would indicate the title and artist information, and then another song would play, but since the song was on a cart, no artist or title information would be available. Following this third song, a spot

would then follow either an SP or PSA, and another spot. The cycle would begin again with another instrumental. This pattern would be followed 24-hours a day and 7-days a week. The only exceptions were in the morning show from 6 to 9, which was done live, and the afternoon 'drive' period when additional newscasts were scheduled at the bottom of each hour.

For all intents and purposes, CFX was an automated radio station. The starting and stopping of the recorded material was undertaken by board operators who, though somewhat technically proficient, were not professional announcers and not allowed to go on the air. Indeed, even the voice track announcements at CFX were recorded for the most part by announcers from Vancouver. The most popular voice in this regard was that of Bill Philips, who worked for CHQM, the Vancouver station that originally implemented the KABL format. In both cases, the people playing the music and those announcing the selections were in a manner of speaking 'voiceless'. They were incapable of reacting to any serendipitous events in the community or even of announcing the time. As one of the first examples of automation, I discuss this more thoroughly in Chapter Five.

Interestingly, even the process of music selection was automated to a degree. As an operator at CFX, I relied upon a computerized data-sheet that told me which tapes to use on any given shift. CFX contracted a Victoria-area firm, Data Tech Systems, to generate a weekly list of random numbers between one and 300. These numbers were then assigned to each shift.

My role, and that of the other operators, was to simply plug into the format. However advanced it was thought to be at the time, the CFX-CHQM-KABL system

was extremely simplistic when compared with the formats and technology that followed. In later decades, the role of the computer would be to attempt to use voice-tracking to add personality, but the CFAX model eliminated any hint of personality outside of the morning show. The role of the human operator was that of opening and closing relay switches – in almost every sense – a computer. Nevertheless, it was not the most influential format.

### ***Top 40***

A confluence of American technology, economics, and demographics in the 1950s resulted in radio in Canada being inexorably altered in ways that are still evident today. By the early-1950s, as the significance of radio entertainment waned in favor of television, most of radio's major personalities had made the technological jump. Crosby, Benny, and the like, were off the air and on the small screen. NBC's President, Niles Trammell predicted that the networks that brought the stars into the homes of millions would be gone in short order. By 1954, Trammell's prediction had been proven correct, and network radio "was all but gone." (Douglas, 2004, p.220) Still, network radio's loss was local radio's gain:

Unlike the 1930s and 1940s, listeners began tuning into stations that were better known for their local, rather than national, identification. In 1948, 1,621 AM stations were in America; by 1960, that number had more than doubled to 3,458 (p.220).

By the mid-1950s, local radio had begun to move out of homes and offices. The

invention of the transistor in 1947, launched the ubiquity of radio, especially in cars. Radio had a new delivery system, though it still took a ratings beating from television, especially at night, during prime time viewing hours. At this time, in Omaha Nebraska and in Dallas Texas, private radio began building the myths and legends that are still used to indoctrinate broadcasters today – the birth of the Top 40 radio format.

The origin of the format can be traced to the early-1950s and to KOWH in Omaha, along with the development of the ‘jukebox theory,’ the forerunner to Top 40. Todd Storz, the manager, and Bill Stewart, the program director, were said to have noticed how often customers in their local tavern kept playing the same songs on the jukebox. They applied this concept to KOWH, thereby developing an early version of Top 40.

North American private radio during the early-1950s should be recalled as consisting of many programs spread throughout the program day in specific blocks. As mentioned earlier, a classical music program could follow a country and western presentation or a murder mystery. The 1950s radio station was not marketed with a single identity, but instead, its image rested with the variety of music, drama, and information programs offered to listeners. With the onset of television, the fear was that radio listening would plummet.

Richard Fatherley, the production director at another Storz station, KXOK in St. Louis, pieced together an alternative history of Top 40. Fatherly claimed that Todd Storz acquired research from the University of Omaha that purported to show that audiences tuned to radio primarily for music. Storz, according to Fatherly, adapted early television programs such as *Your Hit Parade* to radio, and the programs featured the top ten songs

in heavy rotation. According to Fatherly:

He [Storz] bought WTIK in New Orleans; he heard about rival WDSU's Top 20 on 1280 show... added 20 titles, upstaged WDSU by one hour, and went on for an hour after the other show had ended (Fong-Torres, 1999).

The barroom story, according to Fatherley, is a myth, even though, in a 1973 interview with *Billboard* magazine, Bill Stewart indicates otherwise:

We were sitting there and the jukebox was playing and it kept coming up to the same song... We must have sat there four or five hours talking and various things and they got ready to close... the waitress went over and put a quarter into the jukebox and lo and behold... played the same record three times in a row... It was in both our minds. Well, I don't know whether you can say that Todd literally discovered Top 40 or whether I did or whether somebody in the company did. (*Billboard*, 1973).

In the meantime, another Top 40 innovator, Gordon McLendon at KLIF radio in Dallas, introduced the promotional jingle as well as other AM radio programming elements. The role of the jingle is vital, and will be discussed momentarily. For McLendon, repetition was a vital component of programming. In his words "you told the listeners constantly that you were about to do something, that you were now doing it, and then that you had done it." (Douglas, 2004, p.247; also see Garay, 1992) Storz began with great success to limit the playlist on his radio stations while McLendon experimented with promotional stunts and prize giveaways; it was the genesis of format radio and the birth of unmitigated bleat. Nevertheless, what has been absent from this discussion thus

far is the role of Black culture and the contribution of rhythm and blues (R&B).

### ***WLAC***

Radio and popular music have always operated within an extremely close proximity to one another. That proximity, prior to Top 40, was also defined by race. The format would not have evolved in its entirety without the contribution; some would argue appropriation, of R&B, and the likes of Bo Diddley and the Chess Brothers. R&B, a consistent presence in the American South with the Black population, became identified as rock and roll when it was heard by the White youth audience. Radio's role as a distribution medium for R&B, especially with stations such as WLAC in Nashville, has been well documented, and a brief overview is given here.

During the mid- and late-1950s, the evening and 'all night' announcers or disc-jockeys at WLAC were responsible for airing many of the regional records produced by the myriad of independent labels in the area. This was not unusual, as the evening and all-night time slots were not considered 'prime time,' and they therefore resided on the periphery of the programming day. The 1950s music industry was not, to borrow a phrase from Joni Mitchell, the 'star maker machinery' that it is today. Local radio stations willingly played music recorded locally.

What set WLAC apart from other radio stations, was that its signal during the evening hours was heard as far north as the US Midwest. This was not particularly significant except for the fact that many of the record selections played by the young disc-jockeys featured Black artists. These exciting artists, such as Little Richard and Fats Domino, who were popular in the American South, represented something 'new' to the



primarily White youth audience in the Midwest and elsewhere, including Canada.

Several important streams were converging; youth rebellion, the rising prominence of Black music, and the increasing importance of the disc jockey. For young people in the 1950s, who were hearing R&B for the first time, the radio did not recreate an experience such as the Make Believe Ballroom. The act of listening *was* the experience. This was an important distinction, as the disc-jockeys were not triggering an image in the mind, like Martin Block's dance floor. Indeed, no clear image could be connected to the experience, which was the formative beginnings of the radio 'spectacle' (Durham & Kellner, 2001, pp.139-143; Kellner, 2003) without which Howard Stern would have no currency today.<sup>1</sup>

In Canada, the Top 40 format was first heard in Vancouver and Toronto. Red Robinson hosted the program on CKWX, while still in high school. He accompanied salesmen on their rounds to help convince advertisers that "kids buy more than records and lipstick." Each week, he drove to Starks Record Shop in Bellingham for music because it often took an additional two or three weeks to get the latest releases in Canada (personal communication, 2004).

When patent medicine salesman Allan Waters purchased CHUM radio in Toronto, he was first to take the Top 40 format out of block programming and broadcast it 24 hours a day:

There were a number of stations in the United States that were programming Top 40 radio and I just made it my business to find out who they were, how they were doing it and what they were doing with it (Thomas, 1999).

In a sense, Allan Waters replicated what Jack Kent Cooke had done with CKEY

in 1944, but with a major difference. While Cooke lifted programming content from New York to Toronto, Waters imported an entire format and along with it, a particular ideology for programming discourse. So, for well over a decade, the two major private radio stations in Canada's largest city were programming AM radio according to American standards.

Regardless of how influential CHUM would become in the years ahead, as one of Canada's largest media conglomerates, another Canadian AM station in a much smaller city began exerting a far greater influence on radio broadcast culture. This will be discussed shortly.

With regard to Top 40, a second significant event occurred in the mid-1960s with the formation of the so-called Drake format. The pioneer Drake, like his predecessors, Storz, Stewart, and McLendon a decade before, was elevated to radio's mythical realms. The impact of the programming that was credited to him (not without some controversy) continues to be felt today.<sup>2</sup> A key component of the format was the station jingle.

### ***Jingle Development***

Radio has always featured more than just the spoken word. Early broadcasters discovered the medium's 'theatre of the mind' potential for transporting listeners to exotic locations through audio images.<sup>3</sup> The sound of Jack Benny's money vault, discussed earlier, served as a recurring imaginative theme and illustrates how network radio quickly adapted to using sound effects to complement spoken word. Theatre companies, such as the Mercury Theatre, famous for its performance of the HG Wells classic *War of the Worlds* relied heavily on production effects.

Most network variety programs in the 1930s and 1940s incorporated the use of full orchestras. Even local radio stations, citing quality, preferred local live talent to the early scratchy phonograph records (Douglas, 2004). Radio's spoken word component began to adapt to the production values and, in fact, the technical properties of radio itself influenced the type of music being broadcast in the 1920s:

Singers – especially sopranos – accustomed to projecting their voices on a stage often blew the tubes on radio transmitters when they used the same vocal force in front of a microphone. Hence the development of crooning... a soft, cooing approach... that was less stage-oriented and more intimate and didn't do violence to transmitters (p. 87).

By the 1950s, microphone quality was immeasurably improved and for many Canadian families the radio was considered as a member of the family (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982). Television was also making inroads, prompting the J. Walter Thompson Company to ask potential advertisers “When Canadian television... makes its debut in September 1951, will you be ready?” (p. 294)

Radio technology continued to advance. Pioneer broadcaster Laurie Irving remembered how the tape recorder replaced acetate discs, which had a high wear factor: “That changed everything.” he said, “That was a revolution right there,” especially for news coverage and the ability to add sound elements (p. 169).

Television and technology combined to exert powerful influences on radio and more importantly, on how radio ‘language’ came to be defined. In *The Hits Just Keep on Coming, the History of Top 40 Radio*, Ben Fong-Torres (2001) described how rock and roll music, being delivered to post-war baby boomers, essentially saved private radio

during the onslaught of television. As technology improved, more advanced recording techniques followed and the bulky reel-to-reel tape recorder was eventually replaced by the more compact tape cartridge. The Fidelipac (fidelity-package) or 'cart' required no threading or cueing. Bearing a strong resemblance to the 8-track cartridges that made a brief appearance in the 1970s, the 'cart' could be placed in a playback unit and start almost instantly.

The potential of production elements did not go unnoticed by Gordon McLendon. In 1947, McLendon launched his first baseball-recreation on KLIF, in Dallas TX. As highlights of the game were telegraphed from the stadium to the radio station, McLendon described the game against a backdrop of pre-recorded baseball batting, pitches, and crowd noises. Most listeners thought they were hearing the game live. McLendon also developed creative promotional gimmicks to market his stations, including training a parrot that would chirp the station call letters K-L-I-F on command (Garay, 1992).

Since the 1930s, commercial jingles had been used to create identifiable sound signatures for advertisers. McLendon's penchant for promotion led him to believe that his radio station could be promoted in the same way. The radio station became an identifiable product. The first jingle was sung by Bill Meeks, a McLendon salesman and bandleader. The jingles "began catching on among Dallas radio listeners and, according to Meeks, had an awful lot to do with making [KLIF] a recognizable station, where everybody knew it." (p.23)

Four years later, in 1951, Meeks set up his own shop to produce jingles for both commercials and radio stations, calling his company PAMS – Production Advertising Marketing Service. McLendon's music director, Tom Merriman, developed more

elaborate jingles that were customized for radio stations across the US (Fong-Torres, 2001, p.85). Chuck Blore, at KFWB in Los Angeles, modeled his jingles on the popular musical *West Side Story*, and they were described as the “preeminent example of using a musical logo in association with a call letter.” (p. 87) Blore’s packaged jingles were replicated by Program Director Pat O’Day in Seattle who went to PAMS to obtain the replicated package. In O’Day’s words, “Why reinvent the wheel?” (p. 87)

Jingles were becoming an indispensable component of radio programming, however, they were yet to be fully integrated with a format. By the mid-1950s, McLendon had significantly altered his radio station programming and in the process, left an indelible mark on broadcast history. Programs such as “Coffee Capers, Sunny Side Up... and Hillbilly Roundup” were gone. The block programming, comprised of individually titled presentations, were replaced by time slots that identified a particular disc-jockey (Garay, p.72). Radio station identity was no longer simply tied to a variety of musical offerings, but was now tied to a consistent sound and image. The production elements such as news introductions and jingles helped to reinforce the broadcasters identity in the marketplace. Clearly, these production elements were taking on more programming importance and developing their own operational rules and codes.

Broadcaster Barry Bowman, now a freelance announcer working in Victoria, recalls using jingles for the first time on the prairies:

I think the jingle stuff started in CFQC [Saskatoon]... When they first broke we had this big package of jingles and I don't recall at the time when I started out training with CFQC that we had jingle packages. When you started to use them, it left it pretty much up to you as when you wanted to integrate them. It wasn't a formatted package which was great you know... I maintain that the professional jock gets the privilege of doing his own show based on the merits of how he can do the show (personal communication, 2005).

By the early-1960s, radio had embraced rock and roll and “summoned up teens as a distinct social group apart from their parents, yet united across geographic boundaries and differences.” (Douglas, p.253) A poll taken at a teen fair in Hollywood in 1966 asked the question: “Who is the biggest influence on your life?” The results, presumably in order of importance, were: “God, disc jockeys, and then parents.” (Fong-Torres, 2001, p.11)

### ***Boss Radio***

What McLendon had started in Dallas, another programmer in Fresno, CA refined and mechanized. While jingles, announcing patter, music, and commercials comprised the major components of McLendon's brand of radio, it was still 'free form'. In other words, the program log determined the number of hourly commercials that would be played and scheduled the times for major programming items such as news and sports, though the individual disc-jockey was effectively, in control, as Barry Bowman suggested. Choices could be made concerning the length and content of ad-libs, when to announce the time, or how to begin talking as a record ended. While the music playlist

reflected 40 or so songs, the number of selections between commercial announcements was flexible. Free form announcers could decide on any number of announcing avenues at any given time with few restrictions about the length or content of the ‘patter’.

Bill Drake borrowed from Gordon McLendon, but radically redesigned the Texas Top 40 by virtually eliminating all disc-jockey input. Although Drake is credited with inventing the format that eventually bore his name, he developed it with another programmer, Ron Jacobs, who also worked at KHJ in Los Angeles. Knowledge concerning the relative contributions of each man remains cloaked in radio legend and myth (Fong-Torres, 2001, p.176).

The Drake format, or Boss Radio, signalled the end of the free form Top 40 era. Drake’s format called for specific programming segments, spoken and produced, to be aired at specific times. The hourly ‘clock’ consisted of programming such as a music sweep of three songs at :03, :07 and :11, disc jockey identification (ID) at :00 and :30, and weather updates at :15 and :45. Drake took the 40 song playlist and reduced it to 30. For the first time, commercials were organized in ‘stop sets;’ for instance, two or three announcements were aired back to back rather than distributed singly and broadcast between songs. This assisted in marketing Boss Radio’s ‘more music’ brand because the songs were interrupted less frequently. Drake also redesigned the jingles and cut them to three to five seconds. The jingles were a capella, recorded by the Johnny Mann Singers and they preceded each song.<sup>4</sup> The jingles formed such an integral component of the format they often overshadowed the disc jockeys themselves.

The format called for each announcer to have a personalized ID jingle, “*Ladies and gentlemen, you’re listening to \_\_\_*“. This presented a problem when a new personality

was hired because generally, insufficient time was available to arrange for the ID to be produced. Furthermore, since a station usually ordered an entire jingle package, it would be expensive to order just one additional jingle. Ever the innovators, broadcasters simply 'owned' a particular name in each market or they would supplement their jingle package with two or three fictional names to be used when hiring new announcers.

These names could be assigned and re-assigned as needed (Fong-Torres, 2001). The on-air personalities, like the commercials that were broadcast, were interchangeable. Traditional disc jockey ad libs and personality 'patter' were virtually eliminated and confined to the instrumental introduction of a song. Announcers would talk over the 'intro' and stop just as the vocals began. In radio parlance, this is called 'hitting the fade'. One of the worst violations is to 'miss the fade' and 'walk all over' the vocal intro. With regard to the Drake system, "if you had something to say, you could talk up to the vocal; if not, it was better to let the music play." (p.169) As the popularity of the format took hold, Drake began consulting other stations with his business partner Gene Chenault. Drake ensured that his stations benefited from his presence or the fear of his presence:

Disc jockeys lived in fear of what they called 'the Bat Phone'. He [Drake] had hook-ups to all the stations he programmed. He somehow managed to listen to them all, around the clock, and if something was just the eentsy-weentsiest bit off, a blinding light would go off in the offending DJ's booth and he'd have hell to pay (Fong-Torres, 2001, p.174).

Bill Watson, a national program director for Drake-Chenault said that little ambiguity existed in the format implementation:



all the basics, everything tight, no dead air, everything kick-ass, perfect music. Everything perfect, perfect, perfect. A forward momentum with production and everybody can just shut up until you do that (p.169).

Those stations that were not contractually consulted by Drake-Chenault, adopted the Boss Radio format unofficially by copying it. Los Angeles and KHJ became the Mecca for North American radio programmers who flocked to the city with tape recorders in hand. The 'fake Drake' copiers, however, still lacked the strict grammatical rules associated with this new format language:

A guy would come in and listen to us and it was so stupid. He'd go back and they'd put the jingles going in the commercial slots instead of in front of the records. We used to think that was hilarious. They would list all the ingredients we had, and then they'd put them in all of the wrong places (p.176).

One of these Drake replicas was in Vancouver and will be discussed shortly.

### ***20-20 News***

Given that music was the central focus of the Drake format, news presented a special problem and was seen as a potential tune out factor. The key ingredient in the format was the consistency of the high-energy presentation. The traditional formalized news delivery would have to be remade to suit the format. The formal top of the hour newscast was replaced by newscasts at 20 minutes before and after the hour. It was called 20/20 News. This also provided an additional competitive advantage for Drake stations. While other stations were delivering their newscasts at the top of the hour, the Drake

station would be playing a music sweep.

To maintain consistency, 20/20 News was presented in the same high-energy style as the music. In a sense, the news staff were disc-jockeys who developed an entertaining patter to keep young listeners from tuning out. Here is an example from August 1974 in Windsor ON:

It's 20-minutes before 1. This is Grant Hudson, CKLW 20-20 News.

You heard this first on the Big 8.

Accommodations are getting tighter at the Wayne County Morgue as officials stare at 16 new feet peeking out from under those rubber blankets.

Eight murders since midnight; three of them happening a short time ago in an attempted quadruple blow-off. Two women are dead. One man is dead. Another man is now under the knife at the emergency room at Ford Hospital suffering multiple stab wounds.

Another deadly duo of Detroit dastardly deeds, as the dice decree death and disagreement over seven come eleven. Now she's in heaven. The man who delivered that double-barrelled death with his package of penetrating pellets has been pounced in the pen.

In another case of hot lead in the head, a heavy-handed hitch-hiker tipped with a trigger and paid his bill in bullets (CKLW, Grant Hudson, 2007).

The above is a partial transcription of Hudson's newscast that can be found online ([www.rockradioscapbook.ca](http://www.rockradioscapbook.ca)).

### ***Format Mechanization***

Since the formative years of commercial radio, most broadcasters were also responsible for operating control room equipment in addition to their announcing duties (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982). While one record was playing, they would line up the next

selection or prepare commercials. With the sheer complexity of the Drake format, some stations needed to hire an extra set of hands – the board operator. The ‘op’ was responsible for getting the records on the turntable, organizing jingles, and prepping commercials. As turntables eventually gave way to Fidelipac tape cartridges, the board op would stack the 5 x 4 inch carts one on top of the other. Given the frenzied pace of the format, with a 3 to 5 second jingle preceding each song, several playback machines were used.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the CFAX board operators mentioned earlier, these operators acted as an extra set of hands for the announcer.

The Fidelipac carts also provided the announcer with important timing information that was not possible from vinyl. For example, the cartridges could record inaudible cue tones. These tones would only be detected by sensitive audio equipment and used as relays. Once a song was transferred from record to cart, the tape could be encoded with a cue tone to trigger a warning light when the song reached its final 10 or 15 seconds of air-time. The disc-jockey would then have a visible cue. These cues were exceedingly helpful for both announcer and the board op for maintaining the tempo during the fast transition from one segment to another.

By the mid-1960s the Boss Radio format was being replicated across North America:

One study of Top 40 in the 1960s found that an hour of airtime on a typical [Drake] station consisted of twenty-two commercials, seventy weather, time or contest announcements, fifty-eight announcements of the station’s call letters, one three-and-a-half minute newscast and twelve songs (Douglas, 2004, p.252).

Bill Drake and his associates became an undeniable force in commercial radio and, in

effect, launched scientifically managed private radio programming. Private radio, like any other business, was certainly designed to generate a profit; however, Drake implemented all three of FW Taylor's (1964) principles for organizing work. He instituted an extreme division of labour, with managers (not workers) controlling the workplace, and used efficiency of movement or time and motion studies. By developing a rigid 'clock,' Drake could reduce the disc jockey's labour to an exceedingly small part, not unlike that of piece-work employees in the garment industry. This is not to say that a Drake-run control room was devoid of creativity, however, in most cases it was minimal.

Unlike the free-form Top 40 that preceded it, the Drake system called for announcers to specialize their craft along narrowly defined lines. The announcers did not read the news or sports, or lend their voice to any extended features. They were, after all, "Boss Jocks" fulfilling specific character roles within the context of a highly organized formatic presentation. Drake Taylorism took the standard radio station program log and loosely formed clock, and replaced it with a regimented mechanistic Fordist log and clock that demanded absolute precision. The disc jockey plugged into a well-oiled Top 40 machine. Lights that counted down the seconds told him when he could start talking and the music introduction dictated the length. The art and creativity of the free-form format gave way to science. The format, not the personality, dictated whether a fast-to-fast or a fast-to-slow jingle was aired between two particular songs. The announcer IDs, called splitters, always ran at the top (:00) and bottom (:30) of each and every hour. Placement was never left to the artistic discretion of the disc-jockey (McNamara, 2004; Fong-Torres, 2001).

Clearly, it was Drake, his consultancy, and the client program directors that

managed the sound of the radio station. The knowledge and power resided with management. Granted, rank-and-file disc-jockeys were responsible for the overall announcing, according to the format, but they were expendable and easily replaced, to the point that even their names were managed for them. Announcer Rick Davis used four different names while working for various radio stations in San Francisco. Whether it was Al Knight (a common last name for the all-night show) or Lucky Logan, “it was the decision, Davis said, of the station’s owner Bartell Broadcasting... Usually, the jocks at all their stations had the same names.” Some names, like Rick Shaw, had racist overtones (Fong-Torres, 2001, pp. 90, 92). Drake’s constant presence, via the ‘Bat Phone,’ took the notion of format supremacy and supervision to panoptic proportions (Bentham, 1995). Given the absence of face-to-face communication, a disc jockey would have no way of knowing if Drake was listening. Distance was irrelevant since Drake had telephone hook-ups that provided live, off-air feeds from each of his client stations, fed directly to his Los Angeles office.

These developments succeeded in tipping the scales between radio’s spoken and production languages. As discussed earlier, historically, radio used sound to signify or index specific images that were normally tied to sound effects. The process of signification was fairly clear, as was the syntactic structure. Taking direction from Saussure’s notion of language building, we can observe an important historic chain of events in symbolic radio production ‘language’. While Drake did not invent this language, he did adopt McLendon’s free-form production ideas. For McLendon, jingles were used almost exclusively as a marketing tool. He used his KLIF airwaves to advertise KLIF as he would any other product. The Drake system, on the other hand, elevated the

jingle, as part of the production syntagm, to a much higher level. I discuss this further in Chapter Five.

To illustrate, we can test this hypothesis, though not grounded in statistical science. If we removed the production or jingle component from the 1950s programming of McLendon's KLIF Top 40 station in Dallas, the overall programming, would largely remain unchanged in the free-form format. It was announcer-dominated. In contrast, a 1960s Drake station would not exist as such without the rigid clock and the Johnny Mann Singers a capella jingles. They were emotional symbolic signifiers that adhered to specific rules and codes. Announcers were interchangeable, but the format was immutable, and was the real 'star' of Drake radio. Announcers were simply McLuhanistic "servo-mechanisms" integrated into the control room apparatus (McLuhan, 1994, p.46).

A demarcation line can be figuratively drawn in private radio history that separates the industry before and after Bill Drake. We have witnessed a string of formats in the last 40 years, including AOR (album-oriented rock), CHR (contemporary hit radio) and, of course, country. The music, however, is the major determinant in defining each format for the listener. Less apparent, certainly to listeners, is the clock and the formatic mechanism used to present the music.

Chuck McCoy, the national Program Director for the Rogers' chain of radio stations in Canada and a 40-year radio veteran, maintains that the Drake format altered private radio:

The idea of not playing one commercial [and] putting them together in a stop-set... we still do that. The use of a capella jingles was all Drake... We had clocks before, but he changed the clock to be more relevant... You know, you hear everybody doing a top of the hour jingle... It all started with Drake. The Drake format really changed radio (personal communication, 2005).

At this point, we need to clarify that other changes happened in radio since the 1960s that cannot be attributed to Drake. Digitization led to the Fidelipac tape being replaced by the computer hard-drive, and music scheduling software is now the norm, regardless of market size. FM radio, with its superior quality, was non-existent in the 1960s, leaving AM marginalized and left to program mostly talk programs.

