

1983

# Alan Plaunt And Canadian Broadcasting

Michael Joseph Nolan

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ALAN PLAUNT AND CANADIAN BROADCASTING

by

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Department of History

Submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario

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## ABSTRACT

Alan Plaunt was born in Ottawa, in 1904, shortly after Marconi's successful experiments resulted in the development of "wireless" communication. The first Canadian radio station began operation in 1918 and, for the next fourteen years, broadcaster-businessmen dominated this new industry. These radio pioneers were eventually forced to accept a higher level of government involvement in broadcasting. Plaunt's unremitting efforts to fashion a new form of broadcasting, which would transcend the exploitation of radio solely for private gain, helped to establish the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission (CRBC) in 1932 and its successor, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), in 1936. The CBC was the product of his dedication and commitment to the leadership of the movement for public broadcasting in Canada. Plaunt was an influential figure, throughout the various parliamentary stages, leading to the passage of this legislation which governed Canadian broadcasting for almost a quarter of a century. It was his view that a publicly-owned system was essential if Canada's cultural independence, which appeared threatened by her powerful neighbour to the south, was to be preserved. Plaunt's organizing of the New Canada Movement, his philanthropy shown toward such nationalist publications as the Canadian Forum, and his assertion of Canada's right to determine her own foreign policy, were further manifestations of his particular brand of Canadian nationalism. But it was radio that consumed most of Plaunt's interest and enthusiasm, because he saw this new medium with an enormous capacity to both educate and unify Canadians. His vision of the CBC, as a national institution representative of various social

groups and free from partisan influence, was darkened during the Second World War when the Corporation almost totally fell under the control of the federal government. Plaunt died in 1941, with the CBC's future uncertain, but his years of public service established the foundation for the present day broadcasting system in Canada. His central notion of the symbiotic relationship between broadcasting and culture was to be reiterated in subsequent legislation governing both radio and television in Canada.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The subject of this thesis largely grew out of my M.A. study of Canadian federal politicians and their use of the electronic media in election campaigns. Canadian broadcasting, in particular the early era when the present day structure was established, has interested me for a long time both as a student of history and as a professional broadcaster. The following study has benefited from the able assistance of many individuals. Professor Don Avery, my supervisor, was especially helpful on matters relating to both the form and content of the thesis. At an earlier stage, Professors Peter Neary and the late D. G. G. Kerr had encouraged me to pursue the subject. The recollections of many individuals who were actively involved in the broadcasting industry have been important in gathering the historical material presented in this thesis. In particular, the Kenneth Bambrick Collection of interviews, with the broadcasting pioneers of the 1920s, at the Public Archives of Canada, helped to capture the flavour of this early period. As well, I have interviewed a number of figures who patiently and informatively answered my enquiries relating to broadcasting and Alan Plaunt's career. Specifically I would like to thank Jean Machell, Elizabeth Gratias, Alan Gratias, Graham Spry, Edward Pickering, René Landry, Jack Pickersgill, H. E. Kidd, Alan Gibbons and Eugene Forsey. Two individuals who died prior to the completion of the project, T. J. Allard and Malcolm MacDonald, helped to nurture my interest with their spirited views on Alan Plaunt's public activity. Like all historians, I have relied greatly on librarians, archivists and other researchers. Marianne Welch of the law library and Walter Zimmerman of

the D.B. Weldon Library at the University of Western Ontario gave generously of their time and assistance. At the University of British Columbia, George Brandak, Anne Yandle and Mignon Smienk were most helpful during my examination of the Alan Plaunt papers in the Special Collections Division. The staffs of the London Public Library and the Public Archives of Canada answered all my enquiries promptly. Elaine Dogherty and Kenneth Andrews also provided valuable research assistance. Research funding for which I was most grateful was provided by the Bronfman Family Foundation, the University of Western Ontario Foundation, the Ontario Arts Council and the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation. Finally I would like to acknowledge the efficient work of my typist Chris Speed and the steady support of my wife Carolé.



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## CHAPTER I

### Background and Boyhood

The history of Canadian broadcasting, for the most part, has drawn the attention of scholars only in recent years. As a result, the scope of the material written on the subject is somewhat limited though of a high calibre. Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951, earlier traced the origins and growth of radio in Canada and, in his later work, The Public Eye: Television and the Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1952-1968, has described the history of the television medium in Canada.<sup>1</sup> E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada, has presented a factual and lively account of the behind-the-scenes drama of Canadian broadcasting.<sup>2</sup> These three works written by apologists for state-ownership have focused heavily on the evolution of Canada's broadcasting system with particular emphasis on its legislative aspects.

John E. Twomey, in his recent, extensive survey Canadian Broadcasting History Resources in English: Critical Mass or Mess?, has noted that "both Weir and Peers drew heavily upon their personal experience as CBC managers and from official government documents and reports."<sup>3</sup> These publications, which were generated largely "by the many government-initiated inquiries into broadcasting", have been "so free from other scholars' criticism, that they have come to dominate the literature of broadcasting in Canada."<sup>4</sup> In Twomey's view, "very little mention is made of the growth of the private broadcasting sector, or of programming and program personalities."<sup>5</sup>

However this public broadcasting bias in the literature has been balanced somewhat by T. J. Allard's work, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada: 1918-1958, which challenges nearly every generally accepted concept about Canadian broadcasting.<sup>6</sup> Here too the author's concentration was on the structure of the broadcasting system. There are a number of reasons for the short scholarly trail in the writing of broadcasting history. As E. Austin Weir has explained:

Early Canadian broadcasting is singularly lacking in historical documentation. Most of the records were discarded long ago. After all, relatively few people in North America are interested in current history. It is only within the last two or three years that private broadcasters have made an effort to collect and record the experience of early operators. Likewise the CBC has but quite recently begun to collect and systematize its historical records. Fortunately the preservation of actual programs, impossible during earlier years owing to inadequate techniques and high costs, has now been greatly simplified and improved, first by recordings and then by tape.<sup>7</sup>

It can be seen that any examination of Canadian broadcasting contains a number of pitfalls for the student of history. T. J. Allard also has singled out the difficulties of trying to provide an accurate account of events and personalities:

The cautious researcher must distrust most of the written record. It is wrong with distressing frequency. Those who reported public meetings or inquiries before the tape recorder came into general use, could not be expected to know trade jargon or the names or home towns of the participants. I was puzzled by frequent reference in the Minutes of one House of Commons Broadcasting Committee to a place called "Community" before I suddenly realized the witness was speaking of a place called "Unity", Saskatchewan. The written record all too

often has the names or the call letters of the location entirely wrong. To one who knew the participants personally, or the circumstances, or was physically present at the meeting being reported, it is too often obvious that a statement made by a witness is attributed to a member of the committee or commission or vice versa or that a "not" has been dropped or inserted; and there are other major errors.<sup>8</sup>

As well, this same author, who was in the broadcasting business for forty years, has seriously questioned the historical approach toward broadcasting:

Some of the material written about Canadian broadcasting has been very sloppily researched. In many cases heavy reliance has been placed on newspaper reports hastily written, under pressure, by reporters, themselves unfamiliar with the important nuances of the discussion. In other cases reference to original material has been highly selective, designed to reinforce an argument or a viewpoint, rather than set out the facts. Again, broadcasting has far too frequently been seized upon as a central theme for those who wished to support or attack socialism; to support or attack "private enterprise"; to support or attack a particular view on religion, morals or cherished theories concerning that kind of culture or education the writer feels the general public should or should not have.<sup>9</sup>

Yet the subject of broadcasting still deserves the historian's attention even though he must face obstacles in trying to provide any kind of systematic analysis. It is obvious that most topics call for the use of oral history techniques to supplement the historian's traditional investigative approach through documents. Thus, while earlier scholarly studies have concentrated on the structure of the industry and a few broadcasting pioneers have chronicled their experiences, in the form of memoirs, the careers and social outlook of many of the architects, who

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shaped Canada's broadcasting system, have still to receive detailed study. These individuals recognized that a new national instrument, such as radio, could usher in profound change and, in the process, alter social systems.

Among the leading exponents of public broadcasting in Canada were such figures as Graham Spry, Brooke Claxton, J. W. Dafoe and C. A. Bowman. The motives of these individuals, in their urging of a greater level of state involvement in the broadcasting industry, were related largely to political and economic considerations. Spry, for example, was among the founders of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the predecessor of the New Democratic Party.<sup>10</sup> The CCF's leftist philosophy obviously appealed to him and this ideological outlook helped to shape his view that the federal government should be actively engaged in broadcasting which was a major public undertaking. On the other hand, C. A. Bowman, editor of the Ottawa Citizen, saw private broadcasters threatening the advertising revenue of newspaper owners and, for this economic reason, he appeared to favour state intervention.<sup>11</sup> In any consideration of the government's role in Canadian broadcasting, the efforts of such noted figures cannot be discounted. Nevertheless, Alan Butterworth Plaunt, probably more than any other single individual, was responsible for the establishment of publicly-owned radio in Canada during the 1930s.

Plaunt, who has been described by J. L. Granatstein as "a bright and able young man with impressive connections" and "one of the stalwarts of the Canadian Radio League", was perhaps the most influential Canadian among those who campaigned for public broadcasting.<sup>12</sup> He foresaw that such a broadcasting system could be both a national unifier and a bulwark to help establish and preserve a Canadian identity. This was his primary cultural objective for radio. Plaunt had definite social advantages as he

set out to build this new broadcasting structure. As a member of an Ottawa family whose fortune had been accumulated in the lumber business, he enjoyed a highly favourable economic position, unlike most of the other early advocates of public broadcasting. He was a nationalist but not in any narrow sense of the word. Rather he seemed to have visualized a more mature country which would one day take its place, among the nations of the world, boasting a distinctive form of broadcasting, a new kind of public enterprise that would safeguard Canada's cultural independence. It was a somewhat curious social outlook for a young man, in his mid-twenties, at a time when the country's economic indicators did not seem to favour the successful promotion of such a venture. Nevertheless Plaunt's impact on Canadian broadcasting cannot be doubted. He achieved his ambition in 1936 with the creation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, a crown body whose Diamond Jubilee is fast approaching. As the Canadian Forum has explained:

Alan Plaunt may be said to have done for radio what Adam Beck did for the public ownership of power, and the work of both men has opened up new avenues of social progress. If radio broadcasting today is organized as a public service and not as a private monopoly the fact is due to Alan Plaunt more than to any other Canadian.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, Edward Pickering, a former secretary to Mackenzie King and a close associate of Plaunt in the campaign for public broadcasting, has underlined his achievement:

It will be a thousand pities if the significance of Alan's life is not appraised somewhat formally before time rolls ruthlessly over what remains of his labours.<sup>14</sup>

Hence an historical profile of this central figure provides a convenient focal point for a reassessment of early Canadian broadcasting history, an

era when broadcaster-businessmen engaged in fierce struggle with those who sought to wrest control of the system away from them.

Alan B. Plaunt was born in Ottawa on March 25, 1904.<sup>15</sup> His ancestry, which is important in the paternal line because of the history of the family name, dates back to the late 17th century and Île D'Orléans, an island in the St. Lawrence River, a few miles below Quebec City. This small body of land was first named "Bacchus" by Jacques Cartier because of its wild grape vines.<sup>16</sup> Cartier later renamed it Île D'Orléans, after the Duke of Orleans, son of King Francis the First.<sup>17</sup> Even today the old French rural style has been preserved on the island with many residents engaged in spinning, weaving and wood-carving. Farming has remained the main occupation of the islanders with potatoes and strawberries the principal crops. Since the old folkways and French flavour are still present, the island continues to draw many visitors eager to capture the mood of early French Canadian society.<sup>18</sup> Plaunt possessed both a keen sense of history and a deep interest in his family roots. He often spent his leisure visiting the farmers of Quebec, a people he felt were "the real French Canadians."<sup>19</sup>

Xavier Plaunt, Alan Plaunt's great-grandfather, had come from Île D'Orléans to settle in the Renfrew area near Ottawa in the early nineteenth century. Like a number of other settlers in eastern Ontario, this pioneer resident from Quebec, who had been born on March 14, 1808 in County Berthier, was attracted by the development of the lumbering industry in the Upper Ottawa Valley.<sup>20</sup> A few settlers had located in the region by 1830 and, six years later, Xavier Plaunt had acquired land near the Second Chute of the Bonnechere River.<sup>21</sup> By 1848, he was selling village lots and had provided land for the community's first church.<sup>22</sup> This kind of public activity was in keeping with the kind of religious community spirit to which he had been accustomed in Île D'Orléans. There chapels and churches were very much a part of the island's early history just as they were

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characteristic of many early French settlements in Canada.<sup>23</sup> A chapel had been built on the island in 1653 and resident priests arrived about 1666 when settlement of Isle d'Orleans; which had been started by a few families eighteen years earlier, was greatly encouraged by Bishop Laval. Churches on the island stood as historical monuments and one such edifice, the church of Ste. Famille on the northeast side, still is one of the oldest and finest along the St. Lawrence.<sup>24</sup> However Xavier Plaunt's sense of responsibility to the community extended beyond churches to railways and schools. After his death on March 13, 1890, The Renfrew Mercury recalled his contribution to the community:

As a resident of the village and holder of much property in it, he showed commendable liberality and public spirit; and much wisdom as well. He presented to the Canada Central (now C.P.R.) railway the land for its station and yard here; gave fine sites to the Roman Catholic, two Presbyterian and Methodist Congregations, for their churches; and also gave the site for Renfrew's old grammar school. This liberality brought a substantial reward. Lots in the "Plaunt section" soon brought good prices; and it is today one of the nicest residential portions of the town.<sup>25</sup>