Interestingly, FM broadcasters sought to have lightning strike twice in the mid-1970s, by adapting the tight playlist and “assembly line formats... robbing the disc-jockey of autonomy and making the final product – the show – more predictable... as it had been in the ’60s.” (Douglas, 2004, p.278) A complete discussion of broadcast technology, especially with regard to deregulation and the political broadcast political economy, is outside the scope of this discussion. In Chapter Five, I present a condensed version of broadcast technology.

### ***Myth-Making in Broadcast Culture***

Drake’s legacy is dramatic, yet paradoxical in a sense. On one hand, his format elevated the status of the disc-jockey to be the ‘gatekeeper’ for teenagers looking for their first rock-and-roll experience, yet it simultaneously devalued the announcer. Moreover, Drake’s legacy continues to be celebrated by disc-jockeys who regularly contribute to the

many websites that immortalize the Drake format. Two of these sites are particularly noteworthy because they not only illustrate historical facts surrounding Drake, Chenault, Jacobs and others, but they explicitly demonstrate how various aspects of broadcast culture are valued and transmitted. *Bosradioforever.com* (<http://bosradioforever.com>), as the name implies, concerns itself with KHJ and the Drake format while *reelradio.com* ([www.reelradio.com](http://www.reelradio.com)) is a repository of Top 40 on-air audio material.

One could spend countless hours undertaking a fascinating contextual analysis of the text used to describe Drake and his associates at these two Web sites. I will attempt only a brief overview here and confine my examination to cultural values, specifically, the cultural reproduction of private broadcasting values. Cultural reproduction has been described as a process of inquiry that investigates “the processes through which individuals internalize the culture of their societies” (Sedgewick, 1999, p.100). Although the Drake format was confined to a specific period in broadcast history and it left an indelible mark on how radio formats evolved, it would be folly, in my view, to assume that the philosophy associated with that aspect of radio culture died along with the 45 rpm vinyl record.

Drake and Jacobs have been mythologized, in a functionalist sense, in that they “encoded group norms,” which served to “strengthen the cohesion and integrity” of broadcast culture (p.248). This should not be construed to suggest that without Drake and the myth surrounding him, broadcast culture would somehow disintegrate. Clearly, Drake’s role in developing (with Jacobs) the various rules and codes of format radio elevated his status. At the peak of his influence, other broadcasters sought to emulate not only his format, but the associated philosophical values.



One could argue that, since these Internet Web sites are public, and require no user identification or password, they are designed to reach a broad spectrum of public users. The sites are certainly widely accessible, though they are designed to educate and signify, in the semiotic sense that the Drake format was not simply about rock and roll music.

One would not have to dig deeply to find the passion and emotional significance attached to “Boss Radio Forever”. The Bossradioforever.com home page contains links to pages such as: “Culture and History,” “Boss Jocks,” “Drake,” “Jacobs,” and “Drake-Chenault”. Drake is called “historically significant” and partly “myth”. To be sure, teenagers who experienced “Boss Jocks” in 1966 may wish to relive their youth by re-visiting their favourite D-Js via the audio samples provided on the Web site. In all likelihood, they may be less interested in the formatic intricacies of splitters, jingles, and broadcasting myth. The site exists in large part to reinforce and remind broadcasters of one of the important landmarks in their cultural history.

The reelradio.com website bills itself as “An authentic aircheck museum of classic top 40 radio” and is operated by former broadcaster Richard Irwin who’s *nom de web* is “Uncle Ricky”:

REELRADIO may or may not survive, but I'll never forget the greatest radio ever made. The fun, formatics, styles, personalities, promotions, production, time-tones, reverb, creativity and pioneers of Top 40 Radio are celebrated here! And we feel good about it (<http://www.reelradio.com/reasons.htm>).

The Reelradio website claims to contain over 1,000 taped audio radio performances or airchecks. Robert W. Morgan and The Real Don Steele, both KHJ disc

jockeys in the 1960s, have special significance. The role that airchecks appeared to play in broadcasting culture is interesting. At first glance, they appear to exist only as an aural snapshot of days gone by – the equivalent of grainy black and white snapshots.

Nevertheless, for some, like Chuck McCoy, they continue to hold special reverential significance:

I still have some Real Don Steel tapes in the drawer behind my desk in Toronto and when I feel kind of down on the business or whatever, I just pull out the Real Don Steel. To me, he was the very best. He had so much emotion and personality (personal communication, 2005).

### ***The Drake Effect***

While the flagship Drake radio station was KHJ in Los Angeles, or *Boss Angeles*, as it was formatically addressed on-air (Fong-Torres, 2001), a Windsor Ontario station was reaching the most people. CKLW, or *The Big Eight*, was owned by RKO in the US, and like in the real estate business, location was important to CKLW. First, its AM frequency of 800 kHz meant that it occupied a lot of ‘space’ on the dial, and that its signal was extremely powerful. The radio station also erected transmitters close to the Great Lakes using the water to further carry the signal across as many as 22 states and a good part of Canada. Although the signal originated in this country, the primary target was the huge teenage population in Detroit, located across the Detroit River.

CKLW was not only a Drake-formatted station but it was consulted by Drake and Gene Chenault. Paul Drew, a prominent program director in the consultancy, was in

charge. Drew's work was a major influence for many young broadcasters, including Chuck McCoy:

It was 1967 when CKLW changed the landscape for everybody. When I was working in London ON, doing 'old' radio at the time... we could hear CKLW... and it was one of those things that changed my life. The Big 8... a lot of songs in a row with attitude... and it was amazing. I was at one station where I could do almost anything I wanted. It was a free-form station. I just did the Drake format. [I said] There's nothing else I will ever do but this format (personal communication, 2005).

McCoy's response has a wistful tone, similar to his earlier comment about his collection of Real Don Steel airchecks. The radio format was a life-altering experience. Of importance here is the mode of address or the communication that is occurring between CKLW and Chuck McCoy. McCoy at this point is not being addressed solely as a listener, or radio consumer, but rather as a broadcaster. Of course, this brings us back to the earlier discussion concerning production values. The production elements of the format, and not just the announcer content, are 'speaking' to the young announcer in London.

This begs the question: What were the formative radio experiences that McCoy recalls, not as a broadcaster, but as a listener? In the mid-1950s, in Winnipeg, McCoy recalls CKY, which was playing Top 40 rock and roll in the evenings and on Saturdays, and by 1960, was expanded to 24-hour rock:

McCoy: It was some of the best radio done in Canada.

RT: Why?

McCoy: Partly, because everyone there was American. They all came from the States.

RT: Why?

McCoy: Because it was a 50,000 watt station and they had been working in US markets in 5 or 10,000 watt stations. A guy named Jimmy Hillyard came in from Dallas and that's what really turned the station into a real blockbuster. He went on to program and was part-owner in a big broadcast company back in the States, when he left. But he came in and really changed the station, brought in all these Americans and it just had a sound we'd never heard before. That's when I really fell in love with it.

RT: Tell me about the format... did it have jingles.. was it Drake?

McCoy: Oh yeah it had jingles... wasn't Drake. It had PAMS jingles, the PAMS Dallas jingles (personal communication, 2005).

In assessing McCoy's responses, we need to be mindful that in all likelihood he is answering these questions from his current perspective as a broadcaster. It would be doubtful that he could separate himself from his profession and recall CKY only as a listener as it existed four decades ago. Still, his responses are revealing. Clearly, he attributes the success of CKY in large part to the influence of American talent.

Two points should be made: One could conjecture that once the imported Dallas programming was in place, any radio professional would be capable of working at CKY. Nevertheless, McCoy seems to be saying that CKY was successful as a result of the American talent, in which case, any Canadian on-air personalities would be less than satisfactory. Therefore, for McCoy, nationality was a significant determinant:

McCoy: There is a disproportionate number of people in this business in Canada who come from provinces like Manitoba and Saskatchewan. You know the population is very small there, but we grew up listening to great radio outside our own communities.

RT: What did you listen to?

McCoy: We listened to 89 WLS Chicago... that was a big station. We listened to KOMA Oklahoma City... another big one. KAAY Little Rock Arkansas and a few others, but primarily those stations. So we didn't listen to the local Toronto station or Vancouver stations only. When I started as a teenager in radio I could go to other markets and talk about these stations (personal communication, 2005).

When McCoy's career took him to Toronto in the 1970s, he worked with another broadcaster who was heavily influenced by American radio – J. Robert Wood. Wood was Program Director at CHUM AM. Broadcaster John Oliver worked at CHUM FM and said that it was difficult for anyone at the station not to notice the number of on-air imports hired at the station:

Many of us felt J. Robert Wood would hire less-talented Americans for on-air positions at CHUM-AM during the 1970s. One got the feeling he was of the mind, “If it's American, it's automatically better.” In most cases, the Americans stayed only a few months, as if using CHUM Toronto as merely a pit stop until they returned to a major US market. The American jocks at CHUM got paid much more and in many cases did not sound as good as the Canadians on air, such as Roger Ashby, Jim Van Horne, JD Roberts (now John Roberts at CNN), Terry Reid (now QM-FM mornings), and so on. To be fair, some Americans, such as Jay Nelson, Tom Rivers, and Terry Steel, did sound great and did stay at CHUM for many, many years and in fact, embraced Toronto and Canada. But they were rare. Most of the American jocks on CHUM treated Toronto as if it was just another American city. This became evident in their showprep which was very Americanized and often revealed their ignorance of Canadians (personal communication, 2007).

The prairie provinces also played a vital role in Canadian music history, providing opportunities for artists such as Joni Mitchell and Neil Young. Here, we can also see the influence of American Top 40 radio. Robert Wright (2004) argues that Winnipeg's The Guess Who was accused of being influenced more by American than Canadian culture. Singer-songwriter Burton Cummings is quoted as saying that nothing “intrinsically Canadian” was in the Guess Who's music: “We weren't influenced by anything except a rehash of North Dakota AM radio.” (p.257)

For Barry Bowman and Gordon Cruse, American radio was influential as they began their radio careers in Saskatchewan in the 1960s:

Cruse: I listened to CKCK [Regina] and I listened to WLS in Chicago... Yeah... Clear channel 89. Dawn Phillip's funniest guy in the world at that time to me and it would come in at night. Crazy humour good fun.

Bowman: I listened to these guys to see what they were doing. What they were doing and I wasn't and just the way they presented themselves. You know, I think what happened with disc jockeys like us... it's like anybody else in another field. You always emulate someone that is bigger. I guess like in acting you would always watch the Oliviers and the Brandos. And I think that same thing in radio, when Gord and I would go out on a night with a couple other of guys who were passionate about radio, these major stations coming in from the States. In those days those [stations] were coming in loud and clear. And there was personality. You listened to Dick Biondi and Don Phillips at WLS. I remember those guys for their great humour and the funny things they'd say... (personal communication, 2005).

Gordon Cruse left the prairies to work on the pirate ships in Great Britain before joining Bowman at CFX in Victoria. He later became the station's Music Director.

The presence of American radio in the prairie provinces was largely due to geography and frequency characteristics inherent in AM broadcasting. Historically, the flat terrain and atmospheric conditions combined with frequency to provide cities such as Winnipeg open access to radio south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982). The US influence was also felt in BC. Red Robinson, a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee and 1950s broadcaster, clearly identifies himself with his American colleagues:

First off all, the Drake formula was not bad. A lot of people knocked it. Copies of it were bad. Bill Drake and the guys in Los Angeles at KHJ, where it started, people like Robert W. Morgan, who I was good friends with, right up until he died here four years ago and Don Steel and these guys. They had talent. Dick Biondi who is now in Chicago, and Allan Freed in Cleveland. He was the first Big Daddy of it all, yeah all of us... (personal communication, 2004).

Another BC broadcaster, Roy Hennessy, now a national broadcasting consultant with the firm Hennessy and Bray Communications in Toronto, discovered the Drake format in California:

I was on vacation driving to Los Angeles to see my sister-in-law. I had heard many tapes of KFWB, the rock leader in Los Angeles, but I heard there was a new station kicking butt – 93 KHJ Boss Radio. I drove over the hills and into the range of the station and the first thing I heard was the 3pm show opener for The Real Don Steel. I never heard so much excitement, so much energy... it was awesome. And three songs in a row at the top and bottom of the hour. In Vancouver we stopped down between every tune! (personal communication, 2005)

Hennessy contacted his CKLG program director Frank Callaghan in Vancouver and they arranged to tape KHJ. Once back in Canada, Callaghan went to Los Angeles to hear for himself:



I drove him to the airport... he called me from Los Angeles and told me [as Music Director] to get ready... chop the playlist from 40 to 30... lay out the clock... cut down the gold library and start looking for jingles. It tore Vancouver apart... it took 6 weeks to destroy CFUN... the happiest time in my life (personal communication, 2005).

In a 1999 interview, Frank Callaghan relayed how he eventually purchased Drake jingles for CKLG. For US\$ 8,000, he got the entire package with the Johnny Mann Singers (personal communication, September 9, 1999). Roy Hennessy eventually took over the all-important morning show on CKLG. His on-air name incidentally was Real Roy Hennessy.

We should not be entirely surprised at the far-reaching influence of American radio as, according to Peter Lewis and Jerry Booth (1989), it is no accident. The list of countries adopting a private broadcasting system based on what they term was US “cultural and economic domination” makes for interesting reading (p.50). One need only consider the impact of the US Armed Forces Radio Service in World War II to appreciate how American radio and rock and roll left its post-war imprint on European teenagers.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, a country such as Canada, with its geographic proximity to the US, could not help but be drawn in.

### ***The Schein Model***

Edgar Schein (2004) examined corporate leadership culture extensively and identified several factors that illustrate how ‘founders and leaders’ embed and transmit culture. While Schein’s schema focuses on a business model, his notions may also be

adapted to Canadian private radio culture. While not formally and legally bound as a unified corporation, few would argue that private broadcasting does not operate as a distinct sub-culture, with its members sharing a common history and philosophy. This has been detailed well by Seigel (1996), Babe (1990), Peers (1969), and others. According to Schein, “primary embedding mechanisms” and “secondary articulation and reinforcement mechanisms” serve to signal cultural objectives from the ‘top-down,’ to newcomers in a particular organization (p. 231).

Schein’s primary mechanisms include such variables as: what leaders pay attention to; reactions to critical incidents; resource allocation; deliberate role-modelling; and teaching and coaching. His secondary elements include: organization design; structure; rites and rituals; and stories, legends, and myths about people and events (p. 231).

Schein does not put much stock in the secondary factors, claiming that “efforts to decipher culture from collecting stories have the same problem as the deciphering of rituals.” (p.251), namely, the issue of reliability is present. Nevertheless, while saying that the primary variables are more important, Schein allows that “these secondary mechanisms can provide powerful reinforcement of the primary messages.”(p. 253)

Schein is confining himself to a strict hierarchical business model of management, mid-management, and worker, where the myths and stories become intertwined with written corporate documents such as policy papers and memoranda. Still, no firm structure exists in a cultural sector, such as private radio, beyond perhaps lobby groups like the CAB. Given the transient nature of radio employment, from one market to another, we must consider the importance of the orality of radio, not solely as its defining

component (sound), but also for defining private broadcasters who share a common history. The myths and stories are carried from one station to another by employees who, almost by job description, are transient, moving from small, to medium or to large market opportunities. Cultural values are easily transmitted orally (Innis & Godfrey, 1986).

The culture of private radio is replete with rituals and myths. Nowhere is this clearer than in the article by American broadcast consultant and former Top 40 disc jockey, Dan O'Day. O'Day's *A Brief Incomplete History of Radio* is available online (O'Day, 2007).<sup>7</sup> In the article, O'Day outlines the most important things that a veteran broadcaster can pass on to a newcomer. We can see many of Schein's primary and secondary reinforcement mechanisms here. O'Day simply exhorts veterans to "[T]ell them stories" and then lists the facts and events that he signifies as being important. The brief, interrupted list includes:

War stories about broadcasting ... the good old days... stories about legendary radio people you almost met in an elevator at a convention... swapping tapes... deepening your voice... Slow starting turntables, nickel on the tone-arm, the cart machine sticks (O'Day, 2007).

This attempt to trace cultural values, at first glance, appears to be a daunting task, however, it is not as complicated as it might appear. Canada's private radio landscape is small, and only a handful of large and medium markets are present. Deregulation has resulted in few companies, such as Rogers Communication, Standard Broadcasting, Corus Entertainment, and CHUM, owning almost all of the stations. The community is comparatively small though it wields a sizeable influence.

To cite one example, let us return to Frank Callaghan's CKLG in the 1960s, in

Vancouver. Callaghan's values, previously discussed, were clearly rooted in the US and the Drake format, which he transplanted from KHJ in Los Angeles. As Program Director, one of Callaghan's decisions was to hire a young broadcaster who had only been in the business for a few years – Roy Hennessey.

Hennessey, now a media consultant in Toronto, stayed with the Moffat chain for several years as the Program Director at CKLG-FM Vancouver and as Operations Manager at CHED in Edmonton. He also assumed management positions at the Moffat stations in Calgary (CKXL) and Winnipeg (CKY). Before launching his media consulting career, he was Vice-President and General Manager at CFRB in Toronto. He began his Top 40 career adopting the on-air moniker, Real Roy Hennessey, which he borrowed from the Real Don Steele, the popular American DJ in the 1960s.

In a 1999 survey, Hennessey was asked to identify the top three individuals who, in his view, had the greatest influence on radio programming. His responses and rationale were as follows:

- #1            *Bill Drake*, for developing the Boss Radio Top 40 format in the 1960s and 1970s.
- #2            *Lee Abrams*, for developing Album Rock radio in the US.
- #3            *Jack Webster* for pioneering talk radio in Canada.

The question was open-ended. The responses are interesting for what they do *not* include: Marconi and Fessenden's contributions to radio, or other acknowledged broadcasting landmarks such as the invention of the long playing record or the tape recorder, or events such as Mercury Theatre's War of the Worlds.

At this juncture, we need to apply the appropriate research safeguards. This is not a definitive study, and is also based entirely on anecdotal evidence. Nevertheless, we should still take care to not throw the baby out with the bath water, with all due deference to quantitative researchers.

If, as Schein points out, a primary embedding mechanism includes hiring and coaching (a reasonable assertion), then we may assume that broadcast newcomers who were exposed to Roy Hennessy as a manager/leader would either follow or adapt to his radio cultural outlook. For instance, would Hennessy likely hire and promote an individual who holds core radio values that run counter to his own? Hennessy, over the years, has been responsible for hiring many broadcasters who now occupy influential positions within Canadian radio (Table 5).

**Table 5: Roy Hennessy Hiring Trends**

<b>Hennessy Hire</b>	<b>Hiring Position</b>	<b>Eventual Position</b>
Sandy Davis	CKY Program Director	President, Post City Production, Toronto
Jim Johnston	CKY Program Director	Vice-President Toronto and Ontario Radio, Corus Entertainment, formerly Vice-President Programming, Standard Broadcasting
Danny Kingsley	CKY Program Director	former PD, CISS-FM Toronto
Brad Phillips	CHED Assistant Program Director	Vice-President and General Manager, CKVU Television, formerly General Manager, CHUM AM/FM Toronto
Rob Christie	CHED Announcer	Morning Announcer, Jack-FM Toronto
Don Shafer	CFOX Music Director	Vice-President Standard Broadcasting, BC Interior, formerly Vice-President/GM, Star Television, Toronto

While Hennessy would not, even in broadcast circles, be deemed a ‘founder,’ he easily fits the Schein description of a ‘leader’. Those who he has mentored over the years,

especially Johnston, Shafer, and Philips, have assumed some of the most influential management positions in Canadian private radio.

Chuck McCoy's influence has been nothing short of dramatic, in his words:

When I look around the country and look at the program directors or the programming people that are programming in most stations whether, it's Paul Ski, Vice-President of Radio Programming at CHUM, or Brian DePoe or Rob Farina... these are program directors in Toronto. Almost everybody that's programming radio either worked with me, or for me or I consulted. There's hardly anybody... I think about it all the time because... well our company alone. Rob Fisher runs these [4] Vancouver stations here of course Rob worked for me in Toronto. In Alberta [Rogers], our stations are run by Kevin McKenna who was a DJ and became a PD. Geoff Poulton in Manitoba came from Squamish, Gavin Tucker is in Kitchener... I knew him from Moose Jaw. The program director at CHFO... I gave her first programming job. Brian DePoe... I gave him his first programming job. JJ Johnston [VP Corus]... I gave a programming job to Rob Farina at CHUM. I consulted him in Winnipeg somewhere along the line. Pat Bohn [Bohn & Associates]... I gave him his first job. [He is a] huge international consultant. Brad Philips... I brought in from being a DJ to being a PD. Danny Kingsbury now programs for us in Ottawa. Ross Winters would hang out in my consultancy in Vancouver filing records. Sharon Taylor (VP-GM Standard Radio) in Winnipeg (personal communication, 2005).

De-regulation has meant that the companies employing McCoy's protégés have expanded. These companies can now own up to four stations in one market and as a

result their programming influence has increased. At one time Johnston was responsible for all Corus stations in Ontario and prior to that, as Programming V-P for Standard Broadcasting, he was the de facto Program Director for the entire chain.

McCoy became Vice-President of Programming for Rogers Media but, for many years, operated a successful consultancy with Pat Bohn. Interestingly, their style of consulting was passed onto them by another mentor, George Davies of CHUM. Of interest here is the reference to a format of consulting:

There again you know Pat Bohn consults and I consulted with Pat and I consulted on my own, but the basic format of consulting with radio stations is the George Davies format. Pat uses it today. I used it. The basic format [is] I am going to come into town, monitor your station. George Davies began that format of listening to every single hour of that station and relevant competitors, then immediately filing a report. Pat never worked for George and I had worked for George for many years, then when Pat and I became consultants together, I told Pat this is the format we use and it's the George Davies format. People have lots of mentors in this business and he [Davies] was certainly one for me (personal interview, 2005).

In a valiant, albeit misguided, effort at times, Canada attempted to regulate what it deemed to be the cultural content of broadcasting. The so-called CanCon (Canadian Content) regulations of the 1970s are perhaps the best known example. The CRTC and Heritage Canada have so far remained steadfast about foreign ownership regulations concerning private radio that should not be relaxed, for fear that the content will somehow become less Canadian. For all intents and purposes, with regard to structure,

Canadian private radio is American. The cloning of the Drake-Top 40 format was replicated with the importation of Country, All News, All Sports, and East Listening formats. This begs the question – Is a truly Canadian radio format operating in the private sector?

As this discussion concludes, a logical question would seem to be: Do divergent radio programming ideas exist? Certainly, they are hard to find on this continent but, if we extend our search, we find a myriad of alternatives that have escaped the intractable hegemonic hold of the North American private radio model that has dominated the spectrum for the past 40 years (Lewis, 1989; Squier, 2003). In applying the two-language model of radio that we have been discussing, the history provides us (almost) with a clinical laboratory for further investigation.

### *The Pirates*

In Great Britain, the onset of private radio was spurred by the take-no-prisoners approach of pirate radio station, Radio Caroline, which was stationed three miles off the British coast in international waters. Launched in 1964, Radio Caroline was financed by American investors, and beamed US Top 40 music complete with jingles and promotions to eager British teenagers. Not without some irony, none other than Gordon McLendon invested money in another pirate station, Radio Nord, which was aimed at Sweden (Lewis, 1989; Fong-Torres, 2001; Garay, 1992).<sup>8</sup> Although the pirates did not program the Drake format, they were certainly aware of it. In fact, the American D-J, Lawrence Diggs, had almost no experience but was hired after he arrived at the Amsterdam offices of Radio Caroline and dropped the right names. “They thought I was one of Drake’s



guys.” (Fong-Torres, 2001, p.197)

Radio Caroline, Radio Nord, and the other ‘pirates’ broadcasting off the European coast, stayed on the air for several years amid bitter legislative wrangling. Eventually, they were shut down when the governments they challenged made pirate radio advertising illegal. When the money dried up, the illegal private stations sailed into the sunset. Great Britain, seeking to placate rock and roll fans, eventually succumbed and programmed Top 40 music on BBC Radio on September 30 1967 (Fong-Torres, 2001, p.197).<sup>9</sup>

While these private stations were successful in exposing music, advertising, and promotion content to indigenous audiences and broadcasters, the formatic aspects of their signals were never totally adopted. Although the BBC went so far as to hire former pirate broadcasters such as Tony Blackburn and John Peel, it relegated Top 40 to fall between 5:30am to 7:30pm and between 10pm to 2am (Fong-Torres; Lewis, 1989).

In attempting to incorporate a Top 40 format into the public broadcasting domain, the BBC could have simply replicated the American Drake model without the commercial content. It was technically feasible. In other words, if given access to the Top 40 formula – the formatic language of IDs, jingles, and splitters – the US format, already proven to be commercially successful, could have been easily followed in London. Indeed, without commercial stop-sets, even more music would have been aired.

Despite having access to both the technical tools and the knowledge, the Drake format was not cloned in Great Britain, though it was pervasively replicated in Canada. In my view, this occurred for two reasons. To be sure, Canada’s proximity to the US was a factor; however, airchecks of KHJ and other Drake stations were readily available in

Great Britain.

Former Radio Caroline pirate Gordon Cruse recalled that he enjoyed a fair amount of flexibility using jingles on the air, indicating a less rigid format. Nevertheless, another pirate ship, Radio London, attempted a wholesale format importation:

We pretty much had our own choice. Radio Caroline kept the folksy sort of chat. It was Radio London which came on really strong with the Top 40 format. You know, the singing jingles, the slick production and the bang bang bang Top 40 – that sort of thing. English people didn't react that well to that. It was too hard sell. We used to pirate some of the jingles off the American stations and just re-edit them... take out the call letters. Yeah, the jingles that we did have were just real simple. So you wouldn't say that I would be the equivalent of the mechanized Drake [system] because you still have the flexibility. Yeah it wasn't something that was slick and produced. But, culturally it wasn't something embraced by the audience (personal communication, 2005).

If Radio London's delivery, as Cruse suggested, sounded more slick and Top 40 than Radio Caroline, it was probably because it was modelled after KLIF in Dallas TX (Pirate Radio Hall of Fame, 2007).

First, this illustration shows the enormous significance of cultural values and how they are transmitted. Influential Canadian broadcasters, who occupy senior positions in the private sector, have in large part been steeped in the myths and legends of American broadcasting, whether it is Storz, McLendon, Jacobs, or Drake. A cultural assumption is interwoven in private radio in Canada that the Americans are more creative. This was, after all, the country that produced Bill Drake and the Real Don Steele. Even with a

successful music industry in this country, Canadian record labels continue to find this assumption to be challenging. Ray Ramsey, a long-time record promoter and marketing representative for RCA (later called BMG) experienced this first hand:

I remember going into CKLG and Roy Hennessy would say to me “Listen to this record you’ve got.” I forget what it was. He played it and said “Now listen to this record I got from the States and he played it. The production values were day and night. He said that’s the kind of sound we need to have on this radio station. If your records sounded more like that, we’d be more open to playing them...They [radio] still do this to this day to a degree. Even the way they add records and play records is largely 65 percent anyway predicated on how a record performs on American radio (personal communication, 2005).

This practise of looking south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel explains why Chuck McCoy, instead of searching for, or perhaps developing, a Canadian format for CFUN in 1973, looked to KCBQ in San Diego. Furthermore, we must remember that McCoy’s admiration for US radio and its programmers began early as a Winnipeg teenager, when he routinely dialled in WLS in Chicago. These variables were simply not present in Great Britain.

### ***The Legacy of Bill Drake***

The Drake impact of American radio on Canadian broadcasting continues to be pervasive. As a spoken language evolves from a preceding form, so too does the radio programming language. Just as new words are incorporated into our everyday lexicon,

new jingles and splitters make their way into radio production language. The basic grammatical structure, however, the syntagm, has remained virtually unchanged since the 1960s. When CHUM purchased an ailing CFUN (then called CKVN) in 1973, Chuck McCoy was dispatched from Toronto as program director. His prescription was to import another American Top 40 format, this time from KCBQ San Diego. Did he make any alterations, however subtle, in converting from American to Canadian radio? “There wasn’t much adaptation to Vancouver not really. Pretty much the same...” (personal communication, 2005).

The importation of American formats continued. Throughout the early-1990s, as more AM stations opted out of programming music in favor of talk and news content, Rogers Broadcasting launched an ambitious conversion of its AM stations, described as “one of the most daring moves by a Canadian radio station.” (Levin, 1996, p. 10) CFTR in Toronto was reinvented as 680 News, based on a format that was in place at WINS New York. Chuck McCoy, then general manager at CKWX in Vancouver, adopted the format in BC and it was later implemented at the Rogers station in Calgary and elsewhere.

A key aspect of the WINS format was the 20-minute news cycle designed to provide a varied amount of information in a comparatively short time-frame. Like the music format clock that preceded it, the WINS format was also designed with a strict implementation regimen, but with a vital difference. Rather than retain the clock in its traditional role as an internal device, programmers elected to publicize it as a promotional tool. The WX1130 clock is posted on the station’s Web site (<http://www.news1130.com/station/schedule.jsp>). In another remarkable development,

listeners were urged to listen for traffic and weather ‘on the ones’ (i.e., at :01, :11, : 21, : 31, :41, and :51 after the hour). The language of the programming clock, for decades spoken only in a programming context and usually only within a radio station, became publicly externalized for promotional purposes.

The deep emotional significance that broadcasters such as McCoy, Hennessy, and Robinson attach to American broadcasting should not be underestimated. These individuals, among others, in the last 40 years, have either taught, consulted, or mentored hundreds of younger broadcasters. As he suggested earlier, McCoy regularly reflects on the influence he had in Canadian radio “all the time because almost everybody that’s programming radio has either worked with me, or for me or I consulted. There’s hardly anybody [I did not work with]” (personal communication, 2005).

Given that broadcasting culture is, almost by definition, an oral culture, norms, values, codes, and rules are generally passed along in the workplace. McCoy’s philosophy therefore influenced not only Rogers Broadcasting, but others such as Corus Radio’s National Program Director Ross Winters who shelved records for McCoy. CHUM’s Vice-President for Radio, Paul Ski, is another McCoy protégé. As ownership statistics in Canadian private radio continue to reflect fewer independent stations and a growth in the corporate dominance of Rogers, CHUM, Corus, and the like, less room is available for divergent programming ideas. This important point is explored at length in the following chapter.

With regard to the cultural implications of broadcast policy in Canada, we must understand several key points. Radio has two distinct modes of address: the spoken word and its production values. For decision-makers in private radio, normative evaluative

criteria were defined beyond our borders. While other types of radio exist elsewhere and indeed appear to be popular, they do not receive serious consideration because they fall outside what is defined as the norms of private radio.

Regrettably, these norms produced a Fordist and a Taylorist style of private broadcasting in Canada where the production elements, and not the spoken word, reign supreme. In spite of the assembly line approach to private radio programming, the research conducted by broadcasters themselves indicates that, more than any other medium, listeners interact with their radios on an emotional level:

This observation may suggest something about “production values” in radio advertising. Elaborate *production may be less important* than having the right message – the right conduit into personal relevance and emotions (emphasis added) (Radio Ad Effectiveness Laboratory, 2004, p.17).

Granted, the RAEL study, which appears to be thorough in its method, seems to show that, despite the bells and whistles that technology and production elements provide, people still look to radio’s spoken word content.

A further legacy of the Drake format can be heard in how news is written and presented on private radio. Generally speaking, staid and formal news presentations have been replaced by a more informal news read. Although one would be hard pressed to find the same mode of delivery typified by Grant Hudson, today, program directors encourage their news staff to take a more conversational approach on-air, with ample use of the vernacular.

Sadly, the mode of address of the announcer, to transcend space and communicate with listeners, is all but gone. Announcers, who are often automated and voice-tracked,

are now simply plugged into the broadcasting machine, carefully watching digital timers and waiting to deliver their lines. As I shall argue later, this has come at a great price.

The role of broadcast regulation also deserves our attention in this discussion. Throughout its history the CRTC has sought to regulate content which, as we've seen, is only part of the equation. The Commission has never concerned itself with the production side. The fact that a radio station in Vancouver was virtual clone of a San Diego outlet was not an issue as long as its percentage of Canadian music content was achieved. As shown by the previous exchange between Ray Ramsey and Roy Hennessy, Canadian broadcasters placed an exceedingly high premium on the production value and sound. The comparison, or benchmark, of whether or not a song is suitable, is set in the US. In other jurisdictions, such as Great Britain, these considerations were not a factor, which explains why the strong production elements associated with US Top 40 radio were not received particularly well by the British audience.

Clearly, the UK in the 1960s was continuing to develop a strong affinity for rock and roll, though the listeners were not acculturated to the production language of Top 40. As Gordon Cruse suggested, the more 'folksy' presentation of Radio Caroline was more successful. To be sure, Radio Caroline still retained the energy of a Top 40 DJ delivery, but without the associated production elements. Canadian and American audiences, on the other hand, associated both the formatic language with the production elements of Top 40.

## **Summary**

As we reflect on the development of Canadian private radio broadcasting in the

1950s and in the decades that followed, we can observe several important events converging to forge particular attitudes about programming.

The language of private radio programming was being inexorably altered. The full service radio station that was block programmed to offer ‘all things to all people’ was slowly fading off the dial. Moreover, the independently owned outlets were now in the minority because of the encroachment of larger chains, some of which were in the throes of vertically integrating carriage and content.

For young Canadian broadcasters – especially those on the prairies – the experience of listening to the Drake format for the first time was a life-altering experience. For them, and for others, the programming was more than just a series of songs played back to back with a capella jingles interspersed between them. Many recall this experience with an almost religious fervour and, in some cases, attempt to relive the experience as a personal antidote to stress. This also explains the many Internet Web sites that are devoted to the format.

With the introduction of the format, radio stations were anthropomorphized and took on a distinct presence and identity. In later years, this eventually led to private stations being branded or identified with organic labels. Radio stations today have their own (format) personalities such as ‘Jack FM’ or ‘Bob FM’. In some cases, a station might take on a major aspect of local geography; for example, ‘The River,’ ‘The Mountain,’ or ‘The Valley’. Of course, the supreme irony here is that an inverse relationship existed between the organic quality of the name and the delivery of the programming content.

As the Canadian broadcasters who understood the language of the format



ascended to powerful positions in corporate boardrooms, they became the subjects of myths and legends within the culture, further solidifying their status. They became a synod of sorts, programming religious elites who were called upon to spread the word and institute the format across the country.

In the following chapter, I examine efforts by the CRTC to institute change in FM policy as the last major attempt by the regulator to move private radio away from the American model so as to repatriate the airwaves. I will also demonstrate that by opening the door to increased concentration in ownership, the CRTC conferred enormous power to relatively few hands, which led to less content diversity in Canada.

## CHAPTER FOUR: NOTES

1. Douglas Kellner (2003) wrote extensively about this trend as well as about Debord's 'spectacle' (1994).
2. Although the commonly used term for this format is the Drake Format, this designation is not entirely accurate. Drake apparently employed programming techniques developed by the program director at his major client station – KHJ, Los Angeles. When these practices were implemented at the other stations Drake was consulting, the techniques were ascribed to him alone. Much debate ensued about the role of Ron Jacobs. These discussions can be found on various Web sites, especially at the Boss Radio Forever Web site ([www.bossradioforever.com](http://www.bossradioforever.com)). Attempts to contact Jacobs, now living in Hawaii, were unsuccessful. It is generally accepted, however, that Jacobs made a valid contribution to the format.
3. The phrase 'theatre of the mind' is thought to have been first used by satirist and broadcast performer Stan Freberg. For an in-depth examination of Freberg's contributions to radio, see *Theatrics of the Mind: Stan Freberg and the Art of Radio* (Journal of Radio Studies, Vol.13, No.1, May 2006. pp.19-34).
4. Johnny Mann continues to produce jingles and has a testimonial letter from Drake on his Web site ([http://johnnymannsingers.com/drake\\_letter.htm](http://johnnymannsingers.com/drake_letter.htm)).
5. The documentary film *Radio Revolution: the Rise and Fall of the Big Eight* has several excellent examples of the on-air relationship between announcer and operator. The film also features a segment on the 20/20 news format. A

history of the Fildelipac carts can be found on the Web

(<http://8trackheaven.com/index2.htm>).

6. Irish singer Van Morrison and writer Paul Durcan pay tribute to the Armed Forces Network in their song *In the Days Before Rock and Roll*. The song appears on Morrison's Enlightenment album (Polygram Music, Ltd.) and relates how teens would "go over the wave bands" looking for Ray Charles, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Elvis who "did not come in" in the days before AFN and Radio Luxembourg.
7. O'Day granted permission for this article to be reproduced (Appendix 4).
8. McLendon also attempted to purchase the Armed Forces Radio network from the Pentagon saying, "We could broadcast all over the world." His offer was politely declined (Garay, 1992, p.106).
9. A 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Radio Caroline 'pirate broadcasters' was staged in August 2007. The broadcasters boarded their ship and recreated their programming for one-week, receiving much media attention.

## CHAPTER FOUR: REFERENCES

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## **CHAPTER FIVE: RADIO REDEFINED**

### **Introduction**

The supremacy of the format was proven, as far as broadcasters were concerned. The format, and not the lofty principles of regulators, would be responsible for attracting increasingly large audiences.

The 1960s provided private broadcasters with proof that, in their minds at least, they were the content experts. They knew what the audience demanded. At the beginning of the 1970s, private radio culture was strengthened and broadcasters began to acknowledge those in their midst who were destined to replace the heroes and pioneers of past years. Prior to the ascendancy of the format, pioneers such as Roy Thompson were acknowledged for their economic prowess. They were essentially builders and replaced the Susan Davis (1987) ‘inventor heroes,’ discussed in Chapter One. These builders – the Thompsons, Carsons, and Cookes – were replaced by younger broadcasters whose expertise was also in building, but in building programming.

Foremost among this group was Chuck McCoy, a well known CHUM broadcaster in the 1960s, who is quoted at length in the last chapter of this thesis. The influence of this vanguard cannot be understated, and their impact resonated in virtually every major radio market in Canada. Even more importantly, however, the philosophy became the accepted norm. Not only did the success fortify the bonds within the culture, but it greatly influenced the very boundaries by which private radio would be regulated. The ascension of the programmers within the broadcast community combined with the increasing influence of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters lobby. Together they form a well



organized front in opposition to regulation.

In this chapter, I show that, despite the CRTC's stated policy of seeking to create broadcast diversity through spectrum management (i.e., regulating FM radio with different outcomes than AM), the private broadcast lobby was successful in circumventing and eventually remaking national policy to achieve its goals. This is evident in three areas: deregulation, ownership, and technology. In this chapter, I address the first two areas, and discuss technology in the following chapter. The efforts made in these areas could only have been successful with private broadcasters acting in a unified capacity.

The CRTC, on one hand, appeared to reinforce the cultural imperatives of the Broadcasting Act but, on the other hand, it relegated more regulatory control to broadcasters. The CAB succeeded in convincing the Commission that while the regulator had an important role to play in Canadian broadcasting, only the broadcasters truly understood the complexities of format implementation that was acknowledged as the primary determinant of a successful radio station.

Truly remarkable is not that this aural make-over occurred, but that it was accomplished so quickly and with so little fanfare. This process began in the early-1970s, and by analysing key regulations, policy papers, and CRTC annual reports, we can see major changes taking place by the mid-80s. Within two decades, the industry was successful in virtually deregulating its profession along the lines of the American model of radio that entranced its major players in Canada.

In the following discussion, I highlight only the major events that are germane to the topic at hand. CRTC FM policy, beginning in the 1970s, is perhaps the clearest

example of deregulation. I also include an overview of the 1997 Radio Review (1997) and dramatic alterations in ownership policy. Moreover, I cite two examples that serve as a platform for a wider discussion of the implications of these events.

### ***Policy Objectives***

Before examining radio regulations, I must place these regulations within a socio-political context. First, FM was relegated to secondary status in the 1960s and early-70s, compared to AM. The previously mentioned rise of the Top 40 format was strictly confined to AM. The government, however, was still holding to the belief that radio had a greater potential apart from the marketplace. The 1966 Judy LaMarsh *White Paper on Broadcasting* stated that “the destiny of Canada depend[s] on our ability and willingness to control and utilize our own internal communications for Canadian purposes.” (Bird, p. 356) This spirit would envelop the 1968 Broadcasting Act two years later.

The 1968 Act, introduced by LaMarsh, was largely geared towards addressing the growing influence of television. However, the social policy of the day, reflected the climate of the 1960s, and radio was seen as a valuable component in the electronic communications strategy for nation-building. Indeed, many of the early CRTC commissioners, such as Northrop Frye, were appointed from the academic community and they brought with them a background in cultural studies.

Nowhere is the climate of this period better exemplified than in the transcripts of the Davey Commission where issues of political economy and media ownership came under scrutiny. In March 1969, the Canadian Senate created a special committee to:

report upon the ownership and control of the major means of mass public communication in Canada... to examine and report upon the extent and nature of their impact and influence of the Canadian public.(Canada, 1969).

Under the chairmanship of Keith Davey, the committee represented a diverse group that, for the first time, would address the combined issues of technology, culture, and access. Davey was no stranger to private radio, having once been a radio salesman in Toronto (Bird, 1988). Not surprisingly, fears of American domination of Canadian media were rampant and fuelled discussions of “the survival of our nationhood” (Canada, 1969). The committee met 43 times, listening to not only the traditional and mainstream media but alternative media as well. Indeed, Marc Raboy commented that the Davey Report was “one of the first official displays of legitimization for the oppositional press current of the period” (1990, p.201).

Private broadcasters were doubtlessly experiencing some degree of awkwardness during the Davey hearings. After all, they were sharing the stage with a colourful group that seemed more than comfortable speaking their minds. Unlike previous hearings, where the primary ideological adversary was public broadcasting, the private sector now contended with a series of newcomers. In the proceedings, the committee not only recognized radio and television broadcasters, but also acknowledged community activists and all manner of “social animators” (p.202).

The CAB presentation did not impress the Davey committee members, who termed the Association’s stance as “Neanderthal” (Bird, 1988, p.509). Shortly after Keith Davey filed his 572-page report, the CRTC launched its ambitious Canadian content regulations. Private broadcasters reacted with predictable outrage.

To return this discussion to radio regulation, the issues surrounding nationhood and cultural independence from the US were exceedingly prevalent when the CRTC, in 1973, commissioned a study of the potential for FM radio (CRTC, 1973). The *raison d'être* was deceptively simple: FM would offer listeners more than that offered by AM radio. Perhaps realising that it was too late to close the barn door on AM, the Commission seized this opportunity to suggest that:

*Programming on AM is designed to seek out and hold one or more easily identifiable segments of the available audience... housewives, older people, ethnic groups, people in cars, or teenagers... basically it caters to the habitual listening patterns of identifiable audience groupings." (p.6) (emphasis added)*

FM "should fulfil a new role in the community by encouraging the use of the talent, experience, and capacity of expression of members of the community on a more sustained and lengthy basis *than is possible on AM.*" (p.6) (emphasis added)

These are startling and telling excerpts. First, without explicitly stating as much, the Commission acknowledged the role of format in AM radio. For the first time, it admitted that programming was designed in a particular way and was no longer defined strictly by the type of music it played. More importantly, the format, at least as regards AM, was now immutable and unalterable. The Commission had surprisingly adopted a basic tenet of the programming philosophy espoused by broadcasters – some content simply could not be delivered on AM radio due to format restrictions. The CRTC went further, insisting that:

[t]he Commission is convinced that... the tendency of FM stations to copy AM programming and to be used merely as adjuncts to AM stations be arrested, and a new creative voice be added to the Canadian broadcasting system (p.10).

The Commission set about to develop a range of options for regulations, broadly outlined in a discussion paper: *A Proposal for an FM Radio Policy in the Private Sector*.

### ***FM Regulation***

I shall now detail a regulatory roadmap that began in the early-1970s and concluded in the 1990s. Only when we collectively observe the important events, can we begin to recognize key patterns. Moreover, these patterns illustrate the marked influence of the industrial lobby and the ever-increasing degree to which the regulator defined issues that were markedly different from earlier precepts.

If the original 30 percent Canadian content music regulations were seen as a threat to AM radio, then the revised FM regulations that followed took private broadcasters completely by surprise. FM had been traditionally neglected primarily because of the lack of portable FM receivers. By the mid-1970s, however, FM had grown in popularity. According to the 1986 Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, FM's share of radio revenue jumped from 7 percent to 25 percent, between 1974 and 1984, and FM listening skyrocketed from 17 percent to 41 percent in roughly the same period (Canada, 1986 p.186). Seeing the dramatic growth in FM, the CRTC (now called the Canadian Radio Television & Telecommunications Commission, CRTC, issued a discussion paper entitled *FM Radio in Canada, A Policy to Ensure a Varied and Comprehensive Radio Service* (CRTC, 1975). In the discussion paper, Commissioners listed a series of

“dissatisfactions” it had received from Canadians concerning private radio. The complaints eerily echoed similar comments voiced at hearings and commissions in years gone by:

1. radio is loud and strident,
2. radio lacks substance; it is trivial and uninteresting,
3. radio music is limited in scope and is noisy and repetitive,
4. radio is unduly commercialized,
5. radio is imitative; it sounds the same everywhere, and
6. radio personalities are not involved in program development (p.2).

The Commissions goal was to prevent FM radio from duplicating AM formats. In repeating many of the lofty sentiments from the Aird and Massey proceedings, the CRTC played the cultural card, saying it:

is not convinced that all listeners are permanently unable to devote longer periods of time to listening to more engaging radio programs. Radio schedules composed of records, chatter and capsule news do not meet the range of interests, lifestyles and cultural patterns of all Canadians in different communities and regions (p.4).

The CRTC made it clear that FM frequencies were a “scarce resource” and deserved to be more than “unattended juke boxes” (p.7). New regulations were instituted to reduce commercial time, prohibit AM simulcasting, mandate foreground (discussion) programming, as well as a host of other statutes.<sup>1</sup> In another dramatic turn, the CRTC set out ten content areas defining programming elements that would be tied to a license, such as spoken word, music, and advertising. Music was broken down into several categories

and sub-categories. Specific commitments had to be met for an owner to retain a license. The major thrust was to ensure that FM would 'sound' different than AM, by virtue of regulation. Broadcasters were now forced to program according to content areas. New terms were introduced, such as: gramophone format, rolling format, foreground, and mosaic.

The Commission's approach to what it perceived to be the 'FM dilemma' was interesting. In a sense, and in all probability without being aware of it, the CRTC advanced several programming elements that could be construed as being components of an FM format. For example, if AM music formatics dictated uninterrupted music sweeps, why could FM foreground programming not consist of 15 minutes of talk focusing on a particular subject? By mandating specific methodological outcomes, that is to say, a certain block of time consisting of particular programming, it was treading on the sacred territory of the format; a domain only accessible by the private radio programmers.

To be sure, broadcasters had legitimate concerns related to compliance. By regulating music content, the Commission used terms such as 'hard rock,' 'soft rock,' 'hit,' and 'non-hit,' that required a common definition to be quantified. Would a Bruce Springsteen ballad, for example, be considered 'soft rock' even if the artist's previous work was 'hard rock'? Was the song categorized according to tempo or artist? Further complications arose. Given that FM was restricted to a 50 percent hit to non-hit ratio, the exact daily computations for determining the status of a given song became vital. Eventually, when a song reached a certain position on the appropriate music chart, such as those in *Billboard* magazine, it would be deemed to be a 'hit'. Nevertheless, when was the 'hit' designation effective? Did the chart placement take effect when the magazine

arrived at the music director's office or when the publication went to print? <sup>2</sup> The FM policy was implemented in 1979.

For broadcasters, the bureaucratic and arcane regulatory terminology had no place in radio programming, especially when a new format – an FM format – was on the horizon. It had been tried and tested in the US in the mid-1970s; Album Oriented Rock, also labeled the Adult Oriented Rock (AOR) format was developed by broadcast consultant Lee Abrams. Abrams, along with Kent Burkhardt, operated a powerful radio consultancy throughout the 1980s. At their peak, they programmed well over 900 stations in the US. Abrams is now chief programmer for XM satellite radio (Lee Abrams, 2007; Kent Burkhardt, 2007). Having witnessed the success of Drake's AM format, Canadian programmers were keen to implement its FM counterpart. As one might expect, the FM regulations were not conducive to the AOR format.

The following year, 1980, the Commission served notice that it intended to take another look at the AM and FM regulatory structure and called for comments. A dramatic philosophical shift had taken place in the CRTC's stance, as reflected in the Commission's annual reports between 1980 and March 1983, when a review of radio took place. Intense CAB lobbying had paid off. Although little documentation is available about the CAB's efforts in this regard, the Association's campaign was noted in CRTC documents. Chairman John Meisel was concerned about the close relationship that existed between some of his commissioners and the broadcasters:



Fairness and impartiality may be unwittingly affected when some broadcasters maintain constant contact with members of the Commission or staff while others, who may be their competitors or have opposing interests or viewpoints, have no such links with the regulatory agency (CRTC, 1981, p.viii).

In his report the following year, Meisel lamented that while public debate is a worthwhile endeavor, “there is a tendency to attach undue weight to industry spokespersons [who] are well organized and command more resources than anyone else.” (CRTC, 1982, p.x.) He also warned of “a possible [policy] clash between cultural and industrial objectives” (p.ix).

### ***Deregulation***

A 20-year veteran with the CRTC, Marguerite Vogel, who is now retired from the Commission’s Vancouver office, said that while Meisel was a stay the course chairman, his replacement, André Bureau, hit the Commission

like a hurricane... All of a sudden we were looking at what was viewed as deregulation... there was debate [on the policy] from staff and some Commissioners... who were not as one voice (personal communication, 2005).

Bureau stated that the Commission will “exercise a flexible regulatory approach” and “encourage – not hinder – the entrepreneurial spirit in the Canadian communications field.” (CRTC, 1983, pp. viii-ix) A regulatory presence would still exist but “with a greater emphasis on supervision rather than strict regulation together with a consultative approach to major issues.” (p.21)

To no-one's surprise, the Commission elected to focus its attention on FM regulation in the 1983 review (CRTC, 1983b). The tenor of the document seemed far less strident, as it offered the industry more flexibility compared to that of previous annual reports. While the 44-page paper continued to underscore the importance of having "varied and comprehensive programming of high standard" that is "significantly different from that of AM stations," the Commission also offered that with 8 years of experience under its regulatory belt, it was "satisfied that regulatory intervention [was] no longer necessary in certain areas." (p.3)

Notions of deregulation appeared throughout the document, for example: "the Commission intends to streamline" (p.4); "Content Categories will be reduced" (p.5); "current Schedule II of the FM regulations...will be removed" (p.6); "to give broadcasters more flexibility" (p.6); "Description of Programming will not be imposed as a condition of license" (p.7); and "no specific commitments to music subcategories will be required" (p.7).

In introducing the new radio regulations, the Commission made its stand very clear. The new statutes were the result of (another) "fundamental review... within the context of a rapidly changing communications environment" (p.1). Furthermore, the CRTC's "primary objective was to provide a regulatory framework that will ensure that the Canadian broadcasting system remains strong and viable" which reflected "the Commission's commitment to a more streamlined and supervisory regulatory approach." (p.1)

In a speech to the Atlantic Association of Broadcasters the following year, CRTC Chairman Bureau (1987) told his audience:

For AM broadcasting, for example, there are only two fundamental requirements left, first, that 30 percent of the musical selections broadcast by each station be Canadian and be scheduled in a reasonable manner each day, and second, that the broadcasters keep clear and intelligible logger tapes. It is now up to you to use these changes to your advantage (p.5).