The "Plaunt" name had a somewhat curious evolution in which Xavier Plaunt played no small part. It was originally spelled "Plante", as family records show, but this was to change with the marriage of Xavier to Jeanette McLean who was born in the eastern Ontario county of Lanark on December 27, 1818.<sup>26</sup> Her uncle, an army surgeon, had received a land grant of 400 acres in the Renfrew area and his brother John, father to Jeanette, had come to Renfrew to perform settlement duties. Later she and Xavier Plaunt met and were eventually married on February 27, 1838 in Perth near Ottawa.<sup>27</sup> Communication between the newlyweds initially was somewhat



unusual in that she spoke mainly Gaelic and he spoke only French,<sup>28</sup> As well, Xavier Plaunt apparently was unable to read or write and so his wife subsequently spelled the name as it sounded. Hence "Plante" became "Plaunt" since both words are pronounced the same way in French and English.<sup>29</sup>

The Plaunt family in Renfrew consisted of five children, one daughter and four sons. Among the latter was Joseph, a village hotelkeeper, who married Isabella McDonald on December 14, 1868.<sup>30</sup> This couple had four children in all, a daughter and three sons, one of whom was Francis Xavier, the father of Alan Plaunt.<sup>31</sup> As a boy, F. X., as he was affectionately referred to within family circles, was on the frail side and lived much of his early life with relatives who farmed at a site known as Plaunt's Mountain, which was located on Lake Clear near Eganville, Ontario. Later when Francis Xavier began to seek employment, he obtained a position as a railway tie contractor, in the 1890s, with a lumber firm known as the Harris Tie and Timber Company in Ottawa.<sup>32</sup> There he married Mary Amelia Butterworth whose family descended from the United Empire Loyalists who had settled at Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia.<sup>33</sup> Three brothers of the Butterworth family, John, Charles, Enoch Bruce and a sister, Maria, had arrived in Ottawa in the late 1800s. E. B. Butterworth, Alan Plaunt's grandfather, was a successful Ottawa businessman. He eventually owned the Butterworth building on Sparks Street, property that was later sold to the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and is now the site of that company's head office in Ottawa.<sup>34</sup> He also operated a hardware business which was subsequently taken over by Harry Plaunt, a brother of F. X. Plaunt. John Butterworth established a coal dealers business in Ottawa and the other brother, Charles, died at a relatively early age. Their

sister, Maria, served as principal of the Normal School on Lisgar Street in Ottawa, a private school for both boys and girls and which Alan Plaunt attended as a boy. F. X. Plaunt and his wife lived at 333 MacLaren Street in Ottawa until about 1920 when they moved to number one Clemow Avenue. The family eventually consisted of six children including the couple's only son, Alan and five daughters.<sup>35</sup>

The community of Ottawa into which Alan Plaunt was born in the early twentieth century, was experiencing considerable social and political tension. Historian Donald Creighton has written that "the forest had created Ottawa. It had brought profits and jobs to the timber barons, the sawmill owners, the lumberjacks and raftsmen, as well as to the forwarders and merchants who supplied and served them."<sup>36</sup> These prominent lumber families were able to hold considerable influence in the city and Ottawans looked up to them as the true captains of industry and financial leaders. Among these families were the Skeads, the Hurdmans, the Bronsons, the Eddys and the MacLarens.<sup>37</sup> However their tight hold over most aspects of the city's economic and social life had begun to loosen with the onslaught of the depression in 1890. Fearful of losing their grasp on the nation's capital, these businessmen began to advocate a conservative reform ethos. As Peter Gillis has explained:

The corporate elite found that discontent generated by economic hardship had made a good number of Ottawans critical of conditions about them, especially of the actions of the larger businessmen in the community. To combat this rising tide of criticism and to restore some measure of control to the process of transition toward a more urbanized, industrial society, the elite turned to the voluntary philanthropic and religious agencies, which they had traditionally sponsored, as tools for alleviating distress and promoting moral reform.<sup>38</sup>

But what especially irritated many residents of Ottawa was the manner in which a number of these lumber barons, including E. H. Bronson, established a utilities monopoly in the city. This action ran contrary to the wishes of many people who desired greater competition in the utilities field or some degree of public ownership to regulate rates.<sup>39</sup> On the local level, the issue of utilities monopoly produced an astonishing polarization in civic politics. A group of liberal reformers gained a majority of the seats on city council between 1900 and 1911. This group, which sought to challenge the established lumber interests, drew considerable support from the Knights of Labor with its Irish and French-Canadian working class followers.<sup>40</sup> Peter Gillis also has shown how these liberal reformers eventually came to rest in the local Conservative party:

Unfortunately this tension between the two reform groups was also translated into a party fight between Liberals and Conservatives for political control of the city, the first standing for monopoly under regulation and the second for competition ensured by public ownership. The Conservatives received a considerable boost to their prestige in 1905 with their success in the public power plebiscite and the victory by James Pliny Whitney in the provincial election of that year.<sup>41</sup>

Thus Alan Plaunt's early years were spent in a society where the progressives were clearly on the move against the established order. In large part, his later endeavours on behalf of public broadcasting were made possible by the financial wealth which his father had accumulated through both the Harris Tie and Timber Company and later the Poupore Lumber Company.

By the year 1906, Francis Xavier Plaunt had become General Manager of Harris Tie and Timber, a company which was eventually incorporated on September 20, 1917.<sup>42</sup> Government documents from the office of the Secretary

of State, who at that time was the Honourable Arthur Meighen, show the shareholders of the company numbering five in all. Besides F. X. Plaunt, who was described as a lumber merchant, the directors included his brother Henry Poultney Plaunt, a hardware merchant; Philorum Joseph Villeneuve, an accountant; Eveline Cleo Teskey, a stenographer; and John Graham, a clerk.<sup>43</sup> All of the shareholders of the company, which was located in the Butterworth building on Sparks Street in Ottawa, were residents of that city. Harris Tie and Timber essentially played the role of middle-man between lumber mill owners and representatives of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways.<sup>44</sup> The company obtained contracts with both the GNR and CPR, in Ontario and Quebec, whereby it provided railway ties, poles and other forms of lumber to both railways thus making it unnecessary for their agents to deal directly with the mill owners. As Cleo Teskey, secretary to F. X. Plaunt, explained, "we would buy straight from farmers or people with small mills. The railways did not want to be bothered with these small people."<sup>45</sup>

Railway ties, which were used to anchor the train track, were the mainstay of the company. Summer was the busy season when loggers, in such places as Camp Fortune and Maniwaki, Quebec, would cut the wood to the length specified by F. X. Plaunt's company.<sup>46</sup> Occasionally the Harris Tie and Timber Company became involved in litigation over such matters as water rights for the transporting of logs and lumber. One legal dispute involving F. X. Plaunt and his company eventually went all the way to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which delivered its ruling on July 20th, 1936.<sup>47</sup> The case, Freeman T. Cross versus the Gatineau Power Company, also saw the passing of a special Act of the Legislature of Quebec which received Royal Assent on February 19, 1932.<sup>48</sup>

Freeman T. Cross owned a lumber mill and other property above Chelsea Falls on the Gatineau River. His land included part of the bed of the river itself at a series of rapids or falls called "Cascades."<sup>49</sup> Cross frequently supplied F. X. Plaunt with railway ties and, as well, the Ottawa lumber merchant held a 100,000 dollar mortgage on Cross's property.<sup>50</sup> The Gatineau Power Company wanted to expropriate some of Cross's property holdings for the development of hydro electric power on the Gatineau River.<sup>51</sup> Under the terms of the special Act passed in the Quebec Legislature, the Company was not to be "disturbed" in the operation of its said power development" and "fair compensation" to Cross was to be "assessed in his favour and awarded to him by the Courts."<sup>52</sup> The appellant Cross was subsequently awarded \$348,481.22 by the Quebec Superior Court but, when the Gatineau Power Company appealed to the King's Bench Division that sum was reduced to \$157,493.89.<sup>53</sup>

Since F. X. Plaunt held a mortgage on Cross's property, he appears to have been instrumental in Cross appealing to the Privy Council after the amount of compensation was substantially altered in the Gatineau Power Company's favour. Moreover Cross was represented before the Privy Council by Louis St. Laurent, a prominent Quebec lawyer, who later was to become a supporter of the Canadian Radio League and Prime Minister of Canada.<sup>54</sup> In its verdict, the Privy Council finally ruled that a portion of the compensation owed to Cross and reduced, by the Court of King's Bench, should be restored to the amounts stipulated in the decision by the Quebec Superior Court.<sup>55</sup> Cross and Plaunt had won at least a partial victory.

Throughout the course of a year, both the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways would buy tens of thousands of ties from F. X. Plaunt's company. As a result he did a lucrative business for about thirty

years until the Depression struck. As a witness for his business partner, Freeman T. Cross, before the Quebec Superior Court on November 15, 1932, Plaunt explained how his business was hurt somewhat by the unfavourable economic climate:

The depression caused the Railways to curtail their tie requirements. They carried over in creosoting plants ties that they expected to use in construction, and maintenance work, and which were not used, and consequently they were not buying what they did not need.<sup>56</sup>

The Charter of the Harris Tie and Timber Company was not dissolved until February 10, 1965.<sup>57</sup> As W. B. Plaunt, a nephew of F. X. Plaunt and President of United Broadcasting Limited of Sudbury, explained, "F. X. was very successful."<sup>58</sup>

As a boy Alan Plaunt spent several summers at Gogama, Ontario near Sudbury where his father's company owned extensive timber limits and a huge tie mill.<sup>59</sup> There he learned something of the lumber business and was later to serve as President of his father's company briefly in the late 1930s.<sup>60</sup> One of his favourite sports, as a youth, was canoeing. During the summer, he often travelled the Ottawa River visiting a number of places which were then uninhabited. These would have included Baskens Landing, McLarens Landing and Constance Bay.<sup>61</sup> Plaunt's later interest in Canadian artists was a natural outgrowth of his early camping experiences in Algonquin Park. He and his cousin, Philip Wait, often toured the northern sections of the historic park, enjoying the large plentiful fish in the surrounding lakes.<sup>62</sup> The kind of enthusiasm shown by Plaunt and others for the natural landscape of Ontario seemed to have foreshadowed the later emergence of provincial naturalist clubs. By the year 1931, the charter-members of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists included the following:

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the Brodie Club of Toronto, the Biological Club of Toronto, the McIlwraith Ornithological Club of London, the Kent Nature Club of Chatham, the Hamilton Protection Society, the Queen's Natural History Society, and the Kingston and the Toronto Field-Naturalist Club.<sup>63</sup> "By using a multiplicity of attractive methods, especially field activities, ... the federation had an incalculable impact on the thinking of the people of this province in the cause of conservation."<sup>64</sup> The individuals involved in the conservation movement were largely members of the academic community who urged the Ontario government to establish a co-ordinated policy for all resources including water, land, forests, wildlife and recreation. The movement can be seen as a cause ahead of its time and the provincial counterpart to the kinds of voluntary, non-political associations that came upon the national stage, in the early 1930s, when the Canadian Radio League began its activity.

Given his appreciation of Canadian geography, it was hardly surprising that Plaunt should become an early enthusiast of the Group of Seven, the influential art movement that found inspiration in northern Ontario landscapes, notably Algonquin Park, Georgian Bay, Algoma and the North Shore of Lake Superior. It was this section of the country which the Group of Seven saw as representing the unique character of Canada. A. Y. Jackson, one of the well known members of the Group, recalled that Alan Plaunt and his wife Dorothy were "among the early enthusiasts for Canadian painting."<sup>65</sup> It was "their warm appreciation" which "outweighed a great deal of the ill will" which these early Canadian painters initially encountered.<sup>66</sup> Plaunt's wife, who later became Mrs. H. A. Dyde, was the first female trustee of the National Gallery. "With such enlightened people giving a lead and showing their faith in the work of Canadian artists," wrote Jackson, "the vital

phase of the Group's battle against entrenched conservatism was ended."<sup>67</sup>

Plaunt obtained his early education in Ottawa attending the Normal Model School from 1910 to 1916.<sup>68</sup> This private, elementary school was located in a building which still stands at the corner of Elgin and Lisgar streets. Both boys and girls attended the school, but classes were given on two different floors. Parents paid a fee of two dollars a month for their children sent to the school which was closed, in 1939, when the building was taken over for war purposes.<sup>69</sup> Among Plaunt's classmates was Eugene Forsey, a native Newfoundlander, and later to become a founder of the League for Social Reconstruction and a member of the Canadian Senate.<sup>70</sup> Charles and Andrew Blair, grandsons of the Honourable A. G. Blair, a former Premier of New Brunswick and later the Minister of Railways and Canals, in the second Laurier government elected in 1900, also attended that same school.<sup>71</sup> From 1916 to 1919, Plaunt was enrolled at First Avenue School which was located near the family's home at number one Clemow Avenue, a prestigious area in Ottawa containing the residences of many diplomats and civil servants. The post-war years, from 1919 to 1922, saw him a student at St. Andrew's College, a large private institution of learning modelled after the English public school.<sup>72</sup> There he came under the influence of both Canadian and British instructors, the latter having received their education and teaching qualifications in their home country. During the years Plaunt attended St. Andrew's, his instructors included Percy J. Robinson who taught classics; Walter Findlay in English; Ernest Fleming in Mathematics; Michael Magee in French; and T. B. D. Tudball who instructed students in a variety of subjects from Grades nine through eleven.<sup>73</sup> Of these teachers, only Tudball was English; the others were native born Canadians.



Plaunt's elitist outlook, which emphasized the important leadership role of non-partisan intellectuals, could be attributed, in part, to his early conditioning at this private institution of learning. In Canada, such schools have frequently been associated with the European aristocracy and, because of the cost involved in this kind of education, they have tended to be regarded as exclusive and where upper class continuity in enrollment has been maintained.<sup>74</sup> As John Porter has explained, "the expression that the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton is almost reproduced in the pride with which Upper Canada College claims that so many of its old boys obtained the rank of brigadier or higher in World War II."<sup>75</sup> These schools, which have generally been seen as "strong on the character side", have enabled individuals such as Plaunt to acquire the social skills for making the right contacts and sensing opportunities later in life.<sup>76</sup> Indeed his capacity for social interaction with other members of the political and economic elites, which was evident in the mid-1930s, flowed naturally from his days at St. Andrew's and his later education at Oxford where he established lasting relationships.