Other major amendments included eliminating all limits for advertising for AM; eliminating hourly advertising restrictions on FM; reducing foreground requirements; and relaxing ownership requirements. In her minority opinion, Commissioner Monique Coupal dissented on two issues: removal of the FM advertising limit and the foreground programming reduction:

As usual, we are giving even more to the industry than requested... In so doing, we are destroying the diversity that we sought to establish between AM and FM radio. The argument that the industry is in a difficult financial situation may be true for some marginal stations but not for the majority. If the situation is so difficult, why is it then we continue to receive and approve so many applications for radio licenses? (p.9)

The amendments also sent a clear signal to broadcasters that they would have to “play a greater role in ensuring that the objectives of the [Broadcasting] Act are met.” The Commission indicated that the industry would now begin to self regulate “in certain areas previously directly covered by regulation.” (p.2) What a difference a decade had made. For the CAB, there would be no going back.

### ***FM Policy Revision in the 1990s***

Four years later, in February 1990, the CRTC issued a news release announcing it wanted to revamp its FM policy by June of that year. Chairman Keith Spicer indicated he wanted to strengthen and fine-tune efforts towards building Canadian musical resources, while still “paying due regard to the realities faced by broadcasters.” (CRTC, 1990, p.1) The public notice itself, on which the release was based, was more direct in outlining the policy objectives and what were deemed to be the “key considerations” in policy formation (p.3). “The overall policy enunciated in the Broadcasting Act,” the Commission stated, “has not changed.” (p.3) The document went on to list three objectives: an increased emphasis on Canadian talent, continued diversity, and continued high standards.

With regard to the so-called, key considerations which were driving the policy review, one might have expected at least a cursory acknowledgment of the listener or of cultural criteria. Regrettably, such was not the case:

The key considerations are process-related and indicate the manner in which the objectives should be implemented:

- 1) To rely on competitive forces rather than regulatory intervention wherever possible;
- 2) To effect no changes that would have an undue negative impact on AM radio; and
- 3) To simplify the regulatory process and to rely on the most efficient and effective tools to ensure compliance (p.13).

The Commission’s stance was clear for the first comprehensive review of FM in Canada in 14 years. The results followed in December, in *An FM Policy for the Nineties*

(1990b). Each of the above key considerations was detailed, with the third item (labeled ‘Reduced Regulation’) receiving the most attention (p.7-8). I now highlight several of the salient points.

First, with regard to the competitive forces section, the Commission indicated that “competition between broadcasters striving to attract audiences in a multi-station environment will ensure a measure of diversity” and “accordingly, the Commission will lessen its regulatory involvement in this area, while maintaining some basic policy objectives.” (p.6) In the face of growing competition from FM stations and lower revenues, the Commission considered that “AM should be provided a measure of protection” and “competitive flexibility” until a more effective strategy for strengthening was found (p.6).

The final section on regulation is the most surprising. It suggests, in the first sentence, that reduction and simplification of regulations has “again been an important consideration”. Nevertheless, the vagueness of ‘consideration’ is quickly transformed. Reduction and simplification of regulations are cited as being “goals” (p.7). On one hand, these two concepts are being taken under advisement as part of policy formation, while, on the other hand, they become targets or objectives to be reached. ‘Goals,’ one would assume, are an integral part of policy and not simply part of the policy formation.

The document lists several changes to the previous radio regulations. The Commission received 76 written submissions, with 31 appearing at the June hearing. The CRTC directive was watered down dramatically. To list all the changes is well outside the scope of this paper, however, several require highlighting. The Commission dropped its foreground programming imperative and replaced it with a spoken word requirement

calculated weekly with less stringent criteria. The Commission would “continue to encourage stations to complement their music with high quality spoken work programming, including news, that is relevant to the communities they serve.” (p.6)

Representatives of the music and recording industries revisited an earlier notion and urged the Commission to measure Canadian content compliance on a daily basis in three to four hour blocks “to prevent stations from relegating Canadian content to periods when audiences are small.” (p.11) Although it raised the FM popular music Canadian Content levels from 20 percent to 30 percent, it continued to allow for weekly calculations with the requirement that at least 25 percent of popular music selections between 6am and 7pm be Canadian. With regard to ensuring that Canadian content is heard in high audience time slots, the Commission followed its stated policy and chose not to regulate, instead saying that it “would expect reasonably even distribution” and “further expect significant presence of Canadian music in high audience periods” (p.13).

Clearly, the language was exceedingly conciliatory. By indicating that it would ‘continue to encourage’ high quality spoken word and ‘expect reasonable distribution’ of Canadian music, the Commission clearly wanted to be seen as espousing particular goals, without entertaining any firm regulatory enforcement.

Two additional steps taken in the early 1990s put the final touches on private radio policy and regulation in Canada. Although the 1991 Broadcasting Act was revised to allow for several developments in technology and the Charter of Rights, its most prominent feature was the cultural content. Section 3 of the Act, “Broadcasting Policy for Canada” followed through with policy from earlier Acts but was greatly expanded. By comparison, Section 3(d) of the 1968 Act was comprised of one brief paragraph outlining

programming. The 1991 Act included several additional sub-sections (Canada, 1991, sec 3d).

A second relevant document was issued in November 1992, called *A Review of the CRTC's Regulations and Policies for Radio* (1992). The introductory background paragraphs show that the document was in response to a report filed by the Radio Action Plan Consultative Group (RAPCG), formed at the request of the CAB to address the “short term economic plight of private radio” (p.1) as well as to develop long-range strategies. The CRTC wasted no time reacting to the report. On the same day that the RAPCG paper was issued, the Commission launched a 90-day review of the radio regulations, led by Fernand Bélisle. One of the major goals of the Commission’s review was to attempt:

to develop a regulatory structure that will allow broadcasters as much flexibility as possible in responding to the financial difficulties they now face, insofar as these difficulties relate to regulation (p.1).

The financial issues were, in fact, relegated to AM radio, which had been losing audience ground to the higher quality signal of FM. The Commission was suggesting that, by deregulating, a commensurate increase in profits might be seen for AM broadcasters. Furthermore, the Commission said that these steps would be taken without jeopardizing the principles contained in the earlier *FM Policy for the Nineties* document, or in the Broadcasting Act. It was also clear how the CRTC expected to administer these changes. In its preamble, the Commission acknowledged that “certain elements of diversity can best be achieved through competition and market forces.” (p.1)

The CAB was successful in lobbying the CRTC to eliminate the maximum repeat

factor – the number of times a non-Canadian song would be repeated. The level had been set at 18 times per week and had already been eliminated for Canadian selections. The original intent was to prevent FM radio from becoming a clone of AM, albeit in stereo. The CRTC also delineated a fairly broad definition of local programming, describing it as content that “originates with the station or is produced separately and exclusively for the station.” (p.2) Lastly, the Commission made it easier for broadcasters to transfer control of their radio stations using, not public hearings, but an “administrative process” in cases where the application “entails no unresolved areas of concern” and “includes no matters in need of further discussion” (p.2). In both of these instances, no elaboration was made about what constitutes an ‘unresolved concern’ or about with whom the concern rests? Is it the Commission, broadcasters, or the public?

In less than a decade, the Commission had cast aside its original concerns that FM radio, as a scarce resource, offered listeners little more than what was already available on the AM band. If, as the CRTC originally suggested in 1975, most FM stations were operated as “unattended jukeboxes” (CRTC, 1975, p.2), then it was content to have broadcasters self-regulate those jukeboxes by the mid-1980s and onwards. In a parallel action, the regulator also removed CRTC proceedings further from public involvement.

Short of dissolving the CRTC altogether, one could not envision a more positive outcome for the industry. Self-regulation, after all, was CAB regulation; the Association had successfully eliminated hourly advertising and foreground or spoken word requirements, two primary determinants that separated AM and FM. Building upon the lobbying efforts of Allard and his colleagues from the 1940s, broadcasters developed the requisite skills necessary to demonstrate to the regulator that notions of community



responsibility could only be achieved by the experts in format development. Nevertheless, the Commission took great care in leaving the perception that it was continuing to uphold the cultural requirements of the Broadcasting Act. While the Commission was seen as increasing Canadian content levels from 20 percent to 30 percent, the reality was markedly different. The CRTC willingly provided a scheduling loophole to allow broadcasters to play their Canadian material well outside the popular listening times, such as during morning programs. It would ‘encourage’ and ‘suggest,’ but stopped short of regulating compliance.

If the CAB had one major triumph, it was in establishing a link between the financial health of radio and deregulation. This was clearly evident in the financial records submitted for AM radio throughout the 1980s which was losing ground to higher quality FM programming. Broadcasters were able to plead hardship, justified in many cases, and continue their push for less onerous regulation to offset losses.

The Commission knew that the financial situation for private radio broadcasters was not altogether dire, as Chairman André Bureau indicated in a speech to Toronto investors in 1988:

As you are aware, market interest in this field [broadcasting] is strong and active. For some time now, media stocks have been leading the advance of share prices. Between October 20 1987 – just after the crash – and October 6 1988, while the TSE 300 index increased by 12 percent, the communications index increased by 45 percent (Bureau, 1988, p.1).

Broadcasters also benefited from a measure of CRTC intervention in the market when “the Commission also introduced measures to protect the fragile AM industry.”

(CRTC, 1990d, p.2) By eliminating most of the content regulation, programmers were able to fully refine their programming clocks. The Commission still required a 15 percent spoken word requirement, though it was measured weekly from 6am to midnight, Sunday to Saturday, with allowance for creative placement (CRTC, 1990d). Still, the CAB saw challenges on the horizon.

### ***Ownership Considerations***

The issues around policy and regulation examined thus far are increasingly important when we consider radio station ownership. By the mid-1980s, the major players of today were beginning to emerge.

CHUM, which began with one station in 1954, became the largest radio licence holder, with 24 stations. Télémedia, also heavily involved in magazine publishing in the 1980s, developed its radio holdings by purchasing the radio interests of Quebec's Power Corp., and extended its operation into Ontario in the early 1980s. By far, the most diverse media at the time was Selkirk Communications, which enjoyed revenue from 12 radio stations and cable and television holdings. It also operated media interests in the US and the UK (Canada, 1986). Selkirk sold its radio assets to MacLean Hunter in January 1989 (CRTC, 1989) and McLean Hunter held the licences until 1994, when they sold them to Rogers Communications, where they reside today (CRTC, 1994). The top 13 ownership groups in 1985 are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Private Radio Stations Owned by the 13 Largest Groups (1985)**

Groups	Number of Stations
CHUM	24
Télémedia	20
Selkirk	12
Maclean Hunter	11
CUC Group	9
Moffat	9
WIC	9
AGRA Industries	8
Pratte & Demarais Group	8
Eastern Broadcasting	7
Radiomutuel	7
Rawlinson Group	7
Standard Broadcasting	7

(Canada, Task Force on Broadcasting Policy, 1986, p.620)

A decade later, Standard would move from the bottom to the top of the list.

In 1995, in spite of lobbying efforts from the CAB, the Commission remained firm that its major ownership rules would not change. Owners continued to be limited to one AM and one FM station per market. The regulator cited three factors for maintaining the status quo:

First, it [would] be far less likely that each station would provide a distinct editorial view on matters of public concern... [S]econd, eliminating current restrictions could lead to dominance by particular licensees in certain markets... [T]hird, many licensees might choose to ‘flip’ [their] AM [stations] to the FM band... [which] might make it difficult for the remaining AM stations to survive (CRTC 1995).

The CAB continued to lobby for change. In 1997, private broadcasters issued two studies to illustrate how further relaxation of ownership rules would increase programming diversity and stimulate revenue. One was an American study citing data from Granum Communications (CAB, 1997b) and the other had been undertaken by TD Securities (CAB, 1997a) on behalf of the CAB. Both were appended to a CRTC submission: *Radio Renaissance: Making Radio Competitive* (CAB, 1997c).

By any definition, the ongoing lobbying effort was successful. The CRTC began openly questioning the relevance of its own policy by suggesting that the 1995 ownership limitations may not have been necessary (CRTC, 1997).

### ***CRTC 1997 Radio Review***

The *Review of the Commission’s Policies for Commercial Radio* (1997), which officially concluded in April 1998, suggested several forthcoming issues in broadcasting. The most commonly cited overall concerns were change, technology, and competitiveness. The ‘changing broadcasting environment,’ ‘continuing relevance,’ and ‘increasing competition’ were the most frequently used terms, and were reflected in the subsequent radio policy.

CRTC Chairperson François Bertrand and Vice-Chair Charles Bélanger unveiled the Commercial Radio Policy (Canada, 1998) at an Ottawa news conference. The new policy, said Bertrand, focused on three key points:

- 1) Canadian artists must hold as “pride of place” on Canadian radio airwaves,
- 2) A distinctive French-language presence in radio broadcasting must be assured,  
and
- 3) The radio industry must be positioned financially to achieve its obligations under the [Broadcasting] Act and to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (p.4).

The new policy revoked the Radio Market Policy, claiming that it would examine the “individual merits of an application” and increase “diversity and choice for listeners” (Canada, 1998, p.3). The Commission boosted CanCon levels to 35 percent, to ostensibly ensure ‘pride of place’ for Canadian artists, and to further suggest that with cooperative initiatives with the music industry, CanCon levels may reach 40 percent in five years. Concerning Canadian Content distribution, the CRTC mandated that CanCon music be aired between 6am and 6pm. Local programming levels were maintained for FM, and listed as one-third of the weekly broadcast. Citing continuing AM financial difficulties, the Commission called for those levels to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

By far, the most radical policy change came in the form of ownership. The previous references to editorial content and sources were muted in this revision. The CRTC now claimed that “its first major objective [was] to ensure a strong, well-financed radio industry.” (CRTC, 1998, p.5) It justified relaxing the ownership rules on the grounds that the industry’s overall performance would be strengthened, permitting it to

attract new investment, and allowing broadcasters to compete more effectively and “enhance [their] contribution to the support of Canadian cultural expression.” (p.5) In Canadian cities with less than eight commercial stations operating in any given language, the same company would be able to own or control as many as “three stations operating in that language, with a maximum of two stations in any one frequency band.” (p.5) Market doctrine had prevailed. Not coincidentally, the year before, the American 1996 Telecommunication Act relaxed ownership rules to further intensify American corporate consolidation of the airwaves in the US (McChesney, 2003).<sup>3</sup> The CRTC’s rationale was that because a considerable increase was seen in the number of available local, regional, and national news sources, including community radio and emergent technologies (the Internet), a “reasonable and acceptable balance” had been struck (p.5).

Once the Commission introduced these changes in Public Notice CRTC 1998-41, it set off a wave of market activity in private radio and television. In July 2000, Corus acquired the WIC radio assets (CRTC, 2000; CRTC, 2000b) and Radiomutuel was purchased by Astral Communications (CRTC, 2000c). 2000 was also a good year for Jim Pattison who purchased a handful of radio and television interests from Monarch Broadcasting in BC and Alberta (CRTC, 2000d). In the following year, Corus continued to expand its growing empire when it acquired Métromédia CMR Broadcasting and picked up six stations, five of which were in Montréal (CRTC, 2001).

By far the busiest year following ownership deregulation was 2002, when Rogers Communications added 14 radio stations and one network to its roster, in a deal with Standard Broadcasting (CRTC, 2002). In turn, Standard ended the year with 64 additional stations purchased from Télémedia and another 4 stations acquired from the Craig family

(CRTC, 2002c). Fifteen of the Standard stations were sold to Newcap (CRTC 2002b). In 2002, the frenzy continued with Astral Radio picking up 19 stations and 6 networks from Télémedia (CRTC, 2002d). A complete listing of the top ten owners from 1997 to 2004 can be found in Appendix 2.

### *Ownership and Diversity*

In the six decades spanning the 1930s to 1990s, several regulatory strategies became clear. First, whether for the fear of political or cultural manipulation, or for outright broadcaster domination, the perceived solution was found in regulating specific markets. As long as reasonable ownership diversity existed in a given market, a single broadcaster was thought to be unable to dominate by exercising undue influence. Hence, the longstanding licence restriction of only one AM and FM station per market was retained.

Of course, prior to 1998, a broadcaster could circumvent this restriction by sharing programming in a network. The 1958 Broadcasting Act, under Section 13, granted the Board of Broadcast Governors authority to approve private networks, generally only allowing networking for occasional programs such as hockey broadcasts. The CRTC inherited this provision from the BBG in 1968, though not until the early-1970s did private radio begin to network in earnest.

Regional networks were the first to appear. Télémedia appears to have been the first in Quebec (CRTC, 1973), followed by Prince George Broadcasting Ltd, in BC, though the Commission indicated such arrangements were being granted “only on an experimental basis” (CRTC, 1974, p.169). In a related decision, in what appears to be

another first, CKPR-FM Thunder Bay was permitted to network with an affiliate and partially automate its programming. The CRTC indicated, however, that “[s]uch equipment should not be used to reduce staff, but to liberate personnel for more active preparation and production of local programming.” (CRTC 1974b, p.187) Concerns regarding networking disappeared by 1990 when the Commission indicated that, rather than reduce local programming, networking and syndication should actually “provide high quality and diverse programming,” through its “cost efficiency...to improve the financial viability of stations.” (CRTC, 1990c, p.12). Indeed, as early as 1987, CRTC chairman Bureau was encouraging Atlantic broadcasters to air less local content in favor of networked syndication programming, to suggest that these programs “often provide an excellent advertising vehicle for local merchants and... can be acquired on a barter basis, thus protecting your cash flow... [w]here it has been tried, it has worked.” (Bureau, 1987, p. 6)

Throughout the history of the medium, regulator(s) of the day (i.e., Marine and Fisheries, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC), BBG, and CRTC) have sought to safeguard the perceived dangers of ownership concentration through controls imposed geographically. The assumption, and in my view the overwhelming weakness of this strategy, is that each market is somehow hermetically sealed against the imposition of outside influence. As long as several owners are thought to be competing in each market, the prevailing view seems to be that they are disconnected from one another. We are led to believe that natural market forces will reign supreme as each broadcaster seeks to outwit the other for a larger portion of the audience. In other words, the radio station with the ‘best’ programming wins.



The fallacy here is twofold. First, in seeking to preserve notions of editorial independence and what fashionably became labeled as ‘the diversity of voices,’ the regulator(s) assume each private radio station, regardless of the market, operates according to different precepts isolated from competitors. This argument does not account for cultural similarities inherent in private broadcasting. Second, one broadcaster cannot dominate over another by virtue of national and regional concentration of ownership, to limit diversity. I will address each of these arguments individually.

While no cabal of radio broadcasters exists that eliminates dissenters of one kind or another in each market, broadcasters follow certain organizational patterns structured with some degree of specificity. As noted earlier, norms and values, such as accepted definitions of professionalism, are consistently practiced in private radio. Training patterns (i.e., the movement from an entry-level, small market position to a larger market) are the generally accepted norm. Morning and afternoon listening periods are accorded higher status than other ‘day parts,’ and upper-level management positions generally continue to be dominated by men.

The largest cultural common denominator here is the Canadian Association of Broadcasters. The Association’s philosophy concerning private (and public) radio hegemonically permeates the industry regardless of market location. Any innovation in programming that provides for a diversity of voices and opinion would naturally need to fall within the cultural guidelines adopted by the CAB, as the industry trade association. CAB membership does not require a radio station to have its programming vetted by the Association; however, certain ideas and programming would likely be defined and accepted as ‘normal’ and ‘natural,’ while other programming would be rejected. For

example, would we be likely to hear open-line radio programs that consistently advocate left-of-center political views?

Regarding the second point concerning ownership, the traditional view that only local market multi-station ownership is problematic ignores the massive economic influence commanded by an outlet affiliated with a large chain. For example, a station that is horizontally integrated with an ownership network has access to capital funds at a lower cost. Equipment can be purchased in bulk and expensive programming costs can be reduced. On a cultural level, the ownership group can sponsor a national tour of a popular singing group, underwriting touring costs for example, in exchange for the rights to exclusive promotional access in each market, thereby, excluding independent competitors. Potentially, this can limit diversity and access because standalone, non-affiliated radio stations lack the same economic clout. Thus, the appearance that all private stations are competing on an equal footing is deceiving.

These arguments aside, one could suggest, as did the Commission following the relaxation in ownership regulations, that diversity in programming and editorial content would be increased by allowing fewer owners to control more stations.

I explore this issue further by examining two relevant ownership examples. These illustrate how broadcasters, representing both large and small businesses, relate to their geographic community.

### ***CKFU Fort St. John***

Russell Wagg applied and was granted a licence to operate a low-power FM radio station in Fort St. John, BC in 2003 with an effective radiated power (ERP) of 50 watts.

In addition to the CAB, three commercial broadcasters intervened against the application: OK Radio Group Ltd., licensee of Alberta stations CKYX-FM Fort McMurray and CFGP-FM Grande Prairie; NL Broadcasting Ltd, licensee of CKRV-FM and CHNL Kamloops, BC; and Standard Radio Inc. (Standard), licensee of CHRX-FM and CKNL Fort St. John, and CKBL and CHSU-FM in Kelowna, BC. This examination explores the post-application relationship between Wagg's station, CKFU, and Standard (CRTC, 2003).

Far from being a small backwater community, Fort St. John is an active and growing community as a result of the oil and gas industry. According to background information contained in CRTC documents, the population of 25,000 and the resulting oil and gas revenue is responsible for an astounding 8 percent of the provincial economy. Since going on air, the three-year relationship between CKFU and Standard in Fort St. John has been rocky at best and was brought to the CRTC's attention in March 2006 in what appeared to be a minor technical amendment to the CKFU licence.

CKFU, known in the community as Moose-FM, applied to increase the height of its transmitter which prompted the CAB and Standard to launch additional interventions. CKFU General Manager Ross Beerling explained:

CKFU-FM does not own the hotel that houses our existing transmitter and antenna... [The transmitter] sits at the top of a stair case outside a boiler room on a shelf that was mounted above the boiler room door.... plugged into an extension cord that runs one floor down into a cleaning room. If a Chamber Maid decides to pull the plug in order to vacuum or iron, then we are off the air (CRTC, 2006b, p.2).

As one might expect, Standard and the CAB saw the amendment as a bid to boost audience share. In its intervention, the Association claimed to have “a concern about applicants potentially using low-power radio as an opportunity to enter the broadcasting system through the back door.” CKFU, it said, should be a “complementary” service not a “competitive” service (CRTC, 2006c). For its part, Standard was considerably more blunt. The Vice-President of Standard’s operations in the BC interior, Don Shafer, responded to the application by saying “[W]e find it hard to believe that the application is just about providing a more reliable service... [W]e believe the real purpose of the application is to increase coverage area of CKFU.” (CRTC, 2006b, p.3)

The Standard Radio and CAB interventions, and the CKFU responses to them, contain charges and counter-charges (CRTC 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e). The interveners claimed that Standard had not been meeting its budgets in Fort St. John, therefore, CKFU posed an economic hardship. The applicant responded by saying that the Standard stations were already under their projections before CKFU was on the air, though it admitted to advertising revenues between \$1.0 and \$1.4 million annually (CRTC, 2006f). In response, Standard claimed its AM (CHRX) and FM (CFNL) stations were community stations with local content. CKFU countered that the programming was

in large measure either voice-tracked or networked from Kelowna. To be sure, Moose-FM did its best to portray itself in a David and Goliath struggle.

The CRTC sided with CKFU and the technical amendment was approved three months later in CRTC Decision 2006-12 (CRTC, 2006h). The announcement was bundled with several other decisions, ironically, also involving Standard Radio. While unrelated to the Fort St. John case, these applications serve to highlight several points in the discussion at hand and will be examined shortly.

In examining the correspondence filed in the Fort St. John case, several strategies become clear with regard to broadcasting ownership, economics, and the potential for abuse. For example, Don Shafer said:

It should be noted that on three separate occasions Standard Radio reported to Industry Canada, that CKFU FM's coverage area grew significantly while in their present location. This can only be explained by an unauthorized increase in transmitter power (CRTC, 2006b, p.4).

Following the Moose FM approval, Ross Beerling claimed that Standard wasted no time filing its first complaint. It occurred, he said, "just months after we signed on." (CRTC, 2006f, p.5), which raises an interesting procedural point. As part of their original application, CKFU would have to broadcast 'test' programming at the rated frequency and wattage contained in its application. Industry Canada (IC), as part of the application approval, is required to undertake spectrum analysis and sign-off on the technical aspects of the licence, before the CRTC rendered a decision. Naturally, if IC detected a problem, the application would be rejected.

Since the Commission received a technical green light from IC on the CKFU

application, as far as IC was concerned, the additional Fort St. John licence was without problems. This begs the question of why, only months after the initial technical investigation was completed, did Standard Radio call for another investigation? IC technicians arrived unannounced at the station facilities and found everything to be in order (CRTC, 2006f).

Beerling claimed that Standard also attempted to use its position as a regional broadcaster to weaken CKFU's position in the community:

Since CKFU has been on the air, Standard Radio has tried to strong arm charities into not working with us and only use their services. Big Brothers and Sisters and the Child Development Centre are perfect examples of this (CRTC, 2006f).

In a telephone conversation with Don Shafer, with regard to the charity ultimatum, Beerling claimed that Shafer's response was "Don't be naïve; welcome to the world of competition." (CRTC, 2006f, p.5)

Possibly, Moose FM's initial application for a power increase in Fort St. John was, as stated, to solve a technical problem, though the station would certainly benefit financially from a stronger signal. In any case, the Moose-FM advertising policy was to refrain from airing ads for clients residing outside the community, especially in Grande Prairie AB. The rationale was to keep local businesses onside by not encouraging the audience to patronize retailers outside the community, especially given Alberta's tax regime. Likely, the policy resulted in lost revenue.

This case illustrates the potential for a large chain to exert pressure on a small independent competitor. We also must be mindful that this threat does not arise from the sheer number of licences in a given market, which is the guideline commonly cited by the

regulator. Rather, it demonstrates how ownership power wielded by a large regional and national broadcaster can be thrust upon a small independent operator. This case also presents a number of points for discussion, which will be considered below.

### ***Corus Entertainment***

In July 2000, as part of a larger arrangement involving CanWest Global, Corus Entertainment acquired the assets of Western International Communication Ltd. (WIC), giving the company another 12 radio stations (CRTC, 2000). In Vancouver, Corus acquired two additional licences giving them control of CKNW, CFMI, CFOX, and CKLG-AM.