The sons of many prominent families had attended St. Andrew's, among them Raymond and Vincent Massey. The latter was to become a close associate of Plaunt and an ardent supporter of the Canadian Radio League.<sup>77</sup> According to Raymond Massey, discipline at the school could be harsh both at the hands of teachers and students. As he explained it:

An Englishman named T. B. D. Tudball was my arch enemy. He taught arithmetic and algebra to the III-A form. The only really unfair master I ever had, he would begin a class by saying, "Massey Primus, you had better stand in the corner." (I was Primus, my cousin Denton, Secundus.) With my height, it was an

extra humiliation to stand in the corner, a provocation to do something to earn the unmerited punishment. Disciplinary action by the boys was as bad as lynch law.<sup>78</sup>

Tudball, who also taught Plaunt, seems to have had a keen insight into the feelings of teenage boys who were away from home probably for the first time. His manner has been described as "gentle but firm."<sup>79</sup> Later in his life, Plaunt was to become strongly anti-British regardless of what ideas or philosophies teachers, such as Tudball, may have imparted to him.<sup>80</sup> Yet, while at St. Andrew's, Plaunt was seemingly an enthusiastic member of the school. An honours student, he was active as an athlete on the second rugby team and also in the Highland Cadet Corps.<sup>81</sup> But perhaps the real importance of these years at St. Andrew's for Plaunt and others was the spectre of war which hung over both students and teachers. There was constant reference to World War One and the part played by the very large number of St. Andrew's graduates who had enlisted. Some students even cut short their education and joined the war effort as soon as they came of age.<sup>82</sup> In these post war years of unrest, dissent and economic readjustment, the lessons of the Great War including the horrors of Ypres and Vimy would not have been lost on the young men at St. Andrew's. As Roger Graham has written:

In every way the First World War had been the most tragic episode in Canadian history. Gone for ever was the old, pleasant, half-somnolent world, in which most Canadian communities had borne a striking likeness to Stephen Leacock's sunshiny little town of Mariposa. A terrible total of 61,326 Canadians had been killed, and 172,950 had been wounded. On top of that, national unity had been dealt a grievous blow by a prolonged and passionate controversy over how to maintain the supply of men for Canada's forces overseas.<sup>83</sup>

For Plaunt, a young man with French ancestry attending school in predominantly English Ontario during all of these years, the Great War seems to have had a lasting impact. He not only saw the First World War as a dramatic turning point in Canada's history but also Plaunt was to become an ardent pacifist prior to the Second World War.<sup>84</sup>

Before entering the University of Toronto, Plaunt returned to Ottawa in 1922 to finish his final year of high school education at Ottawa Collegiate Institute. His father's business was now expanding and F. X. Plaunt became President of the Poupore Lumber Company which was incorporated on October 29, 1924 with authorized capital of 300,000 dollars.<sup>85</sup>

William and Joseph Poupore operated lumber mills north of Sudbury and the two brothers were able to supply a wide range of wood products including railway ties, two by fours, fence posts and various kinds of hardwood.<sup>86</sup>

This company stayed in existence for eleven years, its charter being surrendered on December 31st, 1935.<sup>87</sup> Alan Plaunt held shares in and eventually became a director of this company as well as Harris Tie and Timber. Despite his financial success, Plaunt's father was looked upon with suspicion by the lumber magnates in Ottawa who tended to see him as their competitor.<sup>88</sup> There was even a generational continuity to this rivalry which manifested itself, in curious ways, well into the mid 1930s when Alan Plaunt was at the height of his public activity. Before he was able to join Ottawa's Rideau Club on October 26, 1936, that "fabled institution" founded by Sir John A. Macdonald in 1865, Plaunt was vehemently opposed by the sons and grandsons of the giant timber interests who then were prominent citizens of Ottawa.<sup>89</sup> An indication perhaps of Plaunt's reputation in the country through his broadcasting efforts, was the

willingness of Colonel Willis O'Connor, a senior official at Government House, to intercede on his behalf. Colonel O'Connor approached the club's executive committee and threatened to tender his resignation from the Rideau Club, if Plaunt were not accepted as a member.<sup>90</sup> Graham Spry, a co-founder of the Canadian Radio League, recalled the stiff lobby his colleague had faced from the descendants of his father's opponents:

The senior secretary at government house was so angry that he went to the committee and said if Alan Plaunt who is one of the best Canadians in this community isn't elected, I will resign. That was the sort of stature Plaunt had at government house where Willis O'Connor was the senior man.<sup>91</sup>

Thus, after other influential members came to his defence, Plaunt was successful in joining the prominent national luncheon club on Wellington Street across from the Parliament buildings which, until destroyed by fire in 1979, remained an all male bastion of leading government and business officials.<sup>92</sup>

No doubt Plaunt's social outlook was also a reason for the opposition he encountered from private interests such as the owners of these large lumber companies surrounding Ottawa. Although he came from a business oriented family, Plaunt felt that society must change if a new kind of Canada were to emerge from the turbulent, inter-war years. The Canadian Forum captured this side of the man who often preferred to row against the current:

Alan Plaunt's close friends, however, know that his work for the public operation of radio was but part of a wider plan of work for Canada on which he had his heart set. His life was inspired by a deep faith in Canada and in Canada's contribution to the democratic cause. He knew full well the changes, both political, economic, and social, that were necessary if the Canadian people were to create a vital national life out of their contemporary indecision and sectional

conflict. He sought to express his faith and to assist these changes in everything to which he gave his support. Though possessed of some private means, he utterly rejected the status quo and looked only to the future.<sup>93</sup>

Even within his own family, Plaunt was often seen as someone who too frequently was eager to march to the beat of a different drummer. His cousin, W. B. Plaunt, described him as "a friendly and dedicated man" but politically adventuresome as well:<sup>94</sup>

Our family was rather conservative and Alan was always considered just a little on the "Pink" side. A little too radical in his approach to things. Of course, this opinion was confirmed with the forming of the CBC as this was considered, in a lot of places, as an intrusion into a commercial sphere by the government.<sup>95</sup>

There were other observers of Plaunt's activities who sometimes wondered at his unusual approach to life such as his reluctance to obtain regular employment. George Smith, a former University of Toronto history professor, and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Alberta, remembered offering him advice early in his career:

It was to find a permanent job and to devote only his spare time to the good causes in which he was interested. I said this without knowing anything about his private means. Whatever they were, it seemed to me he would carry more weight in public affairs if he took on a definite job. Conventional people like to attach a label to others and to know precisely where they belong: in Canada, the public-spirited man of private means and no specific job is liable to be a bit suspect. The job I thought of was a business one - perhaps his father's business - for at times I had glimpses of what seemed to me to be unusual business shrewdness.<sup>96</sup>

Professor Smith saw in Plaunt a young man filled with a deep concern for his country:

Yet there was no doubt about his enthusiasms. The dominating one, I suspect, was an unusual love of his country and a desire to serve it. He had imagination of the constructive kind. His early work for a National Broadcasting corporation revealed a kind of vision which we can all admire. I imagine that he saw sides of political life which he found distressing but his humour did not permit much intolerance: that faculty, I should say, was reserved for the political pressures of private interests and for individuals with the qualities of the so-called 'stuffed-shirt'.<sup>97</sup>

Yet despite the urging of friends and senior colleagues, Alan Plaunt never did hold a permanent job, although he did attend meetings of the board of directors of his father's companies. At an early age, while Plaunt was still in his twenties, his father was able to provide him with capital funding of approximately two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the equivalent today of about two million dollars.<sup>98</sup> Edward Pickering, a former secretary to Mackenzie King and close friend of Plaunt, has recalled the latter telling him of the origins of his wealth and how he was thus able to become a man of "some means."<sup>99</sup> The figure of a quarter of a million dollars, which he received from his father, was further substantiated by Plaunt's sister, Elizabeth Gratias, who at one time served as a director of the Harris Tie and Timber Company.<sup>100</sup>

Yet despite his financial means, Plaunt was not to enjoy a life of luxury or merely indulge himself in hedonistic pleasures during the Depression years, a social approach he readily could have adopted. Rather his career can be cited as evidence for the view that the reform impulse in society often has come from those individuals in positions of influence and not necessarily at the grass roots level. Plaunt dedicated himself to public service apparently sensing that a national broadcasting system -

among other things - could help to heal the English-French divisions in the country. These racial tensions were highly visible, when he was in his teen-aged years, and his family ancestry no doubt made him sensitive to them. His considerable wealth, which flowed from the family's lumber business, provided him with the necessary time and money to exploit the opportunity which the growth of radio in Canada presented to him. At the same time, he did not appear to be the least intimidated by the private owners who had already sought to establish themselves in the broadcasting industry. Rather his father's business orientation seemed to have enabled him to speak the entrepreneur's language and understand the motives of the private operators whom he later challenged for control of the broadcasting system. Given these favourable circumstances, Plaunt was determined to effect social change. A public broadcasting system was to be his instrument. Looking to the future, he explained what he hoped could be accomplished:

I look upon the CBC as a hopeful experiment in a new type of public organization. Combining the principles of independent, flexible management, together with ultimate parliamentary responsibility, I believe it to be a model for other experiments in the public conduct of business just as the BBC has been in England.<sup>101</sup>

To build this new broadcasting structure, Plaunt came to rely on a network of associates he had encountered through his family's business and at the universities of Toronto and Oxford. He attended the University of Toronto, in the midst of the roaring twenties, when college fraternities were enjoying their heyday. Plaunt enrolled at Oxford in 1927 three years after Britain had elected its first Labour government.<sup>102</sup> These half dozen years are important, in any examination of Plaunt's impact on Canadian

broadcasting, because they help to explain how he was able to assume the leadership of the campaign for public broadcasting.



## Footnotes

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<sup>2</sup> E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> John E. Twomey, Canadian Broadcasting History, Resources in English: Critical Mass or Mess? (Toronto, 1978), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979).

<sup>7</sup> E. Austin Weir, Introduction to The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), xii.

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<sup>10</sup> Walter D. Young, The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-61 (Toronto, 1969), 70.

<sup>11</sup> House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 3, March 17, 1932, 74.

<sup>12</sup> J. L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins 1935-1957 (Toronto, 1982), 82.

<sup>13</sup> "In Memoriam: Alan Plaunt, 1904-1941", The Canadian Forum (October, 1941), 202.

<sup>14</sup> Brooke Claxton Papers, Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Edward Pickering to Brooke Claxton, January 10, 1942.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Plaunt Application for Admission, University of Toronto Archives (UTA), October 1, 1923.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from W. B. Plaunt to the author, March 4, 1980 and the Encyclopedia Canadiana: Ogden to Rehabilitation (Toronto, 1977), 64.

<sup>17</sup> Encyclopedia Canadiana: Ogden to Rehabilitation (Toronto, 1977), 64.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, Elizabeth Gratias, May 30, 1980.

<sup>20</sup> The Renfrew Mercury, March 2, 1888.

<sup>21</sup> Janet Plaunt Papers (privately held), "Unveiling of a Plaque to Commemorate the Founding of Renfrew", September 5, 1974.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Encyclopedia Canadiana: Ogden to Rehabilitation (Toronto, 1977), 64.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The Renfrew Mercury, March 14, 1890.

<sup>26</sup> W. B. Plaunt Papers (privately held), Description of the Plaunt family tree and letter from W. B. Plaunt to the author, March 12, 1980. See also The Renfrew Mercury, March 2, 1888.

<sup>27</sup> Janet Plaunt Papers, Dates of marriages taken from the Family Bible, and letter to the author August 18, 1981. See also The Renfrew Mercury, March 2, 1888.

<sup>28</sup> Brooke Claxton, Introduction to Jacob Viner, Canada and Its Giant Neighbour (Ottawa, 1958), 5 ff. This volume and F. R. Scott, Civil Liberties and Canadian Federalism (Toronto, 1959) contain the Alan B. Plaunt Lectures given at Carleton University.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from W. B. Plaunt to the author, March 12, 1980.

<sup>30</sup> The Renfrew Mercury, March 2, 1888 and Janet Plaunt, Papers, Dates of Marriages taken from the Family Bible, and letter to the author from W. B. Plaunt, March 4, 1980.

<sup>31</sup> W. B. Plaunt Papers, Description of the Plaunt family tree, and letter from W. B. Plaunt to the author, March 12, 1980.