In announcing the approval, the CRTC's Madame Françoise Bertrand said that the multimillion dollar transaction and consolidation:

...will provide Corus with the strength it needs to increase the diversity of radio programs on its stations, in all the markets it serves, and to give each a distinct voice that reflects its daily realities... Moreover, the Commission believes that these objectives can be achieved while maintaining the competitive dynamic that exists in the markets where Corus' stations broadcast, and preserving the variety of choice offered to listeners by many other broadcasters (CRTC, 2000b, p.1).

In the decision itself, the Commission recognized that Corus would now own four stations in the same market, though it attempted to allay ownership concerns by suggesting that:

...such consolidation is, in all aspects, consistent with its common ownership policy for radio. Moreover, it is satisfied that Corus will emerge with the capacity it needs to bring about increased diversity among the radio formats provided by its stations in the various markets concerned, and to ensure that each offers its own distinct news voice. It is further satisfied that these objectives can be attained without unduly affecting the competitive dynamics of any given market, or impinging on other individual radio broadcasters to the point where their ability to meet regulatory obligations would be threatened (CRTC, 2000, p.1).

In these passages, two important themes require examination. Bertrand acknowledged the need for diversity, claiming that this particular consolidation will result in more diverse programming in Vancouver. Second, when we consider the CRTC Decision 2000-222, the regulator clearly states that the Vancouver decision will bring about increased diversity in ‘various markets’ elsewhere. Finally, a troubling underpinning is inherent in these statements in that, somehow, the CRTC can only fulfil its fiduciary duty as a regulator by “provid[ing] Corus with the strength it needs.” (CRTC, 2000, p.1) This takes the role of the CRTC a step beyond that of an impassioned independent regulator and places its decision-making process within the Corus boardroom to be able to properly assess corporate ‘needs’.

Shortly after the decision, Corus adopted a new format for CKLG-AM in Vancouver, re-branding it as CJNW with an all-news format. It was referred to as CKNW-2 on the air, to complement the newly purchased heritage station CKNW. The general manager at the time, Chris Pandoff, was quoted in *Broadcast Dialogue* as saying, “We will cross-pollinate with CKNW 98 and use many of the people in the news



department from that station.” (*Broadcast Dialogue*, 2001, p,4)

Veteran CKNW reporter Ted Field said that Pandoff’s ‘cross-pollination’ involved CKNW reporters filing two identical stories, one to CKNW and the other to CKNW-2. Only the sign-offs on the reports were altered. CKNW-2 lasted scarcely a year (personal communication, 2006) and in summer 2002, Corus eliminated the cross-pollination with CKNW in favour of a cross-pollination with Toronto, announcing MOJO Radio, billed as talk radio for guys. The news release boasted that:

This format has proven to be a ratings and audience winner in Toronto where MOJO’s share of tuning has increased by 21% since the format was introduced... making it Toronto’s fastest growing radio station (Corus Entertainment, 2002).

According to its financial statements to shareholders in 2005, Corus was doing well. Industry trade magazines claimed that “[b]oosted by higher profits” the company was “on the hunt for acquisitions” and forecast a “breakout year for its radio stations” (*Broadcaster*, 2005).

It was a breakout of a different sort the following April when CKNW laid off 12 staff members including: 3 reporters, the station’s chief engineer, and operations and sales staff. Newly-arrived Corus Vancouver General Manager JJ Johnston was quoted in the local press as saying, “[T]his cluster quite frankly, needs to perform better” in spite of the fact that “CKNW has reigned over competitors” for years (Hamilton, 2006).

The layoffs were unexpected, especially since Corus was doing so well financially. The Radio Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) featured an interview with Johnston, who further claimed that “We are sitting in the No.2 market in Canada, and the returns to Corus were not what they should be,” though he hastened to

add that in spite of the layoffs, “[W]e will continue to deliver fantastic service.”

(RTNDA, 2005, p.4)

The service lasted one month before Johnston initiated another round of Corus cuts. ‘Talk radio for guys’ was jettisoned in favour of what was billed as “a completely unique and innovative format of continuous drive-time traffic and the best of talk.”

(*Broadcaster*, 2006) Fourteen people were laid off from the Corus ‘cluster’. The best of talk was described in the *Vancouver Province* as “re-broadcast time shift” programming from CKNW (McLelland, 2006).

Linking chain ownership economics with major programming changes is a challenge, even at the best of times. The finances of companies like Corus presented researchers with a labyrinth of interconnecting items on a balance sheet, though some information was also presented with utmost clarity. In the first report to shareholders following the (first round) of cuts in Vancouver, Corus management boasted that:

On December 15, 2005 the Company held its Annual General Meeting of Shareholders. The meeting included a recap of its year-end results including completing fiscal 2005 with the *highest revenue and segment profit numbers in the Company’s history*. In addition, Corus urged Government policy changes in the media and telecommunications sectors to ensure future growth and prosperity (emphasis added) (Corus Entertainment, 2006, p.2).

The Board also issued shareholder dividends in June of that year (Corus Entertainment, 2006b).

The issue here is not that broadcasting companies should not earn a profit, but rather, do these corporate dividends come at too great a cost. Even to those unskilled in

financial forensics, Corus appeared to have instituted widespread layoffs in Vancouver to enhance the standing of shareholders. Clearly, CKNW was as profitable for Corus as it had been for WIC, yet the layoffs proceeded unabated. One could ask how the re-branded AM730, with a staff of only three people plus part-time traffic reporters, could produce “a distinctive news voice” in Vancouver (CRTC, 2000). The CRTC appeared to have provided Corus and its shareholders with the ‘strength it needed’ to produce record-breaking profits.

### ***Private Radio Culture and Ownership***

Both the Corus and Moose-FM cases illustrate the linkages between a dominant radio culture, governance, and ultimately, the programming to reach listeners. The pattern of ownership regulation in Canadian private radio allows for the analysis of the local market in question. Until 1998, the wisdom of the day was that as long as the owner or group was limited to one AM and one FM outlet, no perceived problem existed. Nevertheless, in the face of intense industry lobbying, these multi-station problematics were discarded in 1998 and remarkably deemed acceptable, even beneficial.

The CAB, in its March 10 document (CRTC, 2006g) which, for the most part, restated the Standard intervention in the Moose-FM application, advanced the view that only large commercial interests were really legitimate broadcasters:

Hence our concern about *applicants* potentially using low power radio as an opportunity to *enter the broadcasting system* ‘through the back door’ with few of the regulatory obligations carried by private commercial radio operators (emphasis added) (p.2-3).

Three compelling points serve to illustrate the particular cultural views of private broadcasters and of the CAB. CKFU is relegated to the status of an ‘applicant’ when, in fact, the station had already received its licence. Moose-FM was merely attempting to adjust the technical requirements of a pre-existing licence. Interestingly, the Association appeared to be unable or unwilling to refer to Mr. Beerling as a general manager or as a broadcaster. This should not come as a complete surprise however, since the next sentence clearly suggested that CKFU, in spite of being duly licensed by the CRTC, was somehow seeking to ‘enter the broadcasting system’. The CAB seemed to have forgotten basic Canadian broadcasting policy. In 1991, the Broadcasting Act (Canada, 1991) was revised in Section 3(b) to widen the scope of broadcast undertakings to include public, private, and community broadcasters.

At first glance, one might assume that the oversight was simply a typographical error, since the CAB seemed to view low-power FM outlets more as radio dilettantes than ‘real’ broadcasters. This was further reflected in the CAB intervention against the Moose-FM technical amendment (CRTC 2006c). General Manager Russ Beerling indicated that the Association was not keen to have CKFU as a CAB member:

The CAB should be aware, that although they may be the voice of the broadcast industry in Canada (except CKFU, due to us being turned down by this organization when we inquired about being a member) they are not the voice of the people (p.2).

One would think that a broadcaster creatively billing in excess of a million dollars annually from a community of 25,000 people would have something to contribute to the CAB. However unlikely, the Association may have extended an olive branch to Beerling and suggested that an 'associate' membership status could be an option.<sup>4</sup>

### *Overview*

To conclude this discussion, the CRTC would be well advised to consider placing horizontal consolidation in radio on equal footing with cross-media ownership. Horizontal ownership structures can have a serious impact on local communities, regardless of the number of licences one group might be permitted to operate in a given market. Standard Radio, for example, could have just as easily informed the Fort St. John Big Brothers and Sisters that unless they dealt exclusively with Standard in that community, support would be withdrawn by Standard in other communities including Kelowna, Penticton, or Vancouver. Moreover, no regulatory safeguards were in place to prohibit Standard Radio's corporate head office in Toronto from negotiating a national exclusivity arrangement to the detriment of smaller community stations. This scenario is only possible if a large chain broadcaster continues to gather geographically dispersed assets in the same broadcasting platform, whether it is radio or television.

A separate, but nonetheless, related concern is the exponential growth in regional

broadcasting – again, primarily facilitated through ownership consolidation. Clearly, general manager Russ Beerling is a fiercely local independent broadcaster in Fort St. John and, as such, competitively positions Moose-FM to extract advertising dollars from the community. Beerling claims to have 16 staff members working at Moose-FM generating local live content, while he suggests that the Standard AM and FM outlets in Fort St. John either use networking content or are automated (CRTC, 2006c; 2006f). The local live strategy appears to be working in Fort St. John but this begs the question – What about those towns and villages that lack a small local community-based radio station and instead are forced to rely on regional service? This question will be discussed further below.

The perils associated with a lack of oversight are abundantly clear in the Corus Vancouver case study. The two radio stations that are primarily affected: CKNW and AM730 (MOJO), are AM stations and thus program spoken word and not music-based content. If, as the Commission suggests, a condition of licence is tied to news content, then this programming will manifest itself on AM and not FM, which is better suited to music given the higher quality of the FM signal. We need to ask ourselves how the layoffs of close to 30 people will affect the programming. Certainly it would be in the CRTC's interest to make these inquiries, and not to be a meddlesome regulator, but to simply verify a condition of licence.

With the onset of the 1970s, a strengthening was seen in the resolves of both the regulator and private broadcasters. For its part, the CRTC may have been attempting to complete the cultural objectives of the Massey Commission. Certainly, many of the descriptors cited in *A Proposal for an FM Radio Policy in the Private Sector* bear a

striking resemblance to the objectives outlined by Massey (Litt, 1992). The Commission's proposals for FM were clearly designed to achieve more refined programming goals than what was available on AM.

The regulators of the day saw the potential for community involvement and 'social animation,' beyond the talk show format, which was a staple of some AM stations. Private broadcasters, flush with the success of the AM Top 40 format, held to their conviction that formatics was the answer. It only made sense to apply the lessons of AM to FM, especially after Lee Abrams introduced his AOR FM format to FM radio in the US.

The degree to which the CAB was able to insinuate itself into the regulatory process speaks to the organisation's effective lobbying, to the point where CRTC Chairman John Miesel called upon his commissioners to distance themselves from private broadcasters. By the early-1980s, faced with federal government budget cutbacks and the conservative political swing to the right, deregulation à la Reagan and Thatcher became the government mantra in Ottawa.

More importantly, however, the regulator slowly began to adopt the precepts of private radio as defined by the CAB. The Commission acknowledged the inherent supremacy of the format and its limitations. Once the CRTC and the CAB shared a common framework, the focus drifted, or was unceremoniously yanked, away from the listener and the community.

### ***Dissenting Voices***

Some within the industry, or on the periphery, witnessed these changes and saw

them as a collective setback. Broadcast consultant Roy Hennessy said that long-term investment strategies designed by patient independent broadcasters like Lloyd Moffat were replaced.

The family companies are virtually gone and what is left are the large public corporations managed by people who are driven by the bottom line. You focus on the next 90 days not the next 5 years. In the boardroom of one of the five major [broadcasting] corporations with a head office in Toronto, the lyrics of the most famous Canadian songs are painted on its walls and somehow or another this organization is saying it was a part of it. But when you get off the elevator you are suddenly reminded that this is the head office because in the entrance beside the reception desk there is a flip chart with the company stock symbol and an arrow with what has happened to the day with the stock price. Just so you don't forget what the real purpose is (personal communication, 2005).

To some degree, Hennessy may be longing for the good old days when on-air announcers wielded more power. Nevertheless, as a consultant, he had a vested interest in a healthy radio sector, a sector that he said is in trouble: "Look at what the industry has done to itself. The fact that you have one-third of the teen audience no longer listening to radio... now that drop off really shows where the problem is" (personal communication, 2005).

Long-time CKNW broadcaster Jon McComb said that the Griffiths family was progressive in its labour relations policy. Profit sharing arrangements were present and employees were given their birthdays off as a bonus. However, under Corus a distinctly different philosophy was present:



Corus essentially said that what WIC (Western International Communications] had been generating in terms of return, we're no longer going to be satisfied with. We want significantly more (personal communication, 2008).

We should also be mindful that the CRTC itself, while it might appear as a monolithic institution, is comprised of people who were forced to implement policies with which they did not necessarily agree. On several occasions, Vancouver CRTC office manager Marguerite Vogel attempted to raise issues with her superiors in Ottawa. In many cases, she said, she was told of a lack of resources due to cutbacks, "It was such an impossible situation. There had to be compromises. Resources were not only cut-back, they were reallocated. It was a can't win situation." (personal communication, 2005)

Voices of dissent have also emanated from official sectors. In June 2003, the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage issued an 800 page report extremely critical of private broadcasting. The so-called Lincoln Report, named for Chair Clifford Lincoln, also singled out the CRTC. The report charged, among other things, that the Commission had lost sight of the cultural objectives in the Broadcasting Act and was endorsing corporate concentration to the detriment of local communities (Canada, 2003).

## **Summary**

If any lingering doubt existed about the influence wielded by private broadcasters in Canada in the 1970s, it vanished by the 1980s. Within a few years, regulations aimed at maintaining programming diversity, especially on the FM band, were all but eliminated. Indeed, when we examine how these issues were framed by the regulator, we

can observe an ever-increasing trend towards regulation via the marketplace. The Commission reduced limits on advertising on both AM and FM, and eased restrictions on spoken word programming. With regard to the latter, we need to remember that the very absence of spoken word content on FM, was decried by the CRTC, a few years earlier, as contributing to a lack of substance and ‘sameness’. Moreover, the very process of regulation had changed. The Commission had also effectively removed much the public overview of broadcast regulation.

A case in point was the creation of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CSBC) in 1991 (CRTC, 1991). Prior to the CSBC, the Commission retained copies of public complaints and inquiries in the licensee’s files. These could be readily examined by the public. Complaints are now filed with the Council and are taken out of the public record. The CSBC’s annual report only itemizes the number and types of complaints, and does not cite stations by name. As former CRTC manager Marguerite Vogel explains:

I have never been in favour of that. I think the people at head office got sick to death of hearing from me. I said, you know, we’re delegating and can we really do that? The answer was yes we can, because we lack the resources to do it ourselves (personal communication, 2005).

Few would argue that, by the mid-1980s, private radio culture, in the form of the CAB, had not become insinuated into the regulatory process. For the Association, however, a final regulatory hurdle had to be overcome – ownership. Here again, the results of the CAB lobby were remarkable. The CRTC went from suggesting, in 1995, that a lessening of the ownership limits would jeopardize true competition, to indicating, just three years later, that the new regulations would somehow “allow broadcasters to

compete more effectively.” (CRTC, 1998, p. 5)

The suggestion that ownership consolidation would be offset by the licensing of more community stations and increased news sources from the Internet was disingenuous at best. The CAB consistently intervened to prevent low-power FM stations from, in its words, entering the broadcasting system “through the back door” (Broadcast Dialogue, 2006; CAB, 2004; CAB, 2004b; CAB, 2005; CAB, 2005b; RTNDA, 2006). Indeed, in its 2006-2007 forecast of activities for 2007, the CAB highlighted low-power radio as a major concern, promising to “prevent low power radio from adversely affecting Radio member revenues” (p. 3). Interestingly, in denying these applications and amendments, the CRTC seemed to be so convinced of the CAB’s case(s) that it, perhaps unwittingly, adopted the Association’s terminology. In Broadcasting Decision CRTC 2007-101, in Saint John NB, the Commission denied certain amendments, claiming that “the current application would permit the licensee to enter the mainstream commercial Saint John market by the “back door” (CRTC, 2007, p.2) . The willingness of both the Commission and the CAB to allow true marketplace regulation appears to be, at best, selective.

Consolidation altered terminology and programming in other dramatic ways. Radio stations now operate in ownership clusters. The audience, to use Ien Ang’s phrase, has been further streamlined (1991). In Vancouver, the Corus group consistently targets a male audience across all four of its stations. It would be unthinkable for Corus to program any content that, at least in the minds of its program managers, would not appeal to men. Advertising strategies, which historically have been designed for one station or perhaps two, in the case of the older, one AM and one FM per market model, are now designed to encompass several outlets. The result has been layoffs among workers who were

generally the front-line producers of local content.

Clearly, consolidation left the major chains with a sense of power. Even the smaller ownership groups did not see the CRTC as much of a regulatory threat. When, after four decades of family ownership, Delta Cable sold its television assets to Persona Communications Corp. in August 2006, pending regulatory approval, Persona President and CEO Dean MacDonald was quoted in the local press as saying the Commission would likely grant approval by the end of the year, noting that “These things are pretty much a formality with the CRTC these days.” (Willis, 2006) Indeed, it appeared that MacDonald had good reason not to be overly concerned. The following year, CRTC Chairman Konrad von Finckenstein was widely quoted as saying the broadcast regulator “is not in the business of killing deals.” (CanWest News Service, 2007) He made the comment with regard to CTV’s proposed takeover of CHUM Ltd.

To return to radio, an additional point deserves to be mentioned concerning the real consequences of consolidation, especially regional consolidation. As more programming is shared among client stations within a corporate ‘cluster,’ content inevitably suffers. If the audience is defined over a larger area, the programming needs to be generalized. The reasoning here is that listeners in one town do not want to hear about place-names or events that are occurring outside the boundaries of their community. For example, early in my career, I worked as an evening announcer at CFCP in Courtenay on Vancouver Island. At the time, the owner also operated CFWB in Campbell River. After 6pm, the programming from Courtenay was relayed up Island to Campbell River. Announcers took great care not to discuss or identify specifics that were pertinent to just one city. Station call letters were dropped and replaced with the generalized identification

– Coast Radio.

Networking and consolidation exerts programming pressure that leads to a non-localized sameness in content. In the Vancouver Island example, despite their significant geographical distance, the day-to-day programming of the stations did not vary substantially. Indeed, as long as both stations were programmed in the same fashion, listeners were less likely to distinguish between local and networked day-parts. Ideally, my evening program in Courtenay should have blended with the local day-time content on CFWB in Campbell River. Community diversity in these arrangements was discouraged unless, of course, it was advertising. In the case of Coast Radio, a regional north Island network now operates that includes Port Hardy and Powell River. In January 2000, local programming was reduced from 18 hours to 6 hours daily in Campbell River and from 12 hours to 6 hours in the other centers. Programming at all stations was networked from Courtenay at 12 noon. The licensee cited a decrease in revenues as justification for less local programming and the Commission agreed (CRTC, 2000e).

By homogenizing programming content in this fashion community, voices were effectively silenced. Issues surrounding governance, education, or healthcare, that require debate, are deemed to be too expensive to program. As a result, the potential for radio to act in the context of a public sphere (Habermas, 2001), a fundamental underpinning in many of the formal discussions that examine broadcasting in Canada (Canada, 1929; Canada, 1957; Litt, 1992) is eliminated.

These events could not have occurred without the formidable influence of private broadcasters and their sense of ownership, literally and figuratively, of the airwaves. One need only remove the Canadian Association of Broadcasters from the regulatory equation

since the mid-1940s to glimpse an alternative radio landscape.

As stated at the outset, another important fundamental component in this discussion has been broadcast technology. Without technology, not only would networks be impossible, but many aspects of format design could not be accomplished. More than any other factor, technology allowed broadcasters to erode local community content. I will consider these implications in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE: NOTES

1. The 1986 Radio Regulations (SOR/86-982) defined foreground as a presentation of intrinsic intellectual content at least 15 minutes in length that is broadcast without interruption, or a magazine-style program lasting at least 30 minutes. Other categories such as mosaic, rolling, and gramophone were used to group such content as news, sports, weather, advertisements and, of course, music programs. Foreground was seen as a huge issue because it interrupted the FM music flow.
2. Interestingly, technology intervened in the hit-non-hit designations. When it became known that *Billboard* made its charts available to subscribers for downloading via modem, some radio stations were able to calculate their ratios several weeks ahead of the magazine's publishing date, thereby getting advance word of the chart designations – a work-a-round of sorts.
3. The clearest example of this type of ownership domination can be seen in the US where Clear Channel Communications has dominated the radio airwaves since deregulation. Dorothy Kidd (1995) documented Clear Channel's ascension as did Robert McChesney (2003).
4. Associate member status was extended to peripheral groups affiliated with the radio industry. For example, the BCIT Broadcast Communications Department is an associate member of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters.

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## CHAPTER SIX: BROADCAST TECHNOLOGY

### Introduction

While technology in private radio has been used to expand and refine the quality of audio, such as in the transition from vinyl records to compact discs (CDs), it has also served to constrict the boundaries and effectively downsize the potential of local radio.

Although many aspects of early technology were discussed in Chapter One, the more recent developments require separate discussion. The transition from analog to digital technology alone could easily be explored over several chapters. Thus, I propose to confine this discussion to two key areas. First, I consider the relationship between technology and format development and then conclude with an exploration of how private radio has used technology with respect to the listener.

### *Transcriptions*

In *Telecommunications in Canada: Technology, Industry and Government*, Robert Babe (1990) argues convincingly that Canada's media policy has been adapted to fit a larger, more pervasive policy of technological determinism. While this particular concept has been articulated thoroughly, the application of technology within the private broadcasting sphere has been overlooked.

Prior to transcriptions, radio was a live experience for the announcer, entertainer, and listener. Canadian radio history is replete with examples of how musical performers got their start performing on local radio stations and networks (Duffy, 1983; McNeil & Wolfe, 1982).

Through the introduction of various transcription media, for example, the 78 and 33½ rpm phonographs, which were followed in 1948 by the RCA Victor 45rpm single, radio announcers maintained a connection with their music. Historically, before beginning their on-air duties, announcers were required to make a stop in the music library and choose their selections. They would examine the labels and perhaps develop creative themes for their programs. Not only did this daily ritual bring them into physical contact with the music, but they also noted label or liner note information such as who wrote the song and where it was recorded. This tactile connection resulted in a deeper connection with the music. The records, especially the brittle 78s, required care in handling, since they could not be scratched or exposed to heat. New releases were enthusiastically sought after and a competition developed over which announcer would debut an eagerly anticipated release. In a sense, a reverence was held for the material. Susan Douglas (2004) talks about the listener relationship to records as a spiritual endeavor, a “private shrine” (p.46) that laid the foundation for radio listening. This was also true of the disc jockey. Red Robinson’s career reflections of radio (Robinson & Hodgins, 1983) are replete with magical musical metaphors. For others, such as US Broadcaster Dan O’Day, radio itself is cloaked in a shroud of reverence, as previously noted (2004).

### ***Mechanization***

What transpired in the decades since Robinson and O’Day were heard on the air is the gradual mechanization of radio that increasingly distanced announcers from the source of their programs. It began with magnetic recording tape in the 1930s, but it did



not have a dramatic impact on radio and music until the invention of the Fidelipac tape cartridge, the precursor to the 8-track tape, which began to be widely used in 1960s broadcasting. This was touched upon earlier in Chapter Two. Once inserted into the playback unit, the music started instantaneously. The cartridge did not require a turntable and could not be scratched. More importantly, it could be re-recorded with different songs and thus could be solely a means to store copies of original music. On-air music became disposable and the Fidelipac (fidelity-package) or 'cart,' was a mechanical reproduction of the original record.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of the cart re-defined the announcer's relationship with the music in other ways. Since the cart was a re-usable technology, no fixed label identified the artist or writer. Detailed artistic information, such as that found on vinyl records, was supplanted by technical information, required not by the listening audience, but demanded by the format's 'clock'. Certainly, a selection's title and performer were clearly written on the cart, but other artistic information such as writer, producer and label were gone, replaced by scientific data concerning how long it took for a song's vocal to begin (intro) or whether the song ended 'cold' or perhaps faded. In a process that began with the Drake system, the information regarding the technology superseded the information that was concerned with content. This idea is revisited below.

The song was no longer about a musical experience per se, but it was rather about how it was incorporated into the format. A song was more likely to be deemed to have a 'hit potential' when it was perceived to be well integrated with the stations jingle package. Indeed, some producers such as Phil Spector, best known for his 1960s girl groups like the Ronettes, developed technical skills in recording that could be said to

have 'style over substance'. Spector's 'wall of sound,' developed at the Goldstar Studios in Hollywood often resulted in the same singers being released under various pseudonyms. Darlene Love, a popular choice for Spector, was variously listed as The Crystals, Bobbie Sox and the Blue Jeans, and Darlene Love. These singers, for Spector, were as interchangeable as were the DJs who played their records. What was important was that the sound of the music, a co-modified musical signature, be conducive to the radio format of the day. The music was not created to be performed, but rather, it was created primarily to be (mechanically) reproduced and integrated into a particular system. Spector and other producers who understood the formatic 'language' had their material played, while others who failed to grasp the importance of the format, did not. What Bill Drake did for depersonalizing announcers, Phil Spector did for vocalists. It was the sound and the format, not the individual that was important.

Of course, what had changed in four decades was the technology of broadcasting. At this point, it would be useful to re-examine the distinction between what Leiss (1990) referred to as 'techniques,' and 'technology'. This point was introduced in Chapter One. Clearly, broadcast techniques were introduced to accomplish specific means and ends, in this case, the maintenance of the format being the supreme determinant.

The radio transition from 78 rpm records to tape cartridges, as a technique, was combined with the societal move from analog to digital, which created dramatic shifts in broadcast-specific technology. These developments resulted in a chasm that virtually isolated broadcasters from not only the programming content, but more importantly, from listeners. I shall concentrate specifically on two of the developments.