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## CHAPTER II

### Toronto and Oxford

Canadian universities, for the most part, found themselves financially strained, in the 1920s, even though the country as a whole experienced a general prosperity. Canada was making the transition from the age of steel and steam to the new era of hydro-electric power and there were clear signs of material growth especially in the cities of Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton. The new demands of industry and a growing urbanization were changing the face of the country as the post-war recovery took place.<sup>1</sup> But the twenty-three universities throughout the country were hardly part of these new, good times. They were constantly on the lookout for funds, which were a source of great concern, because university endowments were meagre. Tuition fees and provincial government grants were the two main sources of financial support for the universities during this period. Only at McGill University, in Quebec, were endowments the primary means of raising funds. McGill and the University of Toronto were two of the better financed institutions.<sup>2</sup> This kind of social and economic climate could not help but affect the learning process. The focus was clearly on science, and not the humanities, a reflection perhaps of the changing nature of the country in this new age of reconstruction. Moreover academics steered clear of public controversies for fear of offending some potential donor who might provide financial assistance.<sup>3</sup>

The post-war period at the University of Toronto brought with it a number of administrative problems but also some notable achievements. As

well, it was a time of building expansion. There was an unprecedented rate of attendance at the university after the war. During 1917-18, two thousand seven-hundred and ninety-nine students were enrolled, but this figure jumped to five-thousand two-hundred and thirty-seven by 1919-20, an increase of almost one hundred per cent.<sup>4</sup> This influx of students brought with it the need to increase the teaching staff and also to provide suitable accommodation for the higher enrollment. The increase of students at University College was so great that classes were often conducted in cellars and former sculleries to ease the congestion.<sup>5</sup> This era of expansion saw Hart House, which was built with money provided by the Massey Foundation, opened in 1919.<sup>6</sup> In 1925, a new anatomy building for the Faculty of Medicine was in use and, a year later, with financial help from the Rockefeller Institute a hygiene building was completed.<sup>7</sup> Undoubtedly, the most publicized achievement at the University of Toronto, during these years, was the discovery in 1922 of insulin by Fred Banting, J. J. R. Macleod, Bert Collip and Charles Best.<sup>8</sup> The President of the university, Sir Robert Falconer, showed a desire to preserve the autonomy which the university acquired following the reforms of 1906.<sup>9</sup> For the most part, he discouraged professors from becoming active in politics, largely because such action might encourage legislators to interfere in university affairs.<sup>10</sup> Thus most faculty members refrained from stating publicly their positions on sensitive political issues.<sup>11</sup>

\* At the age of nineteen, Alan Plaunt applied for admission to the Faculty of Arts on October 1st, 1923. He enrolled at



University College and, in that same year, became a member of the Kappa Alpha Society.<sup>12</sup> The fraternity lodge was located at the corner of Hoskin and Devonshire Avenues in Toronto close to both Trinity and University Colleges. Membership in a university fraternity, in the 1920s, carried with it both honour and distinction as well as social standing on campus. Given his prosperous family background and earlier attendance at St. Andrew's College, Plaunt was able to belong to a fraternity with a rich tradition dating back to the early nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

Kappa Alpha was founded at Union College in Schenectady, New York in 1825. The society was the original fraternal organization. It was the forerunner of other fraternities including Zeta Psi and Alpha Delta.<sup>14</sup> The Kappa Alpha chapter at Toronto was established in 1892, and became the second fraternal body at the university. Even today, it continues to draw its members from private schools including St. Andrew's and Upper Canada College. When Plaunt attended the University of Toronto, between 1923 and 1927, membership in a fraternity was considered an important social step for any young man seeking a future place in society.<sup>15</sup> Among the long list of accomplished Kaps are such well known figures as ~~William Lyon Mackenzie King~~ and Brooke Claxton, the latter a one time defence minister in the King government and a close friend of Alan Plaunt. Kappa Alpha is a noted literary society at the University of Toronto and, when Plaunt belonged to the fraternity, each member was required to make a verbal presentation during the year to his fellow members at bi-weekly literary meetings.<sup>16</sup> Plaunt would no doubt have made such presentations in his first three years of membership. Although no record of them exists, he probably impressed his peers because they elected him secretary for the academic year 1925-26.<sup>17</sup> This position required Plaunt

to address each meeting on subjects which seem to have revealed a great deal about his personal views and opinions on Canada and its place in the world.

Two of the papers he presented as secretary have been held in the archives of the Kappa Alpha Society and, among other things, they show a striking rhetorical writing style which was to later serve him well in the preparation of propaganda material for the Canadian Radio League and in his appearances before House of Commons broadcasting committees.<sup>18</sup>

But these papers also convey his deep sense of nationalism, his feeling for the country's two main language groups, and his disenchantment with certain social conditions existing in Canadian society. For the most part, Plaunt held these views throughout his life. As Graham Spry has explained, "a national feeling was Alan's guiding religious principle. This was somewhat typical of people of that generation. You did not set out to be Prime Minister. You set out to share in uniting Canada and making it the leader of something or other."<sup>19</sup> Plaunt was seemingly the embodiment of this post-war spirit, among youth, when Canada was well on its way to becoming an autonomous Dominion.

Plaunt had a deep interest in international affairs and followed closely developments surrounding the growth of the League of Nations. A new world order had emerged in May, 1919, with the formation of the League, and Canada, through the strenuous efforts of Prime Minister Robert Borden, had won separate representation in the League Assembly. Canada was also to be represented in the International Labour Organization, another new world institution which was formed after World War One. This kind of recognition enabled Canada, a young nation, to join the international community with some measure of status and respectability.<sup>20</sup> The League

of Nations was a new institution in the world community and its role as a mediator, in international disputes, was often the focus of debate among member nations. League of Nations Societies were formed in many countries and, just a few years before Plaunt entered the University of Toronto, the Canadian branch was established. According to its constitution, it was "a citizen's organization formed in 1920 to arouse public opinion on world affairs" and stood for "the maintenance of peace and security for nations by the collective action of them all."<sup>21</sup> This peace movement, which was to make its presence felt during the inter-war years, seemed to have helped shape Plaunt's concept of international relations that was revealed prior to World War Two.<sup>22</sup> The League of Nations Society in Canada regarded itself as an autonomous organization with no clear ties to similar organizations, in other countries, other than the promotion of a peaceful world. Members of the Society were under no obligation to take any form of oath relating to their behaviour in the event of war. This matter was left entirely to the conscience of the individual.<sup>23</sup> Plaunt, who was himself a pacifist, espoused this kind of notion, prior to World War Two, when he defended publicly such individuals as Frank Underhill and their view that Canada should not necessarily be dragged into European battles simply because of the British connection.<sup>24</sup> Underhill, who taught history at the University of Toronto, was quite critical of the Round Table Movement which Lionel Curtis, who served as a don at Oxford in the 1920s, had established prior to the First World War. According to Underhill, this world movement, which was centred in London and had a powerful influence on Ontario, "supplied the main impetus" to the pro-war drive and was later "reincarnated as the Royal Institute of International Affairs."<sup>25</sup> Plaunt was to

join the Canadian branch of this latter organization following his Toronto and Oxford days.<sup>26</sup>

Canada's future role in the world was obviously on his mind when he addressed the Kappa Alpha Society in November, 1925:

The consensus of opinion regarding the outcome of the last Imperial Conference seems to be that its main achievement was to draft a statement of the existing political status of the British Dominions. Although this political condition has existed for some time the definite statement of it has done much to clear away the vagueness and suspicion with which Imperial relations have often been regarded in the past.<sup>27</sup>

He then proceeded to underline the division in Canada over the country's future role on the world stage:

In Canada the results of this conference are hailed with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Amongst those who advocate complete independence they are regarded as a step in the right direction; whereas amongst the Imperialists there is rejoicing because they believe that the bonds of empire will be strengthened.<sup>28</sup>

However for Plaunt and his generation, who were products of the prosperous Laurier years, Canada had finally freed herself from the regal apron strings of Queen Mother Victoria:

The important point, however, and one which is implied in these deliberations and which is recognized by all, is this: that Canada has achieved nationhood; that she is ready and willing to take her place amongst the nations of the world. The twentieth century has witnessed the birth of a new nation, of a nation throbbing with life and vitality. The seeds planted by our forefathers and by the fathers of Confederation have produced their fruit in the new century.<sup>29</sup>

Clearly the Great War had shaped Plaunt's outlook at an early age:

The years 1914-1918 may properly be said to have witnessed the birth of this lusty infant. Indeed no force could have welded together so powerfully Canada's diverse elements; as did the Great War. Out of its fire emerged a homogenous and self-conscious nation, glorying in its heroic traditions, proud of the worthy part it had just played, and full of a well-justified hope in its future.<sup>30</sup>

In 1914, the nation might have resembled "an overgrown, awkward adolescent who had not quite reached manhood", but Plaunt saw a new Canada emerging with a clear concept of nationhood:<sup>31</sup>

Members, it is our great honour and privilege to be citizens of this new nation and to be able to take our place in its future life. Canada is embarking in a great adventure - an adventure in nation-building, and she sets out under the most favourable auspices: she is young and virile; her material and spiritual resources incalculable; she has the inspiration of an heroic and unblemished past, of an equally glorious present and of a future most promising.<sup>32</sup>

Plaunt, as a member of a new generation in the ascendant, appears to have had a sense of destiny about young Canada's future role in society. In his view, unhyphenated Canadianism was the only answer if a truly national spirit was to be developed in Canada:

And in this great adventure in nation-building we are no less the pioneers than were our forefathers. The difference is that we come at the second stage, the more fortunate for we have not only the inspiration of their example but also a broader field of action. Canada is a nation - young and inexperienced it is true, but nevertheless a nation. Gradually the people of French, British and other origins are beginning to think nationally, as it were; are becoming proud to look upon Canada as their patria their native land, and to regard themselves as, first of all, Canadians.<sup>33</sup>

He felt that Canada must strive to develop a distinctive outlook of her own. Yet Plaunt also recognized that citizens in the post-war era were

not in agreement as to the country's future course:

This being the case, the question arises, - along what lines should Canada develop? Some say as an autonomous nation within the Empire - others say, as an entirely independent unit. One thing, however, is certain - that if Canada is ever to make any real contribution to the sum of human values, if she is ever to contribute anything of her own in government or literature or art, she must pursue that course upon which she can develop as an individual, where the conditions will be such as to give the fullest scope to the expression of her own individual personality.<sup>34</sup>

He saw the need for a cultural identity which would transcend the question of race:

Just as the artist, or the poet, or indeed the individual, must express his own nature if he is to create anything of real or permanent value, so that nation must express itself as an individual unit. Therefore, if we are to make a contribution it must be neither British nor French nor any mixture of nationalities - it must be an expression of the soul of Canada itself, it must be "Canadian."<sup>35</sup>

Plaunt ended his address with an enthusiastic rallying cry to his fraternity colleagues:

...A great and glorious experience lies before us, and one which calls for all the resources of our people - the world is looking to us to see what we will do with our heritage.<sup>36</sup>

Along with his apparent interest in Canada's place in world politics, Alan Plaunt was also quite critical of certain aspects of Canadian society, many of which came to his attention while attending university in Toronto. The city, in the 1920s, was slowly beginning to emerge from its high period of Edwardian opulence. The traditional "sane and solid" aura about the city was starting to disappear.<sup>37</sup> As Bruce West has written:

But the 1920s were not completely sane, of course, even in Toronto. It was the era of the flapper and the sheik, a gay blade who wore his hair plastered down smoothly with

sideburns and sported bell-bottom trousers and tried his level best to look as much as possible like Rudolph Valentino, the great lover of the silent screen, who devastated his worshippers in Toronto and elsewhere by dying suddenly at the age of thirty-one in August 1926. The ukulele and the coonskin coat were symbols of the age and the bootlegger flourished in Toronto, as he did in United States cities.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover there were several technological advances during this period which seemed to show that Toronto, in a way, symbolized the age of affluence which accompanied the post war prosperity in the mid-1920s. Toronto's first radio station CFCA, which was operated by the Daily Star, sent its first program over the air on March 28, 1922.<sup>39</sup> Foster Hewitt, who was later to become the national voice of hockey night in Canada on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, was one of the early announcers employed by the station.<sup>40</sup> Two years later, the first dial telephone appeared in Toronto and, in 1927, the year of the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation, the Uptown Theater on Yonge Street began to show motion pictures in which the actual words spoken by the actors and actresses were heard by the viewers.<sup>41</sup> The age of the silent movies was over.

Yet despite these obvious signs of progress, Plaunt wondered aloud, in a speech to the Kappa Alpha Society in January, 1926, about the atmosphere surrounding Toronto and the attitude of its people:

Why is it that visitors to Toronto from all parts of the world are chilled by this atmosphere and attitude and yet cannot give an adequate explanation of their feeling of depression? Why does Montreal regard her as smug, Hamilton as complacent, Winnipeg as insular, Vancouver as hypocritical?<sup>42</sup>

The University of Toronto was supposedly a sort of microcosm of Canada given the wide range of student representation from all parts of the country. However many of these students, especially those who were not

Ontario natives, found difficulty in adjusting to the social climate that greeted them. Plaunt was obviously distressed at Toronto's impact on his fraternity colleagues who seemed to develop something of an inferiority complex after their arrival in the city. Unfortunately, his sense of concern was often tinged with an unattractive smugness:

Why is it, to relate this problem to ourselves, that members of this society, who are not fortunate enough to be actives of Toronto, can never completely shake off the feeling that they are inevitably outsiders? Why do some members, not unsocially inclined, prefer the genial glow of the Kap house fireside to the less friendly atmosphere of Toronto's social world? Why is it that not only outside opinion, but also the opinion of temporary residents, is almost unanimous in agreeing that there is something wrong with the atmosphere and attitude of Toronto?<sup>43</sup>

Although raising these critical questions, Plaunt also underlined Toronto's strengths as one of the country's larger cities:

And yet, is not Toronto good, prosperous, comfortable, generous, religious? Has she not a low birth-rate and a high automobile registration? Has she not innumerable churches, art galleries and schools? Does she not contribute to the upkeep of hospitals and to the rescue of distant and therefore less fortunate people? Has she not, indeed, all the conventional Anglo-Saxon virtues? Undoubtedly she has - Toronto is most certainly good, prosperous and comfortable.<sup>44</sup>

However Plaunt also saw some of these same qualities contributing to Toronto's downfall as a city:

The trouble, members, in our most humble opinion, is that Toronto is too good. We suspect that criticism from such representative opinion contains some element of truth. We suspect that Toronto is, in reality, smug, self-centred and village-like; that her outlook is the outlook of a comfortable and self-satisfied bourgeoisie. We suspect that she lacks the spirit of high adventure.<sup>45</sup>



Not surprisingly, Plaunt with his French ancestry, was highly sensitive to the city's anti-French bias:

Toronto goes to Montreal, drinks her neighbour's whiskey and while so doing commiserates on the low public ideals which allow liquor to have public sale. Another Catholic church goes up in Toronto - "how dreadful" bemoan the tolerant burgesses. No candidate for civic or provincial honours can hope for election in this stronghold of free thought unless he be an Orangeman. Toronto, reflecting the sentiment of old Ontario, shudders when mention is made of the French-speaking menace. Toronto has neither a civic conscience nor a national consciousness.<sup>46</sup>

He was of the opinion that young Canada had to steer clear of this kind of mentality, because it would not be good for the country:

Surely members this attitude cannot be in the interests of Canada as a whole. It seems in fact, to be the very antithesis of them. But you ask, what has all this to do with the Society? Just this, members, that this same provincial and insular attitude which characterises Toronto tends to be reflected in our own attitude. Are we to allow ourselves to become too good to be tolerant or too complacent to progress? No, in the interests of ourselves and of our new nation let not "Toronto the good" absorb us.<sup>47</sup>

While his social outlook may have been considered to be rather unconventional, some university faculty members still saw Alan Plaunt as a young, idealistic Canadian with a sense of purpose. George Smith, then a member of the university's history department, remembered Plaunt "as one of a group in the K. A. House on Hoskin Avenue."<sup>48</sup> In his opinion, Plaunt's "essential idealism was disguised by a gay humour and less effectively by presenting a "hard-boiled" veneer which did not deceive."<sup>49</sup> The campus atmosphere at the University of Toronto, in the mid 1920s, allowed for an easy personal rapport between teacher and student. Lester Pearson, who joined the history department in 1923, the same year in which Plaunt first

enrolled at the school, had fond memories of the spirit at the university in an age of personalized education:

In my study groups and in the contacts I had with men in Middle House as their don, I found the undergraduates far from lifeless and no part of my experience at the university was more rewarding than the association and the discussions I had with them.<sup>50</sup>

Pearson and the then respected dean of Canadian historians, Professor G. M. Wrong, were to eventually give their backing to the Canadian Radio League which Plaunt headed with Graham Spry. As the history professor turned Prime Minister was later to write:

I had been interested in the Canadian Radio League in the thirties and my views did not change in principle during the intervening years, though certainly they had to be modified in practice. My general view was that broadcasting should be treated as education and that there should be the greatest possible public control; that the emphasis should be on the public system and private broadcasting should be very much a subsidiary. Indeed, I used to think in the early days that the CBC should be the sole agency for all broadcasting.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed Lester Pearson's view of the Canadian broadcasting system paralleled closely that of Alan Plaunt, an indication perhaps in later years, of the Radio League's lasting impact as a pressure group.

Whatever Plaunt's other achievements during his university days, impressive academic accomplishments were not among them. In fact his academic record may shed some light on his seeming reluctance to discuss this early period of his life. In his last three years at the University of Toronto, he managed only a "C" standing in his overall courses which included English, French, Latin and Greek and Roman history.<sup>52</sup> He was also somewhat self-deprecating about the level of scholarship he had attained. In a letter to his cousin Philip Wait, who was then attending McGill

University in Montreal, Plaunt commended him on his scholarly pursuits:

Many congratulations on your very fine second at McGill. Your results are certainly gratifying - And you call me a student!<sup>53</sup>

That Plaunt did not personally participate in convocation ceremonies at the University of Toronto in June, 1927, when he obtained his Bachelor of Arts, is perhaps some commentary on his undergraduate days.<sup>54</sup> Instead the Registrar of the University, James Brebner, signed the Roll of Convocation on his behalf and the parchment was forwarded to number one Clemow Avenue in Ottawa, Alan Plaunt's home.<sup>55</sup> Besides, Toronto, a city he had often criticized, was behind him at least for the time being. But Oxford, in the 1920s, was ready and waiting for a young Canadian with a deep sense of nationalism and a somewhat progressive outlook. In 1927, the same year in which he had graduated from the University of Toronto, Plaunt enrolled at Christ Church, the "House", as it was known, and thus began graduate studies in history.<sup>56</sup> His two years at Oxford were to nurture some of the social views he already held and also instill in him a sense of mission toward public service.

The turbulent inter-war years in Britain produced profound social changes which could not help but reveal themselves in the academic climate at Oxford University. The Great War had a levelling effect on society. Moreover it altered previously held beliefs such as the idea of the governing class being an elite and drawn only from the established families.<sup>57</sup> The war also created eventually a near nation of pacifists after the British Empire had lost more than a million lives and the country, hitherto the world's banker, was suddenly burdened with a staggering debt.<sup>58</sup> As Hugh Whitney Morrison has explained:

The dislocation of society accelerated the great social changes that had their genesis in the Industrial Revolution and the rapid spreading of machine production. In Britain, free elementary education had been introduced by the Act of 1870. The great Reform Bills had widened the suffrage, and by the end of the war all industrial workers and farm labourers had the vote, and all women thirty years and over had won the right of the franchise. The Labour Party, long a minority group, grew rapidly and gained in influence.<sup>59</sup>

Student life at Oxford was bound to reflect some of these changes. Although Oxford, in the 1920s, became more democratic and the student body more widely representative of British youth, it still remained an exclusive institution and the majority of the students came from the well to do families.<sup>60</sup> Both Oxford and Cambridge continued to serve as an important educational training ground for future leaders in the fields of public service, business and education.<sup>61</sup> The political climate as well at Oxford changed greatly in the mid and late 1920s, after Britain's first Labour Government in 1924 produced a new kind of social force on campus. This fresh political mood was manifested in the rise of the number of Socialist supporters and in the formation of the Labour Club.<sup>62</sup> Just two years later, British economic life was threatened by a general strike called by the trade unions. During the walkout in 1926, students at Oxford and Cambridge volunteered to run trains and buses. To some observers, the students could be seen as anti-Labour. To others, their action represented their instinctive opposition to a social movement that could possibly bring about a form of dictatorship in the long run.<sup>63</sup> All of these developments clearly indicated that campus life at Oxford could not escape the real world. With the university's environment now somewhat more open, "the Rhodes Scholars, no longer looked on as curious outlanders

as they had been in their first ten years (1904-14), were able to make increasingly important contributions to Oxford life."<sup>64</sup>

Although Plaunt was not a Rhodes Scholar himself, he still was able to attend Oxford with a number of noted Canadians who held that honour. Several of these scholars were later to have distinguished careers in law, politics, the arts and academic life. Among them were Hugh MacLennan of Montreal who was to become a prominent Canadian novelist; Clarence Campbell, also of Montreal, who eventually served as a lawyer and President of the National Hockey League; James Sinclair, a future Liberal cabinet minister, and the father of Margaret Trudeau; and academics Escott Reid and Eugene Forsey.<sup>65</sup> All of these young men had to go through the Rhodes ritual of writing a three-hour essay on one of a number of subjects presented to them and then face a selection committee which questioned the scholarship candidates. The political and social environment at Oxford seemed to have considerable influence on Plaunt and the Canadian Rhodes Scholars especially in their later careers.

During this period, at the university, there were a number of emerging intellectual movements which cut across the political spectrum. It was a time of new patterns in politics which eventually saw considerable party reorientation. The second Labour Government headed by Ramsay MacDonald underwent a major upheaval after it was, like so many other governments around the world, overtaken by the unfavourable economic circumstances of the Depression.<sup>66</sup> Although the most intense debates within the Labour party over unemployment and the state of the economy, and between Fascists and Communists, were to take place in the 1930s,

the background to this political ferment was present at Oxford during Plaunt's years as a student.<sup>67</sup> Of particular importance was the debate over pacifism.<sup>68</sup> There was a wide range of opinion among students on international developments and the implications of the unbridled patriotism and militarism that World War One had spawned in Britain.<sup>69</sup> Yet a pacifist sentiment meant many things to many people. As R. B. McCallum has written, "what exactly pacifism was and how many different forms of it there were is a complex question."<sup>70</sup> In general, pacifism implied two main concepts: the abolition of war as an immediate goal in international affairs; and the more personal view that each individual must embrace the doctrine of non-resistance in the Quaker tradition.<sup>71</sup> Plaunt could be described as a pacifist, in the former sense, because he saw the prospect of a major European war as "an appalling one."<sup>72</sup> He also applied practical criteria for Canada staying clear of all international conflict largely because he felt Canadian participation would harm national unity and keep Canada from becoming "a progressive democratic state."<sup>73</sup>

It was quite common for students to belong to several political clubs at Oxford because, as Graham Spry explained, "you wanted to see what it was all about" and be able to "taste all these wines before you bought a bottle."<sup>74</sup> Spry, who attended Oxford between 1922 and 1924, maintained that both he and Plaunt were influenced by the scope of political thinking at the university:

We were typical left-wing Liberals by origin. We had both been over in England when you had the post-war spirit among the young people. The younger graduate types were very interested in the Labour Party and one of my closest friends was Malcolm MacDonald, former British High Commissioner to Canada, and the son of the Labour Prime Minister: Alan would be under these same kind of influences.<sup>75</sup>

Plaunt also became a close friend, in the late 1920s, of Malcolm MacDonald, another Oxford Alumnus. At the time, both shared a growing interest in international affairs. Since they had been to Oxford, at roughly the same period, they would often reminisce about university days and were to maintain their friendship until Plaunt's death in 1941.<sup>76</sup>

Oxford had a prodigious number of clubs, societies and organized groups, within the university, including the Raleigh Club, which was essentially a collection of imperialists, the Brackenbury Society, an old and informal institution which often drew distinguished visitors, and the Oxford Union, which was the university's debating society.<sup>77</sup> "I was a member of the Oxford Labour Club", MacDonald recalled, "where a lot of radical youngsters were beginning to say Labour is the right party and Alan would have been in that minority crowd of young, radical students because they became more and more influential in the Union."<sup>78</sup> This leftist movement at Oxford when Plaunt attended the school was "fairly strong although fairly young" but there was clear evidence of "a new, rising section of undergraduates who were partly socialist."<sup>79</sup> In recalling the mood at Oxford, MacDonald emphasized the importance of group discussion among contemporaries as the most significant aspect of learning. While the tutorial system was the formal teaching method, the informal sessions among students in the evenings, with their dons occasionally present, seem to have had a lasting impact on all participants.<sup>80</sup> In MacDonald's

view, Oxford was more of a debating society than a place where rigid classroom routine prevailed:

I've often said that any little touches of civilization that there are in me, except one or two that I inherited from my mother or father, were planted in me during my years at Oxford by my own contemporaries during those discussions evening after evening about every subject under the sun political and otherwise.<sup>81</sup>

Moreover MacDonald felt that Alan Plaunt's personality would lend itself to this form of learning:

I'm sure it was the same at Christ Church and Alan's character would make him terribly fond of sitting and talking in those discussions and listening to others. A lot of these ideas would be liberal and, while he may have already had liberal ideas, they would be cultivated more and more in these Oxford evening talks and some may have been planted in him then.<sup>82</sup>

Plaunt, according to MacDonald, would have been typical of the post-war generation of students who attended Oxford when the university was undergoing a social change:

Alan was a bit pacifist, a bit socialist perhaps and very much nurtured by the Oxford days. It was, in a way, fashionable among an intellectual minority to be unorthodox or revolutionary in political ways. His main interest was in intellectual things but he did not have a first class brain for creating intellectual ideas.<sup>83</sup>

To some extent, MacDonald's observations are borne out in Plaunt's academic record at Oxford. After studying at Christ Church from 1927 to 1929, he gained a third class Honours B.A. in Modern History upon graduation.<sup>84</sup> But his somewhat questionable academic performance did not prevent him from having frequent contact with the Rhodes Scholars during his days at Oxford. Plaunt's closest friends were two Rhodes Scholars



from Ontario, D. A. "Sandy" Skelton and Stephen Cartwright, and A. E. "Dal" Grauer, a Rhodes Scholar from British Columbia.<sup>85</sup> Skelton, the son of O. D. Skelton, a leading adviser to Mackenzie King in the 1920s and 1930s, was a flamboyant individual who later became secretary to the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations.<sup>86</sup> Cartwright, a member of the Kappa Alpha fraternity at the University of Toronto with Plaunt, was a personable young man who was idolized by many of his friends. In the early 1930s, Cartwright became editor of The Canadian Forum, the leading leftist periodical in the country, at a time when Plaunt was campaigning for public ownership of radio in Canada. Plaunt frequently wrote articles on radio in The Forum and, as Alan Gibbons, a close friend of Plaunt and also a member of the Kappa Alpha fraternity, has explained, "Alan had a natural ally in Stephen Cartwright."<sup>87</sup> Similarly, when establishing his network of radio contacts throughout the country, Plaunt was able to call on A. E. Grauer, who became a member of the executive committee of the Canadian Radio League in 1931. Grauer was a talented individual who graduated with first-class honours in economics and history at the University of British Columbia in 1925.<sup>88</sup> Recognized as a brilliant student, he received his Ph.D. degree at the University of California and, as a Rhodes Scholar from Vancouver, obtained a B.A. in jurisprudence at Oxford.<sup>89</sup> Like Plaunt, he was the product of a wealthy family and became the Vice-President of British Columbia Power Corporation in 1944.<sup>90</sup> In the early 1930s, Grauer had joined the Faculty of the University of Toronto and eventually was chosen Director of the Department of Social Science. In 1936 he was retained by the Bank of Canada to make a study of the taxation system in the country and later acted as an adviser to the Rowell-Sirois Commission on social welfare, insurance and labour

legislation.<sup>91</sup> Although he was not their equal, in an academic sense, Plaunt still seemed to feel comfortable socializing with these Canadians whose family backgrounds were often similar to his own. The social advantages Canadian Rhodes Scholars frequently enjoyed enabled many of them eventually to hold prominent positions in government, business and academic circles.