With the introduction of the CD as a storage medium in the 1980s, the

functionality of the tape cart became limited. The CD was a digital, non-linear medium and, for all intents and purposes, did not wear out. With respect to its ability to reproduce audio, it was vastly superior to Fidelipac tape cartridges. Before long, CD players replaced tape playback units, just as tape had eclipsed turntables.

While CD players generally require someone to load the CD, select the track and push the start button, digital technology also means that the audio can be recorded on a computer hard-drive without any loss in playback quality. Programming, whether for music, commercials, or news content, was just a mouse-click away. Announcers no longer read scripts held in their hands or propped in front of them, but read the words from a computer monitor which thus became the newest piece of equipment in the radio control room.

By moving audio programming away from traditional analog sources, such as vinyl and tape, and into non-linear media, broadcasters have been able to address several problems. Music, commercials, news, and other programming could be stored, transported, manipulated, and played to air with extreme reliability and efficiency. Where vinyl records and recording tape occupied a vast amount of space, entire record libraries could be stored on a computer hard-drive. This material is also exceedingly durable and does not deteriorate quickly.

Once digitization takes place, the audio can be manipulated in a similar fashion to text. It can be re-arranged in a cut-and-paste fashion, transferred from one location to another over the Internet and recorded with relative ease. Radio control rooms no longer relied on turntables, tape cartridges, or reel-to-reel tape recorders, as the digital material would reside on a computer. Moreover, radio control rooms no longer required human

intervention to sequence events from one audio segment to another. Digital broadcasting opened the door to automation.

### ***Automation***

In Chapter Three, I briefly discussed the CFX-KABL format which, in fact, was a semi-automated format since it required board operators. In the late-1960s and 1970s, early attempts were made at full automation using tapes. These were usually music syndication systems and, for example, one of the more successful Top-40 format developers, Bill Drake, created several automated radio formats designed with special music and jingle mixes. The music was recorded and matched with an announcer voice-track that would be triggered at a particular time, usually at the end of a song, to back-announce the particular music selections in groups of two or three songs. Due to the linear nature of tape, which created audio by moving a magnetic tape across the playback heads on tape machines, the contents of the tape were played in sequence, one segment after another. To get an appropriate mix of music, for example; fast, slow, male vocal, instrumental, and the like, the syndicator was forced to record separate tapes and then manipulate the number of times and sequence when each 10-inch reel was played. By today's standards the process was complicated and unreliable.<sup>2</sup>

Digital technology allowed broadcasters to replicate earlier automation with far more reliability. A programmer also designed a music database, defining hundreds of sorting parameters. For example, certain songs can be automatically played on an artist's birthday and intricate mixes can be designed for certain hours of the day. Software programs were available to record and store music, develop particular music flows, or

playback music on-air. These programs were integrated with additional software packages that not only insert commercials according to client specifications but track their frequency for invoicing purposes.

Canadian private broadcasters began networking by using telephone cables (McNeil & Wolfe, 1982). Today, programming is uplinked and downloaded via satellite. For example, subscribers to *Broadcast News*, can receive and broadcast live hourly newscasts from Toronto.

Unlike analog material that moves over cable or telephone lines, the properties of digital programming allow signals to be maintained over distances. With the exception of sunspots, which can interfere with transmission, digital material arrives in exactly the same form as it was sent.

### ***Broadcast Software***

By far, the most dramatic introduction of technology to radio broadcasting came in the form of on-air software which allowed programming content to be operated independently of human intervention. Programs such as Scott Studios, or Selector and Media Touch not only recorded music, commercials, and other announcements directly to a computer, but they could compile the programming components and broadcast them to air in a predetermined sequence.<sup>3</sup>

The technical data originally labelled on the Fidelipac (i.e., the intro, extro, etc.) was now directly programmed into the computer along with the artist's name and song title. For example, the computer would 'know' that it was safe to begin a song with a 10 second intro, or use 20 seconds into a voice-only announcement with a 30 second running

length. When the announcement reached the 20-second mark, music would begin ‘under’ the voice. When the announcement finished, the vocal from the song would begin, resulting in a smooth, uninterrupted transition. The radio station could either operate with an announcer or have the software operate independently.

This software was combined with additional techniques to allow broadcasters to record, program, and broadcast to air, while also invoicing all radio commercials. Programming clocks, similar to the Top 40 Drake system mentioned earlier, would be designed and inputted to allow for several commercial breaks per hour. Once a common ‘language’ of software codes was developed and integrating with these programs, a radio station programming log, mostly listing spoken-word programming such as commercials, public service announcements, station promotions, and the like, could be integrated with the music log. Thus, a computer-generated interface was created with the potential to perform for the radio audience.

These software components are elegant in their dominance. The log software component analyzed how much time was required in each break and, in turn, relayed this information to the music software. Thus, a live event, such as a top-of-the-hour newscast, could be timed to begin with a margin of error of only seconds. As long as the live announcer finished the assigned task according to the time allocated on the program log, the computer would continue to function normally.

### ***Voice-Tracking***

The broadcast technology fetishism displayed by Rogers Communications meant that all but one radio program (the morning show) at Jack-FM in Vancouver was actually

done with live announcers. During her tenure at the station, Colleen Troy's average work day in Vancouver consisted of recording five separate programs. She recorded her Clear FM mid-day voice-tracks, then recorded programs that aired in Squamish, Chilliwack, Victoria, and Lethbridge. It took her about five hours. Someone in each station was responsible for faxing the community information, which she inserted into the voice-track, to localize the programs. The smaller stations sounded better, according to Troy, because they were getting an experienced 'major market' voice, sounding as if "she is doing her show live in their market" (personal communication, 2004).

According to Troy, the transition from live to automated voice-tracking was initially a challenge:

CT: This was a transition for sure because when you are doing a live show, you actually have the chance to listen to let's say three songs in a row and thinking about what you are going to say next and all that. You actually have a break between talking. Whereas, with voice-tracking, you are 'on' all the time. You hit that record button, you talk and you stop and go back and do it all again. It's a constant thing, right?

RT: So when you are doing a live show, you can take a break.

CT: Take a break and listen to the songs. When you are voice-tracking you only hear the beginning and end of each song (personal communication, 2004).

Troy also had to exercise caution with ad lib segments because of the potential danger of audience cross-over with other Rogers' stations:

The station I am on now, Clear FM, broadcasts into Victoria where I [voice-track] on The Ocean as well. I wouldn't use the same bits on the same two stations. As well, Clear FM goes into the Valley, where I am on Star [FM]. I might use a bit that I use on Clear, on Mountain [FM], but I wouldn't use it on the other one. Or, I might use it on my Alberta station.<sup>4</sup> (personal communication, 2004)

This exchange and the previous examples illustrate several important points with regard to content, but also show the deeper issue of a paradoxical master-servant role-reversal. When these systems were widely adopted in the 1990s, the announcers using this technology became indistinguishable from the technology that surrounded them in the control room. In essence, the broadcasters became soulless disembodied machines that permitted human intervention only along well-confined parameters. Broadcasters now stood at Robert Johnson's fabled crossroads. They had the adaptive potential to use technology to free human communicators for more important work, or they could allow the technology to be elevated to an exalted status.

Content and content creation has been a central issue in this discussion. Once announcers were relieved from dedicating a large number of hours to live on-air broadcasting, more time could be devoted to other aspects of local content production. Individuals could conduct local interviews or produce features that were focussed on the community. The assumption is that owners had the desire to establish and strengthen these ties, and that the regulator also acknowledged the need for community in radio broadcasting. Broadcasters made a choice, which carried a great price. Rather than use technology to enhance content, it was too easy to simply escalate the automation to save on costs.



A supreme and, for many of us, tragic irony of Canadian broadcast regulation, is that private radio today could easily be described by a phrase that was first used by the CRTC some 39 years ago. FM radio, according to the regulator, had become a collection of “little more than sophisticated unattended record players” (CRTC, 1973). The phrase was first quoted in the 1973-1974 annual report, shortly before the Commission began revamping the Canadian FM radio policy. The Commission had also made a choice here, which will be discussed again later.

The process of de-humanizing private radio did not pass without controversy. In Minot North Dakota, technological determinism combined with rampant de-regulation to seriously threaten more than 300 lives. Tons of poisonous ammonia spread throughout the town following a winter train derailment. Emergency personnel desperately tried to notify residents without realizing that six of the town’s seven radio stations were owned by Clear Channel Communications that “had fired the DJs in a cost-cutting move and programmed the stations by computers at distant locations” (Riddle, 2003, p.3, also see Klinenberg, 2007).

In another case, the mayor and fire chief in Fort Nelson BC were forced to break down the door to their local Standard Broadcasting-owned station. They needed to inform the community of a Hydro emergency and assumed (incorrectly) that since it was on the air people were in the radio station. They forced their way in, found the control room and managed to cut the station’s remote computer-feed from Fort St. John, to put themselves on the air with the emergency warning (King, 2003).

These incidents are but two examples of what is being lost in the manic push to automate private radio. Public safety concerns aside, other, equally important, factors are

being ignored. The role of the local radio station as a useful tool in facilitating dialogue within the community is lost, as is the potential to strengthen cultural ties between community constituents.

### ***Broadcast Technology and the CRTC***

Technology is often myopically positioned by private broadcasters in one of two situations: a potential revenue stream or, as illustrated earlier, a labour-saving device. In the 1980s, the Commission was beginning to accept the CAB premise that VCR technology was fragmenting the audience, drawing ever increasing numbers of people away from radio and, of course, television (Bureau, 1988). Similar claims are being made today, which I will discuss later. For its part, the CRTC seemed to have adopted the CAB's notions of technology. In 1987, Chairman André Bureau told Atlantic broadcasters that "where [networking] has been tried, it has worked" (p.6), yet a year later, Bureau was musing to the Canadian Advertising Association that one of the problems facing the regulator was "How to maintain the concept of a local service, in the face of increased syndication or networking?" (Bureau, 1988, p.4). The two notions are obviously disconnected. On one hand, Bureau agreed that networking technology will contribute to the financial health of private radio yet, a year later, he acknowledges the reduction in local programming as being problematic.

The dramatic loss of local programming, resulting from automation, networking, and ownership consolidation has not gone by unnoticed in the US. A 98-page report, filed to the Federal Communications Commission (2008) found that "Many stations do not engage in the necessary public dialogue as to community needs and interests" and as a

result, “many members of the public are not fully aware of the local issue-response programming that their local stations have aired.” (FCC, 2008. p.2)

The CRTC was also persuaded by the CAB argument that technology can enhance programming. When AM stations began losing listeners to their FM counterparts in the 1980s, the technological intervention of ‘AM stereo’ was seen as the answer. The Commission adopted the industry position and encouraged broadcasters to adapt (Bureau, 1987). Ultimately, AM stereo was a non-starter.

Clearly, these examples show a deterministic faith that the regulator placed in technology, thus becoming a panacea:

The quality and diversity of musical instruments, conventional and unconventional [will improve] together with advanced studio production technology, lead[ing] to more creativity, more competitiveness, new musical formats, more targeted and thus more satisfied audiences (Bureau, 1988, p.3).

Another CAB concern was the satellite subscription decision that sparked a round of controversy (CRTC, 2005; Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, 2005). Broadcasters made it clear that they would ask for reduced levels of Canadian content to ‘level the playing field’ with the satellite services that were licensed in Canada with revised, that is to say lower, content provisions (O’Farrell, 2004).

At the same time, private broadcasters adapted Internet technology to create new markets. Most commercial stations have sites on the Web, which are primarily used as a cross-promotion tool for radio content and to assist in publicizing station contests and personalities. These sites are also replete with advertising which is often sold in conjunction with air time.

Stations also offer their programming for downloading. Edited versions of morning shows are often available for pod-casting.

Of course, for private broadcasters, this technology is a double-edge sword. In the hands of consumers/listeners, people have additional choices. Pod-casting and portable MP3 players offer flexibility, usually without commercials. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters has not shied away from requesting additional deregulation and protection from the CRTC, citing the decline in audience numbers (O'Farrell, 2005). Digital radio held the potential to make the biggest technological impact on broadcasters because it was initially viewed, by regulator and broadcaster alike, as a 'replacement technology' that would eventually render AM and FM frequencies obsolete.

### ***Digital Radio***

The CAB clearly positioned itself to embrace this new technology, telling the CRTC *Information Highway Public Hearing* in January 1996 that “[r]adio will be a key player as a wireless component of the Information Highway,” though the Association warned that “Government must ensure that radio faces no new financial burdens... which could delay or preclude investment in digital radio altogether.” (CAB, 1995, p.3)

Although licences were issued by the CRTC in 1998, the ‘digital roll-out’ ground to a halt. Digital Radio Roll-Out Inc. (DRRI), a group comprised of private and public broadcasters charged with developing a digital implementation strategy, concluded its four-year mandate in 2003 and turned the digital program over to the CAB (Boei, 1998; Digital Radio Roll-Out Inc., 2003). No substantive movement occurred in digital radio, though the Commission appeared to have given the CAB a wide latitude for its

implementation. One major roadblock was in the standardization between the US and Canada. The CAB also appeared to have little incentive to transition the current programming to digital which, by its own admission, would require “innovative programming available solely by digital means” (CRTC, 2006, p.3). In other words, digital radio, as far as private broadcasters were concerned, would serve not as a replacement technology but as an ancillary service giving the current players what amounted to more radio stations in any given market.

When private broadcasters began researching digital radio in the 1980s, they saw benefits not only in the higher quality signal, but also in the radio broadcast data stream (RBDS) that is provided by digital radio. The RBDS allows for text messages to be ‘piggy-backed’ on the audio signal which could provide additional services – for a price. For example, listeners/consumers could be offered additional price reductions in text form via RBDS when a commercial was played on the radio.

In echoing past performance, the CAB told the 2003 Standing Committee on Heritage that, in its view, an implicit linkage existed between existing programming and potential revenue from digital radio:

..if radio...[is] not permitted to take full advantage of digital broadcasting and distribution in terms on ancillary revenue streams, then their ability to continue to support quality Canadian programs will have been compromised (Canada, 2003, p.437).

Reading between the lines, we can get a glimpse of how the CAB, adapted to technological change. Issues were often framed around a perceived (in)ability to continue broadcasting unless certain technological or regulatory demands were met (CAB, 1997a;

CAB, 1997b). Interestingly, both the CRTC and CAB were anxious to proceed with the transition to digital during the 1997 Radio Review (CRTC, 1997). American automakers, however, for the time being, threw their lot in with satellite technology to result in more caution on the part of private broadcasters. Indeed, for this very reason, the CAB requested a delay in the scheduled 2006 radio review. The CRTC denied the request (O'Farrel, 2005).

For those who saw digital radio as facilitating more entrants into the broadcasting marketplace, the Commission's policy was a disappointment. The CRTC was ensuring that existing players who were dominating the analog airwaves, would also dominate in the digital realm for the foreseeable future. For every analog licence owned by a company, the Commission automatically granted a digital licence. For example, in Vancouver, where CHUM, Rogers, and Corus collectively owned 12 analog stations, they benefited from another 12 digital outlets (CRTC, 2006h). Thus far, no regulator or broadcaster, has stepped forward with an example of the 'innovative programming' potential for digital radio, though, as it stands now, and given the regulatory framework provided by the Commission, nothing would be prohibiting the widespread use of voice-tracking and automation on the new spectrum.

## **Summary**

As discussed in Chapter Three, with regard to the Drake format, the use of broadcast technology strengthens the Fordist argument. Announcers, who at one time were the primary link with the community, are reduced to working on the equivalent of an audio assembly line.

Complicit in this process, I suggest, is the regulator. Escalating deregulation by the CRTC has resulted in widespread regional networking in place of local private broadcasting. Moreover, local programming has been redefined in radio regulations to allow for automated voice-tracking (CRTC, 1998). This is being carried out with little or no regard to local communities.

Colleen Troy, and other absentee announcers, can no longer afford to pause, reflect, and communicate. Her ability to listen to the music she is playing in an associative capacity is gone. By this I mean she is unable to verbally link her music with an event or local landmark in the community and then communicate that image. These links are usually constructed extemporaneously by announcers, as part of a highly serendipitous and creative process. Moreover, this process has been the reason for these individuals being originally deemed to be believable and trustworthy. An evocative quality was present in their presentation. By being relegated solely to communicating and repeating the fact-bound information sent to her, Troy is being stifled. The formatics and technology eliminate any meaningful community elements, and isolated from the communities she is supposed to be relating to, Troy cannot sense a mood in a community or refer to anything other than the most general events. Thus, her natural ability, her artistic flair, if you will, is suppressed.

### ***Technological Alternatives***

To return briefly to the previous discussion concerning the implementation of technology, we should be mindful that technology can be used in a myriad of ways to enhance, and not weaken, radio's strengths. Moose FM in Fort St. John, the low-power

FM station cited in the previous chapter, recognized the possibility to generate a profit without sacrificing important links to the community. According to licence documents, CKFU has live announcers in all day-parts, with the exception of overnights. To support local business, the radio station refused requests to sell advertising time to businesses operating outside Fort St. John. It uses broadcast technology to inexpensively broadcast live events such as amateur sports (CRTC, 2003; CRTC, 2006b; CRTC, 2006c; CRTC 2006d; CRTC, 2006e; CRTC, 2006f; CRTC,2006g).

Why should the radio station not broadcast other live community events? The same digital technology that facilitates voice-tracking over vast networks could also be used to connect people to distant voices. If, as research suggests, teen listening has dropped dramatically in recent years, one could argue that teens are simply not hearing any relevant content. Are broadcasters today suggesting, as they did to Red Robinson many years ago, that teenagers today are only interested in the 1950s equivalent of records and lipstick? No-one in responsible circles today would suggest that a 15-year old Canadian is not interested in anything other than the latest trends offered by youth culture. They care deeply about the environment and can be engaged in all manner of conversations concerning world events. If a radio station in Fort St. John can successfully integrate technology, the spoken word, and formatic structures, one would think that this approach could be taken to larger markets without sacrificing profits.

The CAB, and to a lesser extent the CRTC, seem to have forgotten the listener. If the techniques and technology, especially digital technology, were applied to benefit the listener, the outcomes may have been different. Developments in digital technology facilitate more efficient remote, on-location, broadcasting, which lends itself exceedingly



well to portability. With listener-centered private radio, the potential exists for local, not regional, programming and announcers, not computers, communicating with listeners.

The technology that automates can also animate. Radio interviews no longer require a truckful of recording equipment. A portable broadcast-quality handheld recorder can be purchased for less than \$200. It has no moving parts, is simple to use, and can record in surround sound. Are local lively characters no longer available to populate community stories? Have all the local performers disappeared?

We can suggest, as Leiss (1990) argued, that technology per se is not the problem here, but rather, the problem is in how it is used. Clearly, if we take a non-deterministic stance, technology can be either used to reinforce or to weaken localism. Broadcasters, the regulator, and ultimately, the listeners must make choices. How these technological alternatives will be considered by private broadcasters will depend largely on the codes and values established by their radio culture, which I have discussed in previous chapters.

The capacity for wholesale change in private radio must originate within the culture. Alterations, cosmetic or otherwise, in regulation will not likely breach these cultural roots, which run deep within the membership. Moreover, as we have seen, technology in itself does not forment change. If private radio is to move beyond voice-tracking and its almost religious adherence to polished formatics and reconnect with basic principles such as localism, the movement must originate with human action.

As Edgar Schein (2004) has shown, founders and leaders within a culture come and go and are eventually replaced. The capacity for change rests with a new elite that has the potential to break with the past and introduce new concepts or perhaps reintroduce old thoughts. I will examine the potential for change in private radio in the

next chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX: NOTES

1. For the technically minded, the  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch tape on the cart was one continuous loop wound in a circle. Different lengths were used, usually 40, 70, or 100 seconds for spot announcements and longer carts for music, usually in the order of 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  or 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  minutes. When the record button was pressed, an inaudible cue tone was also placed on the tape at the beginning of the segment. As the material ended, a brief run-off section of silence was added until the beginning of the material cycled around again. The tape containing the cue tone would then pass by a tape head designed to 'hear' the tone. Once recognized, this head would trigger a relay which, in turn, stopped the playback unit. The cart could then be removed. The next time it was inserted, the music or announcement would start almost immediately when the play button was pressed.

A common problem with the carts resulted from operator errors. If the cart was stopped and removed manually, then the next person using it would hit the play button and listen to dead air. This usually occurred when a short announcement, say 15-seconds was recorded on a long 100-second cart. Impatient announcers would not want to wait for the 85-second run-off before the cart automatically stopped, especially if the playback machine was required for other announcements. The carts not cued would be stacked ostensibly to be cued 'later' but the task was easily forgotten.

2. During the early-1970s, CHQB in Powell River BC operated with a taped automation system. During my time there, the equipment was notoriously unreliable and frequently broke down. A photo of a similar system can be viewed at <http://www.dougquick.com/automatedradioformats2.html>
3. Information on these software packages can be found at the following Web sites: Scott Studios ([www.scottstudios.demarc.net](http://www.scottstudios.demarc.net)), Selector ([www.rcsworks.com](http://www.rcsworks.com)), and Media Touch ([www.imediatouch.com](http://www.imediatouch.com)).
4. Troy is no longer with Rogers. She was replaced with a junior person in February 2008. That person continues to voice-track but has added more stations.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN: BROADCAST EDUCATION

### Introduction

Once we identify private radio broadcasters as a distinct group that references norms and values particular to its cultural position, a further layer needs to be exposed. While I have examined the genesis of private broadcasting, primarily through an historical narrative, other important questions remain unresolved. What is the potential for changing the culture of private radio? Is it reasonable to expect, for example, that newcomers to broadcasting have the potential to present new programming ideas? After all, the process of induction into radio has been markedly different for this group. Unlike the situation of the pioneers who came before, the broadcasting ‘air’ of today is cluttered with signals. The mystery of tuning in to distant stations late at night and being inspired has become inconceivable. We must also consider that in this ‘new media’ world with its many alternatives, the notion of young people listening to mysterious signals from afar may be an outdated concept for radio.

Clearly, in sharp contrast to the 1950s and 1960s, young people today are introduced to the private radio discourse largely through a well-organized educational system. This is not to suggest that formalized radio education did not exist in radio’s formative years. Lorne Greene parlayed his CBC “voice of doom” persona and created the Lorne Greene Academy of Radio Arts following World War II (Fairbridge, 2002). The venerable Sprott Shaw organization, still operating business schools today, operated a radio school in Vancouver in the late 1920s (Duffy, 1983). For the most part, however, those seeking a radio career prior to the 1960s were informally mentored on the job by

veterans (Douglas, 1987, 2004; Duffy, 1983; McNeil & Wolfe, 1982). In some cases, these relationships were formalised.

One of the earliest examples of this organized mentoring process can be seen with the Taylor-Pearson-Carson group, discussed in Chapter One. In addition to being discussed informally in the workplace, the TPC doctrine was formally given to employees. To be sure, one would expect new employees at any company to quickly adapt to corporate culture and ‘the way things are done,’ though rank and file workers with TPC were quickly given the company *modus operandi* when,

almost from the outset, wide staff training facilities were provided. Among other elements, these included: A regular announcing school... a dramatic school... regular staff meetings and courses in the principles of advertising, mechanizing, programming and public relations and free access to leading trade and educational publications (Allard, 1979, p.46).

In all likelihood, this indoctrination was probably benign. Announcing programs, for example, would have been few and far between in the 1930s and 1940s, however, entry-level staff were introduced to private radio discourse according to the TPC precepts. These notions would have been accepted as normal industry standards.

### ***Vocational Training***

The task of teaching radio gradually shifted to the education system when provincial governments across Canada began taking advantage of the federal funding and built vocational institutes (Lyons, Randhawa, & Paulson, 1991). Many of these facilities,



such as BCIT, and Northern and Southern Alberta Institutes of Technology (NAIT and SAIT) enrolled students in broadcasting courses. In 1977, faculty from 22 of these colleges formed the Broadcast Educators Association of Canada (BEAC, 2007).

This transition from workplace to classroom was a vital, yet unexplored, component in the development of radio in Canada, and an area that I examine in this chapter. One would expect that Schein's (2004) various embedding mechanisms, discussed earlier, would be minimized in an educational setting where the curriculum was formalised. Clearly, when learning on the job, neophytes are exposed to pertinent operational skills concerning equipment, but more importantly, they are also continually inducted into the larger shared meanings, symbols, and customs that are part of broadcasting. A reasonable assumption would be that once moved to the more formal environment of a classroom, this cultural processing would be markedly different.

This line of inquiry opens several important avenues for discussion. Do vocational broadcast institutions teach rudimentary operational skills, or do they also have a different role (i.e., a cultural role), in reinforcing specific codes and values? If the role of the broadcast educator extends beyond the course syllabus and its associated measurable outcomes, then we have invested institutional organizations, such as the BEAC, with enormous power. Put another way, skills-based training assumes that skills can be put to a variety of uses. Good announcing or mixing skills have a role in any type of radio (private, public, or community). Nevertheless, when more complex variables, involving cultural values, come into play the educational outcomes are drastically altered. This is especially troubling if these colleges and their faculty define their roles solely as taxpayer-supported training programs for private industry. Alternatives would therefore

be eliminated. These institutions risk becoming defacto gatekeepers, rigidly adhering to a status quo which, by many accounts, is designed only to exploit radio's advertising potential.

### ***Publicly-Funded Institutions***

Broadcast education in Canada is a mix of public and private agencies. Public-sector vocational colleges comprise the largest segment. For purposes of this discussion, I am confining my definition of broadcast education to those public institutions that offer a certificate and/or diploma, specifically related to radio broadcasting. Most of these agencies also issue similar credentials in television, news media and, in some cases, print. They distinguish themselves by emphasizing skills-based training and highlight student employment opportunities upon graduation.