The spectre of Cecil John Rhodes would have hung over Plaunt and the Rhodes Scholars at a time when the scholarship system had been in existence for just over two decades. Rhodes, who was "an ardent believer in the unity of the Empire," also was opposed to "Downing Street control."<sup>92</sup> He was a champion of what has been called "colonial nationalism."<sup>93</sup> In Rhodes's opinion, "the English-speaking man, whether British, American, Australian, or South African, is the type who does now, and is likely to continue to do in the future, the most practical, effective work to establish justice, to promote liberty and to ensure peace over the widest possible area of the planet."<sup>94</sup> Doctor Frank Aydelotte, the American Secretary to the Rhodes Trustees for thirty-four years between 1918 and 1952, has explained that Rhodes looked for young men who could partake of public service:

It is quite clear that Rhodes wanted men whose first concern would be for the public welfare rather than for private individual success. Yet the two are not incompatible, are indeed complementary. Public spirit aids any man in making a success in his career as an individual. And the man who can accumulate a fortune or make for himself an influential position in one of the professions in public life is in the best position to serve the common good if he has the ability to understand it and the concern to do so.<sup>95</sup>

It is hardly surprising then that young Canadians at Oxford, in the late 1920s, acquired a sense of mission given the influences they were under. Indeed as Hugh Whitney Morrison has noted, "the great purpose behind the Scholarship scheme was the creation of a core of men in the world who treasure, through a common loyalty, allegiance to the great dream of Peace through Understanding."<sup>96</sup> Although he was not a member of any single profession, Alan Plaunt certainly believed in the need for an individual to perform some form of public service as manifested in his radio campaign, a reflection of his Oxford years.

The Oxford Group Movement, with its thrust for moral rearmament, was very prominent at Oxford during the late 1920s.<sup>97</sup> Plaunt does not appear to have been personally associated with the Oxford Group.<sup>98</sup> However the New Canada Movement, which he founded in the early 1930s, did adopt some of the Group's propaganda practices in spreading its message among rural youth in Canada.<sup>99</sup> Central to the Movement's method was the Canadian 'Big Team' approach whereby a dozen or so young farmers would carry their message to the counties of Ontario encouraging the rural community to become more familiar with the conditions and causes of the Depression. The method was reminiscent of the Oxford Group teams which tried to spiritualize existing organizations, in various world countries, with the enthusiasm of and devotion to moral rearmament.<sup>100</sup> This kind of movement was just one of several new social currents that were introduced to young Canadian scholars at Oxford many of whom were abroad for the first time. Their whole exposure to British society could be a great influence, in particular, the cultural aspects such as the British Museum, the National Gallery and the numerous private art galleries and bookshops.<sup>101</sup> Plaunt's later interest in Canadian artists would appear quite natural

for someone like himself who had opportunity to be in England during these years. As R. K. Webb has noted, "the appreciation of painting was widened by the growing interest of galleries in modern artists, notably the Tate Gallery in London, and by the development of reproduction processes which made prints of good works of art available at small cost."<sup>102</sup> The university was the economic and cultural base of Oxford and students could not help but have a sense of history as they gazed up at the ancient architecture of the imposing buildings. This aura surrounding the university is what Hugh Whitney Morrison has described as "the omnipresent past at Oxford."<sup>103</sup> For many of the Canadian students, these cultural overtones could hardly be anything but a source of inspiration especially since their much younger country was able to boast relatively few cultural achievements. In the words of W. L. Morton, "arts and letters, then, had done little, if anything, to resolve the fierce transition in Canada from a Victorian world of rural conservatism to the astringent, realistic, and abstract world of sophisticated, scientific, urban volatilisism."<sup>104</sup>

Perhaps the greatest manifestation of Britain's cultural growth, at this time, was the British Broadcasting Corporation, which showed the positive influence the state could exert in people's lives. When Plaunt arrived at Oxford, the government had just taken over the British Broadcasting Company which had been established in the early 1920s. In 1927, the BBC began the sponsorship of programs, such as the summer Promenade Concerts, which helped give public exposure to young British composers and enabled listeners to increase their knowledge of music.<sup>105</sup> The nationalization of broadcasting did not appear to have resulted from simply a doctrinaire belief, in public ownership, but rather was perceived

as a pragmatic means of dealing with a new communications instrument of great cultural significance.<sup>106</sup> According to Charles Wright the BBC "has been influenced by an ideological commitment made early in the history of British broadcasting" and one in which "radio was regarded as an opportunity for the cultural improvement of a mass audience."<sup>107</sup> A state-owned system, it was felt, would help "to facilitate the cultural enlightenment of the average listener."<sup>108</sup> Plaunt's later outlook on public broadcasting in Canada tended to mirror this same kind of approach to state intervention.

Radio, in general, and the shift from "company" to "corporation" was a noted topic of discussion at Oxford in the 1920s.<sup>109</sup> As Asa Briggs has written:

In 1922 the BBC first came into existence. At that time the initials meant nothing to most people: they even meant nothing to John Reith, who became the BBC's first General Manager. By the end of 1926 the initials made up one of the most familiar combinations of letters in the country. Yet throughout the whole of these four formative years the initials did not stand for what they stand today. The agency which brought broadcasting to this country was not a public body but a business enterprise. The C in BBC stood not for "Corporation" but for "Company."<sup>110</sup>

Broadcasting in Great Britain actually passed through three early phases. Initially the Marconi Company started an experimental broadcasting station at Writtle in Essex in 1922. Then, in this same year, private stations were started by various interests in Birmingham and Manchester and others were contemplated. Meanwhile, the Post Office, the regulator of radio, which was seen as an extension of the telegraph, had to consider the allotment of wave-lengths. Moreover newspaper interests were fearful of this new electronic medium and urged the government to consider possible

restrictions against the fledgling industry.<sup>111</sup> This defensive posture on the part of newspaper owners would eventually form part of the Canadian radio experience as well. Finally the government decided to permit a broadcasting company to be formed provided the capital was put up by the manufacturers of wireless sets.<sup>112</sup> Thus radio in Britain entered its second phase. The British Broadcasting Company came into existence on October 18, 1922.<sup>113</sup> Five years later, this wholly private structure was replaced by the British Broadcasting Corporation. In 1925, the Government had appointed a special committee under the chairmanship of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres to probe the state of radio in the country and to make recommendations about its future. The Crawford committee, apparently taking its cue from John Reith, decided to recommend that broadcasting be taken out of the hands of private enterprise and entrusted to a Corporation, with a Royal Charter under remote state control, but managed otherwise as a business quite separate from the Civil Service.<sup>114</sup> The British Broadcasting Corporation began operation on January 1st, 1927.<sup>115</sup> The Corporation was to serve as Alan Plaunt's model in his later proposals to Canadian federal politicians on the kind of broadcasting structure Canada should have.

John Reith, later to be named Sir John, as General Manager and Director-General of the BBC, was undoubtedly the guiding influence on British Broadcasting. Asa Briggs has noted that the hiring of "Major Gladstone Murray as Director of Publicity" in 1924 was an important development in Reith's long range planning for broadcasting.<sup>116</sup> Murray, who was later to become General Manager of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at Alan Plaunt's urging, "was given extensive powers including authority to co-ordinate branches of the BBC - among them control of the

editorial side of all publications and responsibility for all public relations."<sup>117</sup> Murray's personal description of Reith helped to reveal the complexity of this highly skilled broadcasting administrator:

Sir John Reith is a phenomenon. He is first of all and unchallengably one of the ablest men of the generation in England or anywhere else. He could be much abler if it were not for certain important psychological limitations which have oppressed him increasingly. He is the only one of my acquaintance suffering from an inferiority complex so acute as to be indistinguishable from a superiority complex. He has an instinct for the dramatic which in other circumstances would have qualified him for eminence on the stage. His natural eloquence allied to his hereditary piety would have led him far in the Church of England.<sup>118</sup>

Despite Reith's personal idiosyncracies, Murray left no doubt as to the extent of his contribution:

Certainly British Broadcasting owes much to the organizing ability and idealism of its founder Sir John Reith. The British people should never forget their debt to Sir John in the essential of a broadcasting service which remains the envy of the civilised world.<sup>119</sup>

Alan Plaunt seems to have been greatly impressed with Reith's design for broadcasting, in particular, the heavy educational purpose which he saw radio fulfilling. Reith refused to make any crude distinction between "educational" or "entertainment" programming.<sup>120</sup> He once asked, "when a critic complains that there is too much education and too little entertainment in broadcast programmes, where does he draw the line?"<sup>121</sup> The only distinction, which Reith himself drew, was "between the educational effect of programmes specifically designed as "education" and the educative influence, potential or actual, of the whole range of the BBC's activities."<sup>122</sup> Similarly Plaunt did not see programming in broadcasting

being strictly categorized under these two headings:

There is not, as I conceive it, any hard and fast line between education and entertainment. On the one hand, all programmes of excellence, from grand opera to good dance music, can be regarded as educational and, on the other, educational material must be presented in an entertaining, interesting way, if it is to be effective. The problem is largely one of presentation.<sup>123</sup>

Still there was no question that Plaunt's years in England had left him with a decidedly biased view toward public broadcasting and the approach taken by Sir John Reith and the BBC in the late 1920s:

From the educator's point of view, broadcasting conditions in England have been advantageous from the start. Since its inception, the B.B.C. has recognized education as an integral part of its function. This, together with complete ownership of its facilities, has made planning and experimentation on a wide scale possible. The results have been amazing, and in addition to adult education 6,466 schools to-day receive broadcasts in history, geography, languages, music appreciation, nature study, literature, and science as supplementary to their regular curricula.<sup>124</sup>

Plaunt saw educational broadcasting central to a public system but felt it would be strictly secondary, if private broadcasters were to have control of broadcasting:

The essential difference between public-service broadcasting and commercial broadcasting may be defined in terms of their respective aims. The aim of a public-service system is to give public service, however that may be defined; the aim of a commercial system must first and foremost be to make profits. It is obvious that education, in both the wide and narrow senses, must be part and parcel of the aim of a public system and equally axiomatic that it is subsidiary to the commercial motive in the case of a private system.<sup>125</sup>

Plaunt appears to have had at least a tinge of elitism in his views on broadcasting probably fostered during his days at socially prestigious



Christ Church:

Let me not, however, be accused at this point of belonging to the "give the public what it should have" as opposed to the "give the public what it wants" school. In this way the protagonists of a commercial system often try to confuse the real issue. The real issue, however, is "who shall decide what the public wants?"<sup>126</sup>

As far as Plaunt was concerned, the private sector was no match for a public board that would be able to assess the tastes and needs of society:

Shall it be a publicly appointed body such as the B.B.C. or C.B.C. acting as a trustee and staffed with experts in the entertainment business? Or shall it be those whose primary object is not entertainment but salesmanship and who must often cater to the lowest common denominator of their audience? Which should be most responsive to the public tastes, interests, ideals, and inspirations, a body which has every resource with which to assess the public taste, or advertisers whose judgment of the public taste often depends on dubious generalizations from solicited fan mail?<sup>127</sup>

Although he may have underestimated the need for private entrepreneurs to know the tastes of their audience, in order to survive in the broadcasting business, Plaunt still was able to make a convincing case for a state-owned system.

The Universities of Toronto and Oxford had instilled in him the need to serve society, in some meaningful way, beyond that of a daily profession. Matthew Arnold once described Oxford as "the home of lost causes."<sup>128</sup> But this description would not apply to the university's impact on Alan Plaunt. J. F. B. Livesay, a former General Manager of the Canadian Press, explained how Plaunt's university days provided him with a deep enthusiasm for public service:

Alan Plaunt, a man of wealth, a scion of a French family that made its fortune lumbering in the Ottawa Valley, became uneasily conscious

after his passage through Toronto University, that he must somehow, sometime, dedicate himself to public service. As a first step, he took a post-graduate course at Christ Church, Oxford, the famous "House". That is a phase that has debilitated many young Canadians of wealth and accomplishments. But it was not so with Alan Plaunt, the young man returning from that ordeal. I met in 1930. Never too serious about himself, he still felt he had a mission, something to be done at home, in Canada. This earnest purpose first took shape in his radio campaign. 129

The private broadcasters, who had had the field of radio to themselves since 1918, were soon to face a formidable opponent - a young Canadian who had both the financial means and the social influence necessary to shape the broadcasting system as he saw fit.

## CHAPTER II

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> W. L. Morton, "The 1920s" in J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown, eds., Part One of the Canadians 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1968), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1980), 177.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> W. Stewart Wallace, A History of the University of Toronto 1827-1927 (Toronto, 1927), 187.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Bliss, The Discovery of Insulin (Toronto, 1982), 247.

<sup>9</sup> Michiel Horn, "Free Speech Within the Law": the Letter of the Sixty-Eight Toronto Professors, 1931", Ontario History, LXXII (March, 1980), 30.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>12</sup> UTA, Alan Plaunt Application for Admission, October 1, 1923.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Gordon Roberts to the author, undated.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Kappa Alpha Society (KAS), Alan Plaunt speeches, November, 1925 and January, 1926, Toronto..

- 19 Interview, Graham Spry, January 28, 1980.
- 20 Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1970), 156-157.
- 21 Cited in James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression, Vol. I (Toronto, 1964), 112.
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- 23 James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression, Vol. I (Toronto, 1964), 113.
- 24 Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1980), 193.
- 25 James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression, Vol. I (Toronto, 1964), 109.
- 26 Letter from Edna Neale to the author, undated. Plaunt joined the CIIA in 1930. See also the Report of the Second Study Conference of the CIIA, "Collective Security" by Alan B. Plaunt, May 24-26, 1935, 8-20.
- 27 KAS, Alan Plaunt speech, November, 1925, 1.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century, (Toronto, 1970), 132.
- 32 KAS, Alan Plaunt speech, November, 1925, 1.
- 33 Ibid., 2.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Bruce West, Toronto (Toronto, 1967), 246.

- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid., 244.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., 245, 246. For a further study of Toronto in the 1920s, see G. P. de T. Glazebrook, The Story of Toronto (Toronto, 1971) 211-234.
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- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
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- 55 Ibid.
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## CHAPTER III

### The Broadcasting Pioneers

The first decade of the twentieth century was marked by noted advances in communications and a steadily growing urbanization throughout the Dominion of Canada. The mass circulation daily, a direct result of this new social environment, was fast becoming the most influential medium replacing the People's Press and the earlier Party Press which had been funded by both the Liberal and Conservative parties.<sup>1</sup> During the 1880s, such papers as the Ottawa Journal, the Hamilton Herald, and a Montreal newspaper, La Presse, introduced a new style of journalism which played down political and business news. Instead these journals focused on people-oriented issues and highlighted entertainment news items for a mass readership.<sup>2</sup> Among the more prominent editors of these newspapers were such noted individuals as E. E. Sheppard of the Toronto News, P. D. Ross of the Ottawa Journal, and Treffié Berthiaume of La Presse.<sup>3</sup> The People's Press thus eroded the influence of the Party Press, which was so evident in the immediate post Confederation era, and set the format for the style of newspaper coverage which the mass circulation daily provided in the early twentieth century. In the words of Paul Rutherford, "by 1900 the typical daily was a conglomerate of news, comment, and entertainment, suited to the different tastes of an assortment of readers."<sup>4</sup> The years between 1901 and 1911 also saw a sharp rise in the country's urban population, a development not lost on Sir Wilfrid Laurier who had adopted a form of campaigning more synchronized with the forces of urbanization at work in British North America. The age of the rural political picnic was

over and party leaders now had to make a more innovative use of the campaign train to reach the great number of voters in the cities.<sup>5</sup>

This decade, as well, saw the start of regional press associations laying the basis for what eventually became the Canadian Press, the country's national news agency.<sup>6</sup> In the United States, there were similar changes including the development of huge newspaper chains, increasing literacy, urban growth and the spread of wire services. In the words of Frederick Whitney, "this conspiracy of communications breathed new life into public relations and its organized practice stemmed from this decade."<sup>7</sup> But it was the first long-distance use of radio communication, just after the turn of the century, that was the forerunner of a technological revolution which was to change the face of the world.

In December, 1901, just three years before Alan Plaunt was born, a startling new invention in which Canada quickly became involved captured everyone's attention. To many people, it seemed like an unbelievable feat but electrical signals had been sent across the Atlantic without the use of wires.<sup>8</sup> The age of wireless telegraphy had arrived. The story of Guglielmo Marconi's experiments with electromagnetic waves, the signals which emanate from a radio transmitter, has remained famous in history because it marked the beginning of radio communication.<sup>9</sup> For Canadians, this event has had a special significance, because Marconi's successful experiment was conducted on Canadian soil and thereafter he was to enter agreement with the Laurier government for the further development of wireless. Just a year after he left Newfoundland, Marconi was successful in negotiating a financial arrangement with the federal government whereby he received \$75,000 in assistance and "the prime plot of Glace Bay, Cape Breton for a permanent installation."<sup>10</sup> Federal politicians would later

display a conservative attitude toward radio in their use of the new medium at election time. However, for the moment, the government of the day sought to turn Marconi's invention to its advantage. In return for his subsidy, Marconi promised that overseas wireless rates would not exceed 10 cents a word for private messages and 15 cents per word for the government and the press.<sup>11</sup> Hence, in 1902, the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of Canada was established, the forerunner to Canadian Marconi. At just about the same time, a Canadian, Reginald Aubrey Fessenden, who was backed by Pittsburgh financiers, conducted his first successful experiment in voice transmission.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, it was Marconi's company that opened station XWA in late 1918.<sup>13</sup> The station located in Montreal was licensed the following year with the call letters CFCF, the designation the station retains to this day.<sup>14</sup> As Professor Peers has noted, "it is without rival as the pioneer Canadian station."<sup>15</sup> Thereafter broadcaster-businessmen, who first launched radio in Canada, dominated the broadcasting system during the first decade.

Apologists for state ownership have paid scant attention to the efforts of private broadcasters during the 1920s and early 1930s. The first government involvement in radio, as manifested in the appointment of the Aird Commission to study this new form of technology, has obviously appealed to these scholars. Therefore their studies have tended to focus on the Commission's findings in 1929, the Radio League's formation the following year, and the arguments for state ownership advanced before the House of Commons Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting in 1932. Perhaps because a great deal of broadcasting history was written in the 1960s, Canada's Centennial decade, a tendency has existed to treat the development of the medium as a logical extension of Harold Innis's thesis that

the geographic lines of the country are as much east and west as they are north and south.<sup>16</sup> It might be suggested that these scholars have sought to develop an electronic version of the Laurentian school of historical thought. Naturally the nationalist implications of the Innis revolution would hardly be lost on these authors. For example, Margaret Prang has noted how the federal government resorted to "defensive expansionism" in the establishment of a system of public broadcasting in Canada.<sup>17</sup> Frank Peers has argued that "nationalist sentiment had achieved Canadian ownership and control of stations and networks, full coverage for the scattered population of an immense territory, and the use of broadcasting to foster national objectives."<sup>18</sup> Similarly Father John O'Brien has written that some people believed radio would accentuate the "psychological pressure from the south" while others believed it could become "the single most important factor in drawing all parts of the country together and in developing a national consciousness."<sup>19</sup> Thus these same authors tend to dismiss the broadcasting pioneers somewhat hastily claiming that the low power of early stations provided limited service, that stations tended to be located mainly in the urban areas and provided unexciting programming, and that network broadcasting rested almost solely with Henry Thornton and the Canadian National Railway.<sup>20</sup> These arguments, which Alan Plaunt and the Canadian Radio League advanced most forcefully, are open to question when the early private broadcasters are examined more closely.

The tendency to equate the low power of some of the early stations with limited service has to be treated somewhat cautiously given the nature of the radio spectrum and the conditions under which the stations operated. For example, Professor Peers, in describing the legislation

governing the medium during this period, has observed that "only two Canadian stations at the end of 1928 had a power of 5000 watts (one in Ontario, one in Manitoba). Five stations had a power of 1000 to 1800 watts; most of the others had a power of 50, 100 or 500 watts."<sup>21</sup> The implications of his argument are that the range of the stations, in the 1920s, did not provide proper coverage. Yet the power of these stations and reception of their signals, during this period, often seems to have been surprisingly adequate and at times astonishing. To understand the extent of radio coverage, in these early days, it is necessary to have some understanding of how radio signals were received.

There are essentially two kinds of electromagnetic waves which emanate from a radio transmitter to the radio receiver. The ground wave is that part of the total radiation that is directly affected by the presence of the earth and its surface features. These factors dictate that radio signals will not travel great distances over or through rocky terrain. The second kind of wave is known as the ionospheric or sky wave, namely, that part of the total radiation that is directed toward the ionosphere also known as the "Heavyside Layer."<sup>22</sup> This is a region in the upper atmosphere above a height of about sixty miles where free ions and electrons exist in sufficient quantity to have an appreciable effect on wave travel. This "layer" has been compared to "a mirror like cover" which can reflect radio sky waves back to earth.<sup>23</sup> In the 1920s, radio waves could travel great distances and be received in far away places, because there was less man-made interference and less cluttering of the radio spectrum than exists today. The countless radio usages common today including citizen band radios were not as pronounced. Nor was there a large amount of industrial equipment, which can also cause radio

interference, to hamper reception of signals. Hence a station of fifty watts would probably be heard much clearer over a greater distance, in this earlier period, as opposed to present day receiving conditions.<sup>24</sup> Evidence to show the extensive signals provided by some of these "small" stations can be found in the Minutes of the 1932 Commons Committee on Radio Broadcasting. Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia operated a fifty watt station with the call letters CKIC. The President of the University, Doctor F. W. Patterson, appeared before the Committee claiming that his "primary interest" in radio broadcasting was "of the education-ist."<sup>25</sup> Under questioning from Committee members, Doctor Patterson explained how far the station's broadcasts extended. Asked "what points do you reach?", he replied:

We reach St. Stephen, St. Andrews, Eastport in Maine, Saint John, as far north as Chipman; Sussex, Moncton, Amherst, practically all of Prince Edward Island, by day time broadcast; Truro, into New Glasgow, Dartmouth, but not Halifax except in the outskirts. The area between Truro and Halifax, and in the day time Digby and a little farther, probably in around Moncton by night.<sup>26</sup>

The University President went on to state that "we have only a 50 watt station" and that "one hundred watts would probably give us all the coverage we would reasonably desire."<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, Gerry Quinney, a radio pioneer with station CKWX in Vancouver, recalled how low power transmitters actually could attain great distances in the early days of broadcasting:

You know when I joined CKWX we were operating with 50 watts with the most inefficient antenna system because nobody had designed a decent one. But that 50 watts got us all over the world literally. In those days, your power used to go straight up in the air with these flat top antennas to the heavyside layer which is now called

the ionosphere. We would transmit up to that layer and it would run across the roof of the world, you might say, and then it would come down. But it was predictable where it was going to come down. It always came down in Australia and San Francisco and we were putting signals into Los Angeles as strong as into our own market.<sup>28</sup>

Thus was born the practice known as "DX-ing" as listeners sought constantly to bring in far away stations. When they had been successful, listeners frequently wrote to the station they had heard and, in return, were mailed "DX" cards as proof of their reception. For these pioneer stations, "DX-ing" was an early form of measuring the strength of signals and determining listening audiences.<sup>29</sup>

Professor Pèers has questioned the early radio coverage in the province of Quebec noting that "French Canada was particularly ill served" and on the east coast where, in his view, "the coverage of the Maritimes was not much better."<sup>30</sup> He notes that in Quebec, "the only station of moderate power broadcasting mainly in French was the Montreal station of La Presse, CKAC."<sup>31</sup> Similarly "in Nova Scotia there was for some years a single station, CHNS, Halifax."<sup>32</sup> In this regard, it is interesting to examine the evidence presented to the 1932 Commons Committee on Radio Broadcasting relating to both provinces. For example, Arthur Dupont, the director of Radio Station CKAC, recalled the history of the station noting, in the process, its extensive coverage even with fairly low power:

Radio station CKAC began operations sometime in 1922. To our knowledge, Station CKAC was amongst the first three Canadian radio stations to broadcast on a fairly regular schedule. Its initial power output was rated at 500 watts. Its coverage, in those days, was much beyond what is being secured from present transmitters of equal power. This can be explained by the fact that radio stations, being few in number, were not subject to the present congestion.



It can safely be said that the reasons for its coming into operation have been fully justified and amongst these reasons the first was to give radio programs to Canadians of French extraction in their own language. The coverage of CKAC included part of the Maritime provinces, Eastern Ontario and the entire Province of Quebec. Much to our satisfaction and pleasure, we were also able to establish contact with more than one million French-Canadian, or Franco-Americans, residing in the New England States.<sup>33</sup>

The Government of Nova Scotia was represented before the Committee by Colonel E. C. Phinney, the provincial solicitor, who noted the significant coverage provided by CHNS, a 500 watt station located at Halifax. He testified that it covered "the mainland of Nova Scotia and gives a very effective daytime service. This daytime service is particularly appreciated in a large part of the province of Nova Scotia as from Halifax East no daytime radio is received from any outside stations."<sup>34</sup> Colonel Phinney also explained the scope of radio coverage and how, in Nova Scotia, radio was servicing areas where the population was thin:

Radio receivers are increasing in use in this province. While entertainment in one form or another constitutes a large portion of the programs broadcast, nevertheless, we have been fortunate in Nova Scotia, in that our stations, particularly the Halifax station, are sponsoring to an increasing degree informative, educational and special services which are so desirable to a large body of our citizens, such as farmers, fishermen and sailors. Also educational talks, news items, market reports, and similar programs are presented and are adapted to the local constituencies which they are intended to serve, more particularly to those in sparsely settled parts of the Province, where communications are difficult.<sup>35</sup>

It would appear that these early pioneer stations were attempting to provide both cities and small communities with the highest level of service possible given the state of radio technology at the time. In

fact Commander C. P. Edwards, the director of radio for the Department of Marine, also appeared before the 1932 Commons Radio Committee and was asked pointedly, by Committee member E. J. Garland, whether Canada was "receiving adequate coverage from Canadian Radio Stations?" He answered that the country "is not inadequately covered."<sup>36</sup> Committee members also questioned the radio director, who had a sound knowledge of the new medium and how it operated, on the feedback from listeners to the radio department. P. J. Arthur Cardin wanted to know "is the broadcasting in Canada to-day subject to any criticism and are there any complaints filed in the department against the broadcasting we have to-day?" To this question Commander Edwards replied, "Yes, sir, we have a certain number of complaints not very serious."<sup>37</sup> Not only the coverage of the stations but their locations as well tend to refute the claim that these early private broadcasters were only intent on serving large markets to gain advertising revenue. Appendix IV in the Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting shows that many private stations were situated in small centres where the population would be sparse indeed. These locations included Red Deer and Lethbridge in Alberta; Chilliwack, Kamloops and Victoria in British Columbia; Fredericton and Moncton in New Brunswick; Sydney in Nova Scotia; Brantford, Chatham, Cobalt, Iroquois Falls, Kingston, London, Midland, Prescott and Preston in Ontario; Summerside in Prince Edward Island; St. Hyacinthe in Quebec; Fleming, Moose Jaw and Yorkton in Saskatchewan.<sup>38</sup> Many stations were low in power, by present day broadcasting standards, but they had attempted to provide entertaining and informative programming for their audiences.