The following list is of the major publicly-funded institutions in Canada that deliver radio broadcast education:

- Algonquin College, ON
- Assiniboine, MB
- BCIT, BC
- Canadore College, ON
- Camosun College, BC
- Centennial College, ON
- Conestoga College, ON
- Confederation College, ON
- Fanshawe College, ON
- Humber College, ON
- Loyalist College, ON
- Mohawk College, ON
- Mount Royal College, AB
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, AB
- Nova Scotia Community College, NS
- Ryerson University, ON
- Seneca College, ON
- Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, AB

Little difference is present in the admissions requirements. Most programs expect applicants to have graduated from high school with above average standings in English. The majority of the colleges also impose further admissions criteria such as applicant interviews, mandatory attendance at pre-admissions orientation sessions or current events quizzes. Upon graduation, educational transferability of the credential within Canada is by no means widespread. Athabasca University grants 60 credit hours towards its Bachelor degree from most of the vocational broadcasting programs, as does Royal Roads University. Seneca graduates can attend Monash University or York University with undergraduate degree credit.

Because these institutions act as a collective repository from which private broadcasting draws employees, it is worth examining the material used to recruit applicants to the various programs. When reviewing the program-specific material contained in either the calendar published by the institution or its online equivalent, several points become evident. Institutions describe post-graduation employment opportunities in positive terms and some publish testimonials from former graduates. These programs also exercise some degree of caution in attracting specific applicants. I will discuss each of these points in turn.

Several programs across the country use statements elicited from former graduates to promote their radio programs. At Loyalist College in Belleville ON, the calendar information includes two statements from former graduates. Ryan Lemmon, whose on-air name is Sideshow, says his career began in Kingston:

as a college intern, I began doing crazy morning show stunts, which were actually pretty funny, just to get in the door. The name Sideshow came about during those morning stunts – I was the sideshow. My crazy hair didn't hurt either! (Loyalist Calendar, 2003)

Wendy Bouwma, known as Boomer, said her job “consists of talking to people, being creative, listening to music, and working in several departments.” However, her primary accomplishment is more specific:

I'd have to say that being on a billboard has been the highlight of my career to date. It was scary, fun and exciting. For me – and Sideshow too I think – it's even more exciting because it is so early in our careers and to have reached the point that we have, and to celebrate with our big ol' faces plastered on billboards in our hometown – it was a huge event (Loyalist Calendar, 2003).

Some programs list the positive aptitudes required of future broadcasters.

According to current information posted on the Mount Royal Fanshawe College Web site: “as a future broadcaster, you are out-going, imaginative and self-motivated, thriving in a diverse, fast-paced environment (Mount Royal, 2007). Centennial College in Toronto is more direct. Its Web site lists five distinct attributes including: “risk-taker,” “willing to work long hours,” and “thrives under pressure.” “If these words describe you,” the college suggests, “Broadcasting and Film may be your route to career success.” (Centennial College, 2007) Other colleges encourage applicants to personally prepare themselves by “developing a clear understanding of industry work ethics, deadlines and competition.” (Fanshawe, 2007) Several colleges encourage applicants to visit a radio

station before formally submitting an application.

Most institutions also make a point of itemizing potential jobs that await graduates upon completion of the broadcast program. As one might expect, these include disc jockey, sportscaster, announcer, commercial producer, and sales rep, among others. These institutions position their programs in the best possible light to consistently attract students in the competitive post-secondary marketplace.

A distinct pattern can be seen in the 20 institutions examined here. In each case, radio is presented as an exciting career choice with varied employment options. Nevertheless, the type of radio illustrated in this promotional material is ideologically closed, to limit the medium and its inherent potential. In several instances, desirable applicants are said to be those who are ‘outgoing’ and ‘highly motivated’ to work ‘long hours’. Radio as entertainment – the Boomer and Sideshow model – is deemed to be important and thus accorded a status that is well above the model that considers radio as communication with the potential to be something more.

An exception to this is Assiniboine Community College (ACC) in Manitoba, where applicants are encouraged to consider a broader perspective and:

View the world through different eyes. Open eyes. Critical eyes. Listen to the world through different ears. Discerning ears. Unbiased ears. Talk to the world with a different voice. A confident voice. An empathetic voice. See. Hear. Think. Speak. Change the world. Change your world (Assiniboine Community College, 2007).

ACC takes a more all-encompassing approach, indicating that the medium has the potential to be more than simply a vehicle for entertainment. When the ACC program

matrix is considered, in a course by course breakdown for each year, the college offers most, if not all, of the same courses available at the other institutions. While the educational model does not appear to be a dramatically different, ACC suggests that it operates with a different operational philosophy.

Two additional points are vital to this discussion. First, when the program matrices of these institutions are analyzed, each program has a practica or internship component that involves placing radio students in industrial settings. This usually occurs in the second year and allows students to refine their entry-level skills. These placements are usually four to six weeks, but may also be longer. The Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) requires students to complete a 640-hour, 16-week Radio Field Placement (NAIT, 2007) and Ontario's Centennial College, which offers a three-year advanced diploma in Broadcasting and Film, has a field placement that is a "four-month, full-time work experience" in the third year (Centennial, 2007b).

These institutions have also incorporated Program Advisory Committees (PAC) as part of their governance strategies. Conestoga College, for example, expects the PAC groups to "advise the Board [of Governors] on the development of new programs [and to] monitor existing programs." Committee membership is drawn from "employers, practitioners and recent program graduates." (Conestoga, 2007) The Loyalist College Web site (2007) indicates that it uses PAC members to keep the Loyalist curriculum relevant.

### ***Bloom's Taxonomy***

Of importance here is the link that these institutions have with private radio. As

stated at the outset, we must consider how the majority of newcomers to radio are introduced to the broadcasting discourse. Is this process largely ‘training’ or have provisions been made for elements of critical thinking? This is not to suggest that complex skills do not require higher cognition, but the distinction is important because it is at the heart of all educational outcomes. It was first addressed by Benjamin Bloom (1956) and is one of the key underpinnings in educational theory.

Briefly, Bloom’s Taxonomy highlights three domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. These translate loosely to: knowledge, attitude, and skills.<sup>1</sup> Each domain has certain properties, measured on an increasing scale of complexity. For example, in the knowledge domain, simple processes such as recognition or recall would be a lower order function, while synthesis and evaluation would be placed at a higher level. Bloom’s concept was that the learner would have to master lower order functions first, before moving to more complex tasks. The implications for teaching become clear when we integrate curriculum and instructional design with evaluation.

For example, if the instructional outcome was the successful operation of an audio mixer then, as a psychomotor skill, it would make no sense to teach this as a lecture and evaluate the student using a written exam. Similarly, a course in journalistic ethics, with a knowledge-based outcome, would require first defining ethics and then identifying, through discussion or perhaps role-playing scenarios, various ethical dilemmas. In both cases, the learner would have to appreciate the importance of audio mixing and ethics. This outcome (attitude) would fall within Bloom’s affective domain.

Regardless of the educational environment, Bloom’s theory forces us to consider not only curriculum but how it is delivered and ultimately, how it is evaluated. To bring

this discussion back to the broadcasting curriculum, several vital questions must be addressed. Do we expect people to finish a two- or three-year diploma program in this field with only a variety of psychomotor skills? Is it not reasonable to expect that new broadcasters be responsible for upholding the Broadcasting Act, a complex document to be sure, and also be taught additional skills outside the psychomotor domain to fully appreciate their craft?

Given that the institutions discussed thus far share a common curriculum and educational methodology, I now focus on one facility, rather than survey each provincial institution, though it would certainly be a worthwhile avenue for future study. Given my 20-year history with BCIT, I propose to continue this exploration using BCIT as an institutional model. My intention is not to focus on instructional quality per se, but to determine whether or not, through its structure, BCIT provides opportunities for learners to consider the full potential of radio beyond the traditional private broadcasting model.

### ***BCIT's Radio Program***

BCIT began offering broadcasting programs in 1964. The Broadcast and Media Communications Department has historically offered three diploma programs: Radio, Television, and Broadcast Journalism. A fourth program, FilmFlex, was added in 2003 (BCIT, 2008). The Radio program schedules one intake of 42 students annually with instruction taking place over four semesters, or terms, beginning in September and concluding in May of the following year. I will describe the following aspects of the program: instructional staff, curriculum design, and practica/internships.

The BCIT teaching faculty is hired for its industry-based experience. In some



programs, for example, nursing, instructors must also meet national accreditation standards. In these cases, the curriculum is standardized, and since accreditation is not a factor in most programs, curriculum is very much experientially-driven by the faculty. In my case, I was hired in the Radio program in 1986 because my background consisted of 15-years in radio programming, journalism, and the music business. I had little teaching experience, apart from providing media training to police officers. My industry experience was deemed as being important, and I was acquainted professionally with most of the faculty, having either worked alongside or competed against them in the private sector.

The curriculum is taught over two years: the first is comprised of two introductory semesters, and the second year is generally more challenging. Central to BCIT's radio program is the student-operated radio station. Indeed, the bulk of the instruction is designed to prepare students to contribute to the campus broadcasting system. Students must demonstrate mastery of first-year skills such as announcing, copywriting, and news, before being allowed to take part in the execution of the skills on-air. The radio station is licensed by the CRTC as a campus-instructional station and is required to conform to the necessary content regulations. CFML (or Evolution 107.9) operates continually throughout the year. Overnights and some mornings are voice-tracked using the Media Touch system. All programming is produced by Radio and Broadcast Journalism students as part of their diploma programs.

With few exceptions, the educational outcomes over the two years are skills-based (psychomotor). The credit hours assigned to Radio Operations amount to 16 in year-one and 41 in year-two. The two practicum courses (BCST 2209 and BCST 4409) are also

skills-based. First-year students are introduced to four weeks of live on-air broadcasting, accounting for 11.5 credit hours, which is carried out when the second-year students leave the campus for their four week internships. When the total hours for Radio Operations and Practica/Internships are combined, the overwhelming emphasis is seen to be in these areas (BCIT, 2008b). This is not unusual for broadcast education. As mentioned earlier, some institutions incorporate practica/internships that operate for much longer. Logically, the credit hours assigned to a given subject area stem from its importance to the program. This does not suggest that knowledge-based outcomes have no role in broadcast education, as additional courses are also part of the curriculum, for instance: Broadcast Law, Interpersonal Skills and Contemporary Issues.

The level of complexity involved in the technical aspects of broadcast education is challenging. With no previous experience, students are expected to master basic electronics, including the associated mathematical formulas (Technical Introduction), record and edit audio sequences using specific software programs (Audio Production) and use on-air and newsroom software systems (Radio Operations). By their final term, students will become familiar with broadcast-specific software such as Adobe Audition, BURLI, Media Touch, and Selector, as well as the Dreamweaver and Fireworks Web production packages. Their business courses, including statistics, also require familiarity with Microsoft-Excel and PowerPoint.

### ***Program Governance***

Ongoing curriculum development in many colleges, as it is at BCIT, is done from the input of program advisory committees. Committee appointments are usually for a

two-year term and are given a high institutional profile, as suggested by this statement taken from a college and university database:

BCIT's mission is to provide British Columbians with world-class, job-ready skills for career success. BCIT maintains strong linkages with local, national and international business and industry through advisory committees, partnerships and applied research. Their 'job-ready' graduates are an integral and vital part of the economic infrastructure of B.C. (CanLearn, 2008).

The current members of the BCIT Radio Advisory Committee are listed in Table 6 on the next page.

**Table 6: Members of the BCIT Radio Program Advisory Committee, February 2008**

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Gord Eno	Program Director, Jim Pattison Broadcasting
Gary Milne	Sales Manager, OMNI Television
Teresa Trovato*	Publicist, Straightedge Publicity
Bob Mills	Program Director, Power 104
Rick Holmes	Creative Director, Jim Pattison Broadcasting
John Shields	Program Manager, OK Radio Group
Don Shafer	VP, Standard Radio Group
Mike Whittingham*	Program Assistant, CHUM
Brian Adler*	Aldercast Productions
Ciana Parsons	Creative Director, CHUM
Erin Davis	CISL
Joan Anderson	Director, CBC British Columbia
Ross Winters	General Manager, Corus Vancouver
Shushma Datt	Rim Jim Music & IT Productions
Carole Alexander	Rogers Broadcasting
Tamara Taggart*	CTV
Todd Hancock*	Corus
Karen Kuhn Kuhn	Corus
Marcy Mailloux*	Corus
Kelly Grant*	Publicist, Hastings Park Race Track
Rick Dhaliwall	Corus
Joe Leary	Host, Chum
Mike Eggen*	Account Manager, Rogers

\* former graduate of Radio Program (BCIT, 2008c)

The Radio Program Advisory Committee (PAC) meets with the faculty twice annually. A provision is made in the second meeting, usually held in the spring, to meet with students. The Committee meets with both first- and second-year students without the instructional staff present to listen to any concerns. The comments, compiled

anonymously in small breakout groups, are then relayed to the faculty. In the past, student issues have dealt with course length and content, instructional methods (including teaching styles), and lab facilities. Recurring issues, especially those involving course content, are addressed in extensive curriculum reviews. The PAC's role as external advisor is seen as a necessary component in the Canadian college system evaluative mechanism.

### ***Key Performance Indicators***

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been used in the Canadian post-secondary system since the 1980s as a statistical performance measurement. Briefly, governments have designed a series of criteria that, when used to statistically compare past historical performance along with other institutions, is said to measure institutional 'success'. According to a study by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) (2006) KPIs are used by many provinces to financially reward or punish what is deemed to be institutional performance. This is particularly true in Alberta. In BC, according to the OCUFA, all public post-secondary education institutions are subject to a "detailed accountability framework every year through the Ministry of Advanced Education" to ascertain whether or not "public expenditures provide value, and to determine whether or not individual institutions... achieve identified goals and objectives." (p.10) The study is critical of KPIs and their accuracy when used to measure the success, or lack of success, of an educational institution.

To return to the discussion at hand, BCIT's broadcast education needs to be placed into the larger provincial context. Regardless of what one may think of the

efficacy of these key performance indicators, they continue to be used by the Ministry of Advanced Education to assess whether or not a particular program continues to be a good educational investment (Geoff Plant, 2007). Such factors as the number of students admitted to a given program and the retention rates are vital to a program's longevity. For college programs, another key factor is the employability upon graduation, which is a major promotional item for BCIT and is publicized on its Internet Web site (BCIT, 2007).

Adaptability and change are challenging concepts to introduce to any bureaucratic environment; however, when considering how performance indicators are used in post-secondary education, one would conclude that any alteration to curriculum that threatens a program's KPI standing would not likely be considered. This is especially true if, as in the case of the BCIT Radio program, the diploma in question is widely regarded by government as meeting or exceeding its performance expectations.

### ***Educators and Industry***

The links between private radio and broadcast education have been well established. As suggested earlier, strong cultural connections exist, since broadcast educators are generally recruited from the ranks of industry.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this relationship, employers and educators have an understanding that the delivery of course curriculum resides with the institution. I base this on anecdotal conversations with colleagues who are members of the Broadcast Educators Association of Canada (BEAC) and from personal experience.

While little doubt exists that industry-dominated advisory committees exert influence upon the course content, instructional design and evaluation resides with the

educators, not without some occasional conflict.

Industry people employing students part-time often express frustration when a student is unable to work because they are attending classes. The question becomes: Why would educators not want to provide students with an ‘actual’ learning experience? The deeper and more troubling question then becomes: Who is the client: the student or industry? My view is that this question is too often left unanswered.

At Fanshawe College in Ontario, the faculty have established educational ties with Corus Radio that appear to go beyond mere collaboration with the private sector. According to *Broadcaster magazine* (2008) radio and journalism students will be hired to “deliver news broadcasts and cover breaking stories” for AM 980 in London. In a news release detailing the arrangement, Program Coordinator Rob Collins said, “While the college has always enjoyed a strong relationship with Corus for many years, the new agreement takes that partnership to another level.” Students are hired for this new partnership based on their resumes and auditions which, according to Collins, “is another valuable training exercise.” (Fanshawe, 2008, p.1) These arrangements are in addition to the regular student practica and internship arrangements.

Corus has also been able to take advantage of its relationship with Fanshawe by having access to student radio reports that are done for the campus station. As student news stories are itemized for campus broadcast on Fanshawe computers, Corus news personnel have external user access. Corus can copy selective stories to its corporate servers and re-broadcast them on AM 980 thereby using Fanshawe as a kind of news service.

The Fanshawe Corus arrangement is troubling on several fronts. First, the usual structural

separation that serves to limit curriculum delivery within the institutional environment appears to have been breached in this case. Moreover, Fanshawe seems to be functioning as a labor repository for Corus. Have Fanshawe and Corus agreed to a predetermined student salary scale for these positions? One would hope that, as part of the ‘real world experience,’ students would be able to negotiate the terms. If, as the news release suggests, student auditions and resumes are forwarded to AM 950, and a decision is made accordingly, then this partnership is hardly an equitable learning opportunity for all. Clearly, some will be chosen over others.

### ***Ethical Implications***

Further fundamental issues are involved with regard to another partnership, that is, the relationship between faculty, institution, and learner. Do students have a choice about whether or not their radio reports, produced as part of their Fanshawe course work, are re-purposed as AM 650 content? Having worked with radio students for many years, I have yet to encounter any students who would take issue with their material airing on a ‘professional’ radio station. Nevertheless, this conveniently circumvents two important considerations. First, if a story is chosen from the collective student body of work (i.e., the Fanshawe ‘news service’) and broadcast on AM 950, then the student’s material is used, in part, to assist in selling Corus advertising. The student’s effort is seamlessly integrated into the ongoing Corus programming and used for advertising purposes. Of course, Corus has not paid any production costs and has simply appropriated the programming. Further to this point, has Fanshawe negotiated, on behalf of its students, an honorarium of any kind with Corus? The news release is silent on this point, but



nevertheless, it would be an opportunity to teach students the value of their work.

Instructional staff are unlikely to write or create voice radio programming and freely give it away to the private sector. Yet, when students undertake these efforts, it is all too often based on vague undefined learning experiences that bring the individual closer to ‘the real world’. This position does not hold up to rigorous examination, however, and with regards to the discussion at hand, any student material deposited for broadcast into the Fanshawe pool for broadcast (such as a local news story), has already been produced (written, voiced, and recorded). Corus is only retrieving the finished product. For the student, the totality of learning occurs well before Corus downloads and re-broadcasts the material. In other words, for students, apart from the satisfaction of hearing their material on AM 950, no additional learning experience is gained.

The Corus-Fanshawe arrangement certainly provides students with learning opportunities. To be sure, students are able to ‘test’ their knowledge and skills in the marketplace while still attending college; however, by formalizing a student’s hiring process on one hand, many would suggest that Fanshawe is restricting healthy debate on the other. Once the institution enters into a partnership with a broadcaster, it becomes exceedingly difficult to engage in critical classroom discussions that might include that particular company. From a student’s perspective, Fanshawe’s faculty would be assumed to have not only vetted the partnership, along with the associated operating parameters, but also accorded Corus honorific status.

## **Summary**

The BCIT system, at least as regards program governance, is clearly not designed

to accommodate major deviations from the status quo. The PAC is mostly (78%) comprised of broadcasters from the private sector and former graduates make up 35 percent. Private broadcasters would be unlikely to offer suggestions that would stray outside of their occupational parameters and former students, who in some measure credit the existing system with their career success, would also be unlikely to advocate massive change to the Radio program. When the broader institutional landscape is considered, evaluative processes such as key performance indicators are designed to measure specific outcomes, with graduate job placement being given high priority. Clearly, these jobs will come from the private sector.

Even if different approaches to radio were taught sporadically, perhaps dispersed throughout various courses, ultimately, no opportunity exists for their implementation. The student-run radio station at BCIT is structured and formatted according to commonly held precepts of private radio. For example, commercial breaks are at :10, :20, :40 and :50; news is broadcast at the top of almost every hour, with traffic in the morning quarter hours. The success of this student endeavor is measured against the private radio stations in the Vancouver market, other stations with which it is ostensibly designed to ‘compete’. BCIT students sell advertising as part of the sales course, albeit at a reduced rate, and the station has been given a promotional cruiser sponsored by a local auto dealer.

The factors that contribute to the distinctiveness of the BCIT campus radio station are not found within the overall structure of its programming, but rather, primarily in the music format, which is designed to appeal to a younger demographic. This is apparent on the radio station’s Web site which proclaims “Evolution 1079 is a Radio Station dedicated to experimentation and distinctiveness” (BCIT, 2008d). How is this

distinctiveness heard? Station programming includes several unique student feature programs but, for the most part, Evolution 107.9 has all the trappings of most commercial radio stations: station contests, liners, announcer IDs, and assorted promotional announcements. Precious little can be found in the way of consistent content that reflects the Burnaby community within which it is situated. Issues pertaining to the Burnaby community receive no particular priority on the air.

Somewhat ironically, BCIT's radio program incorporates aspects of broadcast technology that is displacing its graduates in the workplace. Evolution 107.9 students voice-track the overnight shift, statutory holidays, and some morning periods. This allows students to fully participate in their classes. The automation system also keeps the station on the air during the summer when the program is not running. To be sure, this solves several organizational problems for the institution, but what is increasingly evident is the adoption of this as a "technique" of this technology (Leiss, 1990, p.31).

In this excerpt from *Broadcast Dialogue*, the Operations Manager of the BCIT radio station, John Oliver, seems resigned to the fact that voice-tracking is now an accepted tool:

I'm not a fan of voice-tracking in music-driven formats. It will never equal the quality of live announcers, it eliminates jobs and decreases the farm system for future talent. Having said that – facing the reality that voice-tracking is here – let's see how this kind of recorded announcing can be improved, within the boundaries of its obvious limitations (Oliver, 2006, p.40).

Oliver goes on to offer suggestions for producing a good quality automated program. He continues: "[v]oice tracking may not go away, but we can at least make the

way we treat it and present it more professional and rewarding.” (p.40) Oliver concludes his article by suggesting some limited alternatives:

And if the only choice is non-live or voice-tracks versus splitters... in other words music, commercials, and splitters, and no announcer’s presence at all, I’ll take voice-tracked shows anytime.<sup>3</sup> (p.40)

Voice-tracking is presented as a viable alternative – a *fait accompli*. By suggesting that *it may not go away*, voice-tracking is presented as a technological deterministic event that is somehow disconnected from human action.

### ***The Hidden Curriculum***

BCIT and Fanshawe, like their counterparts across Canada, culturally inculcate learners according to the codes and values of private broadcasting. This reinforces the assertions of educators such as Freire (2005) and Illich (1972) that the act of teaching is a political act.

For the most part, the faculty are drawn from the private sector and these experienced individuals, generally older, are soaked in the familiar radio legends and myths that permeate the discourse. While the course curriculum may overwhelmingly be focused on psychomotor skills, the other, less obvious, lessons are also imparted. The myths surrounding Bill Drake and Top 40 radio are passed on from teacher to student in the affective or emotional domain. Although this aspect of the curriculum may not readily appear on a course syllabus, it is no less important. The cultural connection not only provides the emotional fuel for the radio newcomer looking for recognition and a sense of

belonging, but it is the glue that binds participants together.

Broadcast educational institutions serve a dual purpose. Not only have they largely replaced the ‘on the job’ workplace mentoring relationships commonplace in the decades prior to the 1960s, but they have also become “primary embedding mechanisms” (Schein, 2004, p.231) for passing on specific cultural values. While these values may be presented as the norm for radio, in fact, they are bound up in the codes and values of the private radio model. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Fanshawe-Corus relationship where students are encouraged to produce programming that is ‘good enough’ to be aired on the Corus station in London ON. The payoff, as it were, is not in the careful creation of the programming, or pride in its creation, but rather whether or not it receives a professional Corus stamp of approval. I would argue that the Fanshawe campus station could air programming that is infinitely more relevant and creative, precisely because it is not tied to Corus.

This process, by its very nature, hegemonically elevates private radio as the defacto norm, by selectively eliminating alternatives. Clearly, alternatives exist. BCIT was not directed by the CRTC to produce a particular model of radio for students to emulate and an opportunity was available to create a different model of radio with the potential to embrace and reflect the community. A clear choice was made.

This ideological closure also had an impact on other aspects of the curriculum. As long as a lingering cultural reverence continues for the private radio pioneers, such as Bill Drake, no room is held for the colorful Canadian historical characters such as Graham Spry. Spry, who’s 1932 rallying cry of “the State or the United States” helped define the the public broadcasting debate in this country and as such is a vital link to our historical

record (Raboy, 1990, p.38). His achievements, indeed the entire spectrum of debate surrounding public and private radio, are left with little opportunity for discussion. Instead, this colourful chapter of radio history is in danger of becoming an obscure footnote, relegated to few history books on Canadian broadcasting. Given the institutional bias in broadcast education where are we to find the next Graham Spry?

This notion of broadening the curricular landscape is possible and has been adopted by broadcast educators in the US. The Broadcast Educators Association (BEA) is comprised of people who are engaged in a healthy debate concerning a wide spectrum of American radio broadcasting: public, private, and community. This is reflected in the many scholarly works published by its members in the peer reviewed *Journal of Radio Studies*. Such issues as the relationship between format diversity and ownership concentration are regularly discussed. The Broadcast Educators Association of Canada (BEAC), on the other hand, has no similar forum for discussing these issues. The BEAC meets annually to discuss broadcast education from a vocational point of view, but does not generally discuss radio from the same philosophical perspective as does its American counterpart.

In Canada, no publication provides space for examining radio studies. *Broadcaster* is a publication of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, and *Broadcast Dialogue*, published by Christensen Communications, takes a somewhat broader approach to the field allowing for some criticism by guest columnists, though, by and large, it is devoted to the private sector.

To conclude, a different model of radio is unlikely to emerge from the institutions responsible for introducing new broadcasters to the field. These facilities see themselves

as training centers, not as institutions involved in larger, educational debates.

Furthermore, the criteria used for assessing the viability of these institutions is based on specific indicators that center on graduate employment statistics. Finally, when we look to how radio is institutionally modeled as part of the training regimen, the alternatives to the private model are excluded.

What we are left with in Canada is a continuance of our historical private radio heritage. To be sure, this legacy includes a public broadcaster; however, by definition, the national broadcaster cannot address local content in a meaningful way outside of the major urban centers. Private broadcasters have succeeded in defining themselves as the sole purveyors of local radio. I will explore this further in the concluding chapter.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: NOTES**

1. The mnemonic code often used by students to remember the cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude) and psychomotor (skills) domains are *head, heart hands*.
2. While many broadcast educators across Canada have public radio experience, most faculty are drawn from the private sector. From personal experience, BCIT's Radio program has been dominated by private radio faculty for most of its 43 years. Terry Garner, best known as the genial host of CBC's *Reach for the Top* television program was with the radio program for 17 years.
3. A splitter is a brief 5- to 10-second announcement that is usually programmed as a station identifier in automated periods.



## CHAPTER SEVEN: REFERENCES

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## CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has shown that private radio in Canada has developed in a particular manner, and has been restrained, encouraged and molded according to certain factors. Most research on radio in Canada has been undertaken from the perspective of political economy (e.g., Raboy, 1990), however, in my view, a blindspot in private radio academic investigation has been overlooked by researchers. All too frequently, private radio is either combined with studies of public broadcasting or studied as a component of the broad field of mass media. My efforts here have been to distinguish private radio from its larger context.

We can only begin to understand private radio when we consider the broadcasters themselves. Ultimately, this group is responsible for the high degree of self-regulation that they have come to enjoy. Moreover, given the substantial influence of private broadcasters in policy formation in Canada, we need to take the time to better understand this powerful group and its trade association.

It would be an oversimplification to suggest that the Canadian Association of Broadcasters is comprised exclusively of private radio managers having the sole interest to make a profit. Certainly, the Association has always advocated for private broadcasting, even though its direction has altered over time. Its founders were broadcasters in the literal sense and many maintained close ties with the day-to-day operations of a radio station. Individuals like TJ Allard saw themselves as broadcasters first, and as business people second. This becomes apparent when TJ Allard speaks with pride about the pioneers of radio and their skirmishes with the Canadian Radio League. He and his colleagues in the 1940s made emotional commitments to the fledgling

industry. Today, few Allard's can be found in private radio. The Griffith, Slaight, and Waters families, with decades of collective history, have sold their radio interests to the larger corporate interests. Today's managers are first and foremost business people, many of whom are far removed from any experiential knowledge of radio.

As an institution, the CAB has changed. The owner-broadcaster, the traditional membership of the Association and once the majority, are in the minority. Members now act, not as broadcasters, but as proxys for their boards of directors at the head office. Indeed, many years ago these broadcasters decided that the president of their organization no longer needed broadcasting experience. For many years, the CAB has been managed by a CEO. Ownership of a broadcast undertaking is no longer seen as a vital prerequisite. To be sure, since its landmark lobbying effort in 1948, the Association has been enormously successful in representing the interests of its membership. As discussed in this thesis, the CAB has gone from being a solely reactive entity, to being proactively insinuating itself securely within the policy-making process. Indeed, former CRTC commissioners have capitalized on their regulatory expertise as consultants for the private broadcasting sector once their appointments expire.

The demarcation between private radio and the CRTC has become increasingly blurred, to the extent that the regulator's perspective seems to be overwhelmingly defined by the private sector.

Canadian content, for the Commission, is relegated to a line item budgetary expense rather than to programming that holds potential for cultural enrichment.

Nowhere is this better exemplified than the 2006 Radio Review where:

[t]he Commission considered the possibility of increasing the minimum level of Canadian popular (category 2) musical selections from 35 percent to 40 percent. It determined that such an increase would not be appropriate at a time when the commercial radio industry must respond to the challenge of competing with new unregulated sources for the delivery of audio programming (CRTC, 2006, p.1).

The very institution responsible for safeguarding Canadian content on the airwaves has accepted the notion that Canadian music is inherently more expensive. A 5 percent increase in Canadian music, according to CRTC Chairman Charles Dalfen, is nothing less than a programming liability for private radio because broadcasters would have to *respond to the challenge* of unregulated audio services. Many Canadians would argue that a 5 percent increase in ‘their’ music would be a programming benefit. As to the idea that somehow private radio was on shaky financial footing, Mr. Dalfen must have known at that time that private broadcasting was well on its way to record profits that year. Indeed, according to Statistics Canada, profits totaled 20 percent, the third highest in 40 years (*Broadcast Dialogue*, 2006).

The historical record is replete with these so-called challenges posed by Canadian content and being faced by private broadcasters. The threats were defined by the industry and were largely unchallenged by the regulator. At each turn, the solution was a call for deregulation as a coping mechanism. The VCR was one of the first, followed by the Internet, satellite radio, and Ipod. The CRTC, once a somewhat distant regulator acting in the public interest, has moved into the corporate boardrooms and assumed fiduciary responsibility on behalf of shareholders.

If these threats required regulatory intervention, which is a debatable proposition,

and the Commission saw a pressing requirement for remedial action to alleviate a perceived financial hardship, then it had at least one further option. The CRTC could have acknowledged that the threat was temporary and held regulatory requirements in abeyance, to reinstitute the regulations when the situation improved. The Commission, it seems, is often more comfortable in the role of partner, than as regulator.

What both regulator and industry have forgotten in this process, and what I submit the listener is searching for, brings us back to the very core of what radio has the potential to be. The strength of radio has always been rooted in its immediacy, portability, and potential for one-to-one communication. As Harold Innis suggested, radio is inherently a space-binding medium to bridge distance. Why then is radio programming not designed to reflect one of its greatest attributes? Certainly it is not for a lack of relatively inexpensive and accessible technology that is in abundance today. Live programming is not an expensive broadcasting proposition in radio, especially when compared to television. Indeed, CBC television programming often highlights its origin, such as the East Coast Music Awards or the Winnipeg Comedy Festival. It sees value for the audience in the geographic mosaic. Private radio, on the other hand, often conceals its origin, even at the local and regional levels.

The answer, of course, is how the programming is defined and, ultimately, regulated. Decisions today concerning radio content are rooted in formatics with programmers chained to notions of the scientific clock. Programmers for Rogers, Astral, and Corus compete, not to reach out and communicate more effectively, but to find the next format with just the right balance of music interspersed with liners, splitters, IDs and promotions. Seemingly, the perfect software package has yet to be discovered that will

magically and deterministically solve the latest ratings problem. This effort continues to be a growth industry for a relatively small group of Canadian broadcast consultants who are gainfully employed making regular trips to the US searching for the next format formula. Nevertheless, as we have seen, formatics is not about community, not about human communication, and most assuredly, not about the listener.

Examples can be found on the periphery of the private sector where the format science has not trumped the community. An incident occurred in MacKenzie BC where a community took control of the spectrum from Jim Pattison Broadcasting. When Pattison served notice he was closing CHMK-FM, only to network content from Prince George, the morning personality went to the community with an idea. In less than two years, CHMM signed on with a community licence. The town of Mackenzie rallied with no less than 137 interventions in support of the bid. The community has been operating its low-power FM (LPFM) for several years with 100 live and local hours per week (CRTC, 2003; King, 2003; MacKenzie & Area Community Radio Society, 2006).

Ironically, we can once again look to the US for a newer regulatory model of radio. The Local Community Radio Act of 2007, if approved by the US Senate and House of Representatives would, in effect, re-balance the dial to provide more opportunities for LPFM broadcasting. Remarkably, this would entail a repeal of some sections of the 1996 Telecommunications Act which launched massive consolidations in that country. If approved, this bill will repatriate valuable spectrum to the community broadcasters. More importantly, as the Act states, “A commitment to localism – local operations, local research, local management, locally originated programming, local artists and local news and events – would bolster radio listening.” The Local Radio



Community Act of 2007 has grasped the notion that not only can the language of the spoken word trump the language of the format in radio broadcasting, but community can trump market. It also holds the promise of increasing radio listening.

One of the major factors responsible for moving community broadcasting back onto the political agenda in the US was Hurricane Katrina. Several radio stations, notably WQRZ in Bay St. Louis MS, were able to remain on the air with live local programming. In the aftermath of Katrina, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) found that “in some local markets, there had been too much consolidation” (US House of Representatives, p.2). This was partially responsible for pushing the FCC towards a re-examination of its localism regulations (FCC, 2008). We can only hope that it will not take a similar disaster in Canada to lead to the re-examination of the importance of radio localism.

The community broadcasting movement has a long tradition in the US, beginning with Pacifica and Lewis Hill’s vision of diverse voices in the 1920s (Lasar, 1999). Groups like the Prometheus Radio Project (2007) do not have Canadian counterparts advocating for low-power broadcasting here. In this country, the shift has been to support public broadcasting as defined by the chronically underfunded CBC. One would suppose that Plaunt and Spry, and the Canadian Radio League would have supported community broadcasting. Nevertheless, community broadcasting in Canada, either using regular FM or LPFM, has the potential to repatriate spectrum resources to the local level.

As great as the possibilities are for community radio, a danger exists in placing too much emphasis in this regard. To be sure, the Broadcasting Act acknowledges the triad of private, public, and community radio as playing vital roles in the broadcasting

system, however, we must ensure that each component is equally responsible for implementing the cultural imperatives found in the Act. In other words, in any given market that includes all three radio licenses, pressure may be exerted by private stations to be allowed to offload their cultural commitments to the public and community stations. Why, the private stations may argue, should they be forced to carry local news when the audience already has an alternative offered in the market? The CRTC has already adopted much of the CAB's framing of issues surrounding content, and such an argument would not be impossible.

One of the alternatives I have shown here is the need to gradually change private radio culture; a difficult task to be sure, but one that holds the promise of ensuring that radio has an opportunity to fulfill its potential. Consolidation in Canada has meant that fewer programmers are in the major cities. Those programmers are responsible to national managers and, ultimately, to shareholders. As the first generation of national programmers retire, they will be replaced. In keeping with the tradition of private radio, they will be replaced by others who have come up through the ranks in the cultural mentoring process. For this reason, substantive changes are unlikely to occur in radio programming, especially in the major urban markets which are currently dominated by the major corporate broadcasters.

The pervasiveness of private radio culture should not be underestimated. In the many interviews conducted for this study, almost all participants decried the cookie-cutter formats and the automation that is so pervasive across Canada. Nevertheless, in attempting to explain the phenomenon, two factors became clear. None of the interviewed broadcasters were willing, publicly or privately, to cite deregulation as a

negative factor. Second, more often than not, blame was fixed on the ‘bean counters’ at ‘the head office’ who have little or no experience in radio. In other words, the problem was outside the cultural boundaries of private radio. In other words, if we could only rid the world of accountants and regulators, then radio would be as it was. When asked to speculate about the notion that the industry itself was possibly programming the seeds of its own demise, very few interviewees were openly critical of private radio. In this regard, private broadcasters seemed to be a cloistered religious order. Anyone speaking in favor of regulatory overseeing or publicly criticizing the industry could face excommunication.

Doubtlessly, radio listening is dropping dramatically, especially in the younger demographic groups. According to Statistics Canada, the number of hours per week spent listening dropped from 19.5 hours in 2004 to 18.6 per week in 2006. The average has fallen by nearly two hours since 1999 (Statistics Canada, 2004; 2007). The industry has been quick to point to audience fragmentation resulting from digital music players and online music services; however, this explanation conveniently lets broadcasters off the hook with regard to their programming. Naturally, the assumption is that new media will displace the old, but this may be an oversimplification on a grand scale and tends to disregard content altogether. Television did not replace film, just as radio did not replace newspapers. Rather, as Jay Newell (2007) rightly suggests, the new media is often incorporated into the daily routine of the user. The deceptively simple question to ask is: “Is radio worth listening to?” If broadcasters continue to program 20-minutes of uninterrupted music, as some do, they are, in fact, the broadcasting equivalent of a digital music player. In these cases, little would distinguish a radio station from a digital music

player.

To find the potential for change, we must journey outside the major cities, and outside private radio culture, to find programmers employed at smaller independently-owned stations. These individuals have not been subjected to the formatic precepts of their urban counterparts. They have a keen sense of responsibility, not to shareholders, but to the community. Moreover, they understand radio as a communicative instrument. To a certain degree, these broadcasters reside outside the group membership and larger order, and are thus not constrained by the same values and codes. Here we find the MacKenzie and Area Radio Society, the Moose-FMs, and, of course, the other community stations that have always operated outside the private system. Here, radio is still relevant and continues to function as part of the community public sphere. The outcomes of weekly municipal council and school board meetings are reported. Other events that comprise the social fabric of the community are routinely addressed on air. This content is incorporated within and assists in defining the format, rather than the format dictating the content. In other words, the format is malleable, not immutable.

This brings us to the role of broadcast educators as change agents. Are they teaching a community model, or a private radio model, or both? If the latter is true, can they clearly distinguish their curriculum, given their governance structures? Many of these individuals steadfastly hold to a preconceived notion of radio. They see the medium as it once was, and hold to the belief that, like the phoenix, private radio will somehow be reborn to regain its rightful place in society. They are disciples of a religious order rigorously adhering to a canon that is distinctly non-inclusive with regard to the practice of radio broadcasting, regardless of the fact that private radio has become less local, less

immediate, with far less human communication.

I now conclude this discussion in a more lighthearted vein. In borrowing a phrase from the culture of radio news production, this might well be framed as a 'kicker,' the final story that attempts to end the newscast on an upbeat or humorous note. In this case, it also attempts to correct the historical record.

Doubtlessly, the Drake format was exceedingly influential for a number of reasons. As previously stated, the format itself and the personalities involved hold special significance in private radio culture. One of the major aspects of the Drake system was the Johnny Mann jingles that are still heard on hundreds of stations around the world.

Generally, Bill Drake or his KHJ colleague Ron Jacobs were believed to have somehow inspired to move away from the traditional jingle approach of the 1950s and 1960s and develop the short three- to five-second straight voice jingle. However, this is not an accurate portrayal, as I discovered during my interview with Mr. Mann:

Don Otis was the PD at the time at KHJ, and he called me, and he said, “John, I need some jingles”. We didn’t know each other, but he knew something about my doing jingles. He said, “I need some jingles”. I said, “Fine, Don, what do you need?” He said, “I want some jingles for KHJ, my radio station here like the ones [you did] for WMCA New York”. All those big jingle packages back there had full orchestra with us. When we did the early ones I mean they were really big, screaming orchestras, with a vocal group on top of it. So I said, “Well, Don, I can do them at any time, but right now the musician’s union is on strike.” And he said, “Oh, my gosh, what are we going to do?”... I said, “We’ll do them a cappella.” and he said, “What’s a cappella?” We booked it right away, and the first one I wrote was “93 KHJ,” and it stayed in my head, the melody (personal communication, 2007).

In a way, it seems fitting that the very concept viewed by many broadcasters as being a landmark in their history was a serendipitous event borne not of insightful programming, but rather of a labor dispute.

To conclude this kind of an extensive research effort, one is tempted to put forward that one theory, suggestion, or overview will somehow tie each of the arguments together, giving the document a firm, if not convenient, conclusion. In this regard, I have been singularly unsuccessful, but in reflecting on the work of previous authors, I realize that this effort is still very much a work in progress. When Liora Salter (1973) called for citizens to create their own community radio content, in many respects, she was a voice in the wilderness. Her thesis included a manual, which was a step-by-step plan for content creation. Six years later, Jean McNulty (1979) also underscored the need for

*other voices* in radio. Thirty years ago, well before private radio consolidation and deregulation, both women saw the warning signs, and history has proven that their concerns were well founded. Those of us interested in the potential of radio, stand upon their shoulders. Much still remains to be done.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1	A Brief Incomplete History of Radio
Appendix 2	Top 10 Private Radio Owners
Appendix 3	KABL-CHQM-CFAX Clock
Appendix 4	Johnny Mann Jingle Chart

## Appendix 1

**A Brief, Incomplete History of Radio**  
by Dan O'Day

## A READER ASKS:

"Following your advice in an earlier column, we've looked for and actually hired part-timers from several unusual places. (One was a waiter our GM had while trying to pitch a potential client, another door-to-door salesman who came into the station lobby.) But when they get on the air, they seem to clam up and become much more boring than they were before we hired them. When training 'newly discovered' part-timers, what are the most important things to start with?"

## DAN REPLIES:

## TELL THEM STORIES...

...about how & why you got into radio, who influenced you, your best radio moments, what you still hope to achieve. War stories about broadcasting despite impossible conditions, accidentally locking yourself out of the studio, on-air flubs. Stories about personal connections that have been made with listeners: The girl who called to request her late grandmother's favorite song...The fan who sent you chocolate chip cookies on your birthday...The listener who berated you for mispronouncing the name of his favorite artist.

Stories about transistor radios under the bed covers and at the beach. Endless struggles to control the car radio buttons. "Would you PLEASE turn that down" and "Wait, I want to hear this!" Novelty records and girl groups and Motown and Stax and Cadence and Elvis from the waist up and hearing "I Want To Hold Your Hand" for the very first time.

Stories about lovesick teenagers dedicating songs back & forth to each other. About children turning on the radio before they're even awake, feverishly hoping to hear those magic words from their local disc jockey: "No school, snow day...." About loneliness and a solitary voice reaching out to you. About making a complete stranger laugh or reflect or remember. About baseball games from far away on car radios. About someone driving across town or across country, with only you and your radio brethren for company.

Stories about Larry Lujack and John Records Landecker and Robert W. and Wolfman Jack and Gary Owens and Dr. Don and Kenny Everett (ask someone from the UK about Kenny) and those crazy young jocks who brought American-style radio to Europe in the 1960s by taking to the seas in honest-to-God pirate radio ships (imagine broadcasting under the worst possible conditions; now imagine doing it while seasick).

Stories about bad news and everyone immediately turning on the radio. About sad news

and where you were when you heard it. About practical jokes and misunderstandings and mild or wild revenge. About getting fired, packing up the U-Haul, and being scared all over again. Getting angry, getting older and "the good old days." Static-y voices criss-crossing in the night. Fifteen-hour airshifts, flaky jocks, disappearing engineers.

Stories about legendary radio people you almost met in an elevator at a convention. The major market PD who did you a favor; the request line caller you can't forget. Practical jokes on the news guy, disappearing stationery, and a bedroom full of promo records that one day will be worth something. Staying up late talking radio, swapping tapes, borrowing" ideas, "embellishing" your ratings, deepening your voice, losing your voice, losing your place, losing your keys, losing your cool. Wire service copy paper, 15-inch reels, pin-controlled automation. Caffeine addictions and junk food and whatever the station could trade for. Old friends, borrowed headphones, uncontrollable sleep-deprived laughter. Razor blades, splicing tape, grease pencils. Draping the tape edit over your shoulders until it was safe to throw away. Cue tones, cue sheets, in cue, out of breath.

Slip-cueing, back-announcing, and hitting the post. Egos, rivals, and friendships. Imagination, excitement, Orson Welles and Jack Benny and Ma Perkins and Franklin D. Roosevelt and Arthur Godfrey and Don McNeil's Breakfast Club. Losing jobs, gaining weight, changing names. "How do they do that?" and "Listen to this!" Storz, McClendon, Drake...and Chuck Blore's Color Radio. Play-by-play and blow-by-blow; sports scores and election returns and Number One on the charts this week. 7-7-7, First Ticket, Hooper, Pulse, "You don't looka nything like you sound!" "What am I doing with my life" and 7-day work weeks and "I can't believe I get paid for this!" Slow starting turntables, nickel on the tone-arm, the cart machine sticks.

Stories about hotlines, hot shots, skimmers, phantom cume, time checks, time warping, ratings, feelings, winning, showing off. T-shirts and coffee mugs and iridescent frisbees. Billboard and Claude Hall and Cashbox and Record World and R&R and Bill Gavin's green pages. Floods and tornado watches and power outages and school lunch menus. Lost dogs, lost accounts, lost tempers. Jiving, shouting, rhyming, whispering. Hiccupremedies, lemon 'n' honey, and good old-fashioned adrenalin to save the day. Embarrassed, elated, delighted. Hi-Low, Name It And Claim It, and Dollar-A-Holler. Playlists and station surveys and Good Guys. Q, Zoo, and Boss. Bob & Ray and Mike & Elaine and The Monitor Beacon.

Jingles, stickers, Chickenman and The Oidar Wavelength. Silly stunts, intense rivalries...Passion. B-Sides and label colors and songwriter credits. Favorite songs, favorite artists, favorite moments. Newspaper wars, live remotes, and meter readings. Shouts, stingers, sweepers, stagers, stabs. Make-goods, live tags, rip 'n' read and backtiming to the news. Allan Freed and Dan Ingram and Cousin Bruce. Beat the Bomb and Lucky Bucks and Battle of the Bands. Pinning the needle, pegging the meter, riding gain. Feedback and wrapping the capstan and "Hold on a sec, I gotta go on the air..." Sign on, sign off, warming up the filament and Compression, Compression, Compression! Gates board with rotary pots; Automax and Volumemax. Intros, outros, ramps, talk-ups. False endings and records popping & skipping and carts jamming.

Philosophical Differences and late night resume photocopy sessions. Tight board, good pipes, will relocate. The big break, bad luck, skip waves, skipping town with the air staff's paychecks.

Cueing past the splice, heavy phones, cue burn. Solid Gold, Hot Nine at Nine, Hot 100. WABC and KHJ and KLIF and WOWO and WLS and making it to the big markets. Friday night countdowns, Saturday Swap Shops, Sunday drag racing commercials, twin spins, doubleplays, triple shots and instant replays. Romantic entanglements, broken hearts, big dreams, small wins, and "Garbage Mouth Leaves Cleveland. "NO ONE is to touch these carts! And that means YOU!"

Were you listening when...?" and "What'd ya think?" and "You should have been there." Then explain to that new jock:  
Now you are there.  
What are you gonna do with it?

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## Appendix 2

**Top 10 Private Radio Owners**

Number of Undertakings by Year \*\*

Source: CRTC Broadcasting Monitoring Reports 2000-2005

Company	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006-2007
Astral	-	-	(12)*	12	15	36	36	34	31	83***
Corus	-	-	(11)*	43	49	52	50	50	50	
Chum	25	-25	-27	28	29	29	30	30	33	
Golden West	-	-	-	-	19	21	21	21	24	
Maritime	-11	-15	-19	19	20	21	21	21	21	
Métromédia	-1	-5	-7	6	-	-	-	-	-	
Newcap	-12	-12	-13	20	24	39	41	41	47	
Radiomutuel	-12	-12	-12	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Pattison	-	-	-	-	19	19	18	18	19	
Rawlco	-	-	-	8	-	12	12	12	17	
Rogers	-20	-19	-25	29	29	42	43	42	43	
Shaw	-11	-11	-11	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Standard	-13	-13	-12	12	12	50	51	51	52	
Télémedia	-30	-25	-28	76	81	-	-	-	-	
WIC	-12	-12	-12	-	-	-	-	-	-	

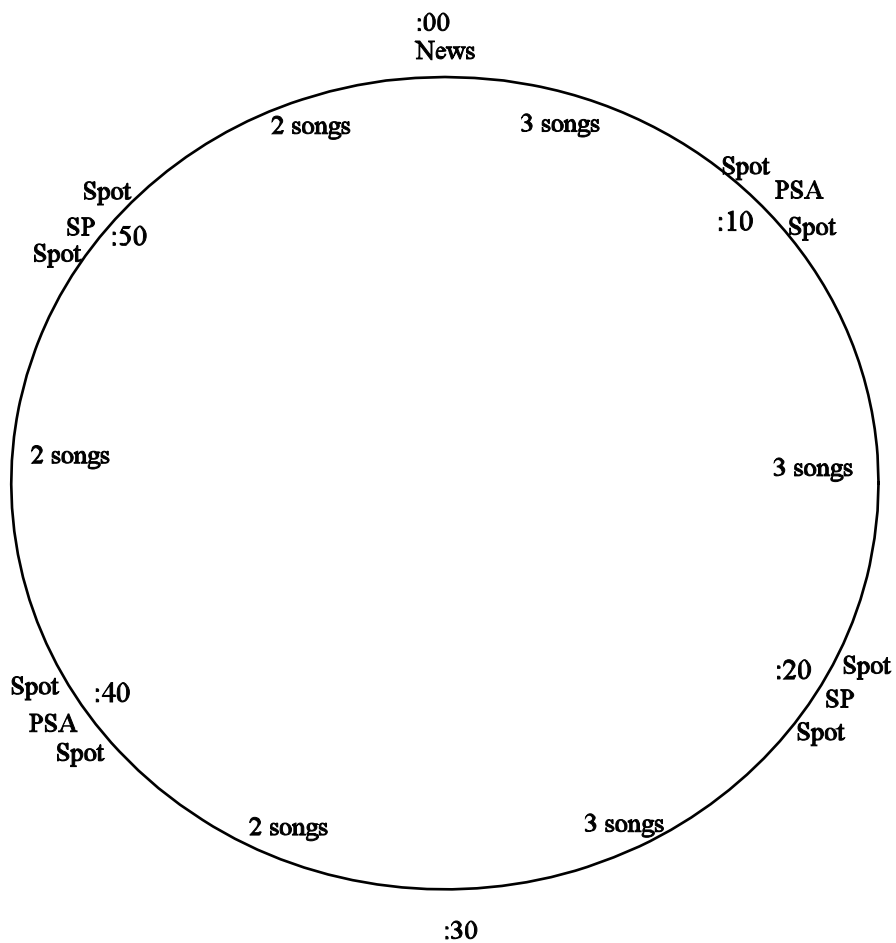
\* Number not included in 1999 Top 10

\*\* Includes private commercial networks and commercial ethnic radio stations

\*\*\* Stations added as a result of Astral-Standard sale in 2007

Appendix 3

The KABL-CHQM-CFAX Clock



*PSA* represents public service announcement  
*SP* represents station promotion announcement  
*Spot* represents commercial announcement

## Appendix 4

## Johnny Mann Jingle Chart

EDMONTON. AM 1260 3-3-99  
VANCOUVER 650 C1SL

(1) ⊕ 1260

ED-MON-TON WEATHER (1260 AM)

(2)

VAN-COUV-ER WEATHER (650 C1SL)

(3) ⊕ (3.8 TO 4.0 SECS)

OLD-IES RAD-I-O A M TWELVE SIX-TV

(4) (IN G) → 3.8 SECS

OLD-IES SIX-FIFTY SEA ISLE