In any consideration of the pioneer days of broadcasting, it is important to realize that these daring entrepreneurs, who opened stations,

were initially more concerned with the technical aspect of broadcasting than with the art of programming.<sup>39</sup> Historians perhaps have been too harsh in applying present day standards to these pioneers who were the true risk-takers when many businessmen and politicians were unable to grasp the full implications of this new medium. In the early 1920s, radio equipment was primitive. Stations were operated on batteries and government regulations dictated that they had to share radio frequencies.<sup>40</sup>

That is there was to be no simultaneous broadcasting on different frequencies, in the same city or town, unless specifically authorized by the Department of Marine and Fisheries, later to become the Department of Marine. By 1922, thirty-nine broadcasting stations had been established in the country and just six years later the number had risen to sixty-eight.<sup>41</sup> That Canadians eagerly embraced this new form of technology is evident in that four-hundred thousand receiving sets were in operation throughout the country by 1928, the year in which the Aird Commission was appointed.<sup>42</sup>

Vic George, a former member of the CNR radio department and manager of CFCF in Montreal, has observed that "in the 1920s, and early thirties a few people were feeling their way around in a completely new and different world."<sup>43</sup> Stations were established for various reasons and, among them, was the need for radio apparatus firms to sell radio receiving sets. For example, George recalled how Nate Nathanson, an early pioneer in Sydney, Nova Scotia, opened up a small 50 watt radio station CJCB and sold radios to those people who worked in the mines. Nathanson frequently collected the weekly installment to pay for the radio set from the miner or his wife who lived in an area where radio reception in these early days was not that favourable. "Nate decided he had better do something

about this", said George, "and he opened up a little 50 watt radio station that, in time, became a powerful radio station and Nate and his family benefited mightily."<sup>44</sup> This kind of enterprising individual could be found in just about every province. Early radio stations were almost invariably owned and operated by auto supply companies, newspapers, religious groups or radio associations. Gerry Quinney, another of the early pioneers, has noted that "it is amazing how a lot of the broadcasting industry in Canada and the United States came out of the original automotive industry."<sup>45</sup> It was quite common for the profits of an automotive service station to subsidize a fledgling radio operation. Typical of the latter was Roy Thomson who started selling automotive parts in North Bay and then established a radio station to promote the sale of batteries to provide power for the receiving sets.<sup>46</sup> A. A. Murphy did the same at CFQC in Saskatoon as did Arthur "Sparks" Halstead at CFDC in Nanaimo, British Columbia, the call letters "DC" standing for "direct current."<sup>47</sup>

In Unity, Saskatchewan, Horace Stovin started a ten watt station in 1922 to supply programming for his radio customers. Stovin, who later became western regional program director for the CBC in Regina, owned a drug store which contained a wide variety of merchandise including radio sets. The station's transmitter was in the dispensary, in the back of the drug store, and, on occasion, the signal is said to have been heard in New York.<sup>48</sup> Doctor Dick Rice, another of the early pioneers in Edmonton, had studied electronics at the National Physical Laboratories in England before joining the Marconi Company's admiralty service. He became manager of CJCA in 1922, a station owned by the Edmonton Journal, before becoming owner of CFRN, a station which went on the air November

3, 1934.<sup>49</sup> Rice was eventually given an honorary doctorate from the University of Alberta for his contribution to the community.<sup>50</sup>

It can be seen then that radio served a variety of purposes and these early station owners could hardly see themselves reaping enormous profits through advertising. In fact, advertising agencies initially recommended that their clients refrain from using this new medium until the reliability of the spoken word could be assessed more accurately.<sup>51</sup> But auto supply manufacturers could use radio to sell their batteries; religious groups saw this new form of communication as an extension of the pulpit; for local radio associations, radio was a community focal point and newspapers could see in radio a vehicle for self promotion. Moreover, as Vic George has explained, "radio news could have more immediacy about it" and newspapers bought "their way into the future competitive area of mass dissemination of information."<sup>52</sup> Radio was a potential threat to the advertising revenue of the print industry. Recalling this early era, Gerry Quinnéy has argued that newspapers "would not publish program schedules" and "did effectively hold broadcasting back for years" even though now "they fall all over themselves to get a little bit of news about broadcasting."<sup>53</sup>

In the early 1920s, radio in Canada was almost an extension of the platform or town hall meeting which was a favorite social occasion for families in small communities. Nearly all of the events broadcast by the private stations, including dance band music from hotels and other functions, such as concerts in the park, were local or regional in nature. These remote broadcasts, which relied on the use of telephone lines for the sound to be relayed back to the studio and eventually out to listeners, were a burdensome undertaking given the state of radio technology at the

time. Not infrequently, upwards of one hundred and fifty pounds of heavy equipment including batteries and amplifiers had to be physically carried to the site of the broadcast.<sup>54</sup> Yet the private stations seized upon virtually every local event of any significance to fill their broadcast schedule. A number of federal politicians including Arthur Meighen, Robert Manion, Mackenzie King and R. B. Bennett were first heard on radio speaking at public meetings. The radio audience was conceived as an extension of the audience politicians were accustomed to addressing from the platforms of the country.<sup>55</sup> The radio "studio" was in the early stages of its evolution and politicians, in the 1920s, were not eager to fully embrace this new form of technology until they became more familiar with its impact on society.<sup>56</sup> Thus their use of radio, at this time, enabled politicians to control their campaign environment, a practice that has been continued even to the present day.

The establishment of the National Broadcasting Company in the United States, in 1926, and the Columbia Broadcasting System the following year were further incentives for Canadian broadcasters to emphasize regional artists and events.<sup>57</sup> As Vic George has explained, it was impossible to compete with high level American programming:

In Canada we could only occasionally match artistically the things that NBC and a little later CBS were doing. How do you compete with the Metropolitan opera or the various big American symphonies or Ed Wynn or Jack Benny? So we set out first to exploit local interest. Our best singers and instrumentalists were willing performers for very small fees or no fees at all and that was made necessary by the fact that stations had little money or none at all. Nightclubs were good for a few hours a week on remote control broadcasts. Local choral societies and orchestras, spelling bees and debates between schools, old-time music contests and like events made radio part of family life really.<sup>58</sup>

These early stations were on the air an average of six hours and fifteen minutes a day, a practice dictated, in part, by a lack of sophisticated radio equipment. However, it must be kept in mind that stations, in the same community, shared frequencies which enabled listeners to hear radio programming beyond six hours or so. By today's standards, individual stations were on the air for relatively short periods, but communities still could be reasonably well serviced by radio. Horace Stovin, Manager of CKCK radio in Regina, set this matter in perspective for the 1932 Commons Broadcasting Committee:

I further direct your attention to evidence in which the statement was made that at present only six hours and fifteen minutes are broadcast by stations in Canada. I do not want to upset the witnesses' averages, but would you please note that CJRW, Fleming, and CJRM, Moose Jaw, share time on 665 kilocycles and should be considered as one station, giving them a total of 11 hours and one minute daily average. Also that CHWC and CKCK, each of Regina, also share time on 960 kilocycles, and as one station serving the same listeners, provide an average daily total of 15 hours and 32 minutes.<sup>59</sup>

Stovin also had an interesting exchange with Committee member J. L. Ilsley, future Minister of Finance in the Liberal government, who inquired whether the "broadcasting of records" was undesirable from a listener's standpoint. The Manager of CKCK offered this answer:

Our experience has been quite the opposite, Mr. Ilsley. I cannot go and grab a bunch off the shelf and put them on the air. I have got to use the same care in presenting that program that I do in presenting an orchestral program, or choosing soloists.<sup>60</sup>

When asked "can listeners tell the difference between record and live talent broadcasting?", Stovin replied:

There is this about it, that when I put on the first orchestra in Saskatchewan by permanent staff two years ago, that for about three months people called up and wanted to know what the title of the last record was.<sup>61</sup>

At this point, the Chairman of the Committee, Raymond D. Morand, observed, "that speaks well for your orchestra."<sup>62</sup>

By the mid 1920s then, a number of what were to become famous names in Canadian broadcasting were getting their start. Tenor Wishart Campbell, who became musical director of radio station CFRB in the early 1950s, on one occasion sang the song "Ramona" four times after scores of listeners requests.<sup>63</sup> Ernest Bushnell, who co-starred on a popular radio show the "Cocoonoodle Club" over CKNC in Toronto, eventually became an assistant General Manager of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and head of Bushnell Communications.<sup>64</sup> John Adaskin, a cellist on radio in 1924, later was producer and master of ceremonies for the popular radio show "Opportunity Knocks."<sup>65</sup> Maurice Bodington read children's stories over the air, in the 1920s, and later had his own CBC show entitled "Bod's Scrapbook."<sup>66</sup> Jane Gray, who was billed as the first woman broadcaster in Canada, started in London, Ontario in 1924 with station CJGC, the present day CFPL. She was responsible for launching the first series of radio mysteries in Canadian radio over CFCA, in Toronto, despite manager Foster Hewitt's contention that "you can't kill a man, find the murderer and hang him in thirty minutes."<sup>67</sup> Among her group of radio actors were Ken Soble, who eventually became owner of CHML radio in Hamilton, and Donald Gordon, who played a Scottish detective and later served as President of the Canadian National Railway.<sup>68</sup>

It is clear as well from the evidence presented to the 1932 Commons Broadcasting Committee that the early private broadcasters saw radio



playing an important educational role. For example, R. T. Holman, the owner of station CHGS in Summerside, Prince Edward Island, in a brief to the Committee, showed that his station provided a number of educational features including radio talks relating to "Prince Edward Island History and Folklore, Parents Educational Talks" and "General Educational Talks prepared by the faculty of Mount Allison University."<sup>69</sup> These were aired along with programs "for housewives, for rural audiences, as well as for urban listeners."<sup>70</sup> Similarly Charles Borrett, the director of station CHNS in Halifax who was known as "Mr. Halifax", showed, in his brief to the Committee, that his station was heavily involved in educational programming. Among such programs heard on CHNS were the "Half Hour French Lesson, weekly, by Professor C. H. Mercer, the Review of the Week's News by Professor H. L. Stewart, the Trans-Canada Educational Programs and the Lord Nelson Little Symphony."<sup>71</sup> Mr. Borrett also made the following comments, in his brief, on the nature of the stations's programming:

We also broadcast for the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia in the regular educational program for two hours every Friday afternoon at a cost to the Government of \$30, instead of our regular fees to commercial concerns of \$80. It will interest you, no doubt, to know that the Province of Nova Scotia has been broadcasting these educational programs to the schools for nearly six years. My only object in bringing this before you, is to show the amount of service given by this station in addition to its commercial broadcasting.<sup>72</sup>

In London, radio station CJGC had started a program known as "University of the Air." This station, which was originally established on September 20, 1922, was the third private station in Canada.<sup>73</sup> CJGC was licensed to the London Free Press Printing Company whose President, at that time, was Arthur Blackburn, the father of Walter Blackburn, now Chairman and Publisher of the London Free Press and Chairman of the Board

of CFPL Broadcasting.<sup>74</sup> The University of Western Ontario, which had been founded in 1878; played a considerable rôle in the station's public service programming. Beginning in 1928, university professors were heard Thursday evenings between 7:30 and 7:45 on CJGC delivering a wide range of radio lectures touching upon both practical and academic areas. For example, two chemistry professors were heard discussing "The Why and Wherefore of Anti-Freeze."<sup>75</sup> In another lecture, Fred Landon, the university's librarian, addressed his radio audience on the historical aspects of early London newspapers. According to the then President of Western, Sherwood Fox, the station charged the university only "bare expenses in order to permit [it] to give its service to the community."<sup>76</sup>

In a somewhat similar educational vein, CJGC was the first radio station in Canada to attempt to provide its listeners with up to the minute coverage of federal election results in the October 29, 1925 campaign. The news-gathering resources of the London Free Press were "placed at the disposal of the radio department so that interesting and intelligent reports" were provided to "radio fans from time to time."<sup>77</sup> The station provided periodic coverage of local, regional and national results with a constituency by constituency breakdown of election results in Western Ontario while paying special attention to the ridings of Cabinet ministers. This style of election coverage, which set the radio format for later years, reflected the notion held by Arthur Blackburn that "radio could supplement and not necessarily supplant the form of service provided by the newspaper."<sup>78</sup> This conception of radio was somewhat unconventional at a time when a number of newspaper owners saw this new electronic medium as a threat to their existence. These early broadcasting efforts relating to educational programming, in specific

areas, and to programming of a more general nature presaged the Canadian Radio League's lofty objectives for national radio in Canada.

The private stations' determination to serve their communities locally and regionally went beyond formal educational programs and remote broadcasts of political rallies. For example, Doctor George M. Geldert, the owner of station CKCO in Ottawa, noted how his station was attempting to provide a range of services to citizens by first asking the question, "has not each community a duty to its sick and shut-ins in this regard?"<sup>79</sup> Doctor Geldert drew attention to the fact that "the prevalence of diphtheria" in Ottawa required "local rather than widespread publicity."<sup>80</sup> His station had attempted to do something about "the public health of its community."<sup>81</sup>

During the past year, CKCO has taken a great part in broadcasting information tending to educate our citizens to the value of various preventative measures leading to the eradication of diphtheria from our midst. I ask you, gentlemen, should not the lives and health of each community demand that every possible means be used towards bettering general conditions of health and sanitation?<sup>82</sup>

Perhaps anticipating a more centralized form of broadcasting, which was eventually established in Canada, Doctor Geldert argued that health education "is a very powerful reason why no system should be evolved leading to the elimination of the local station."<sup>83</sup> He also maintained that regulations, whereby owners had to waive financial compensation for station improvements, had greatly hindered the private broadcasters and had tended to discourage them from upgrading their equipment:

I am convinced that progress in Canadian broadcasting has been definitely retarded by the warnings given stations during the past three years by the government, in regard to the purchase of new equipment.

I feel that this has shown many of the smaller stations up in an unfavourable light in the evidence given by the technical experts as to the relative value of their coverage and so called "nuisance" range. For example, it is conceded that a modern 100-watt transmitter, fully modulated, will give the same, if not greater coverage than the old 500-watt type station, of which many are still in use, with infinitely better quality, and easier to cut out by the local listener.<sup>84</sup>

The same thrust toward community service was contained in a brief presented to the 1982 Committee by J. N. Thivierge, the Vice-President and Manager of CHRC radio in Quebec City:

We could easily have submitted to your Honourable Committee scores of petitions from local organizations such as the Canadian Legion, The Army and Navy Veterans, the Regiment des Voltigeurs of Quebec, the Red Cross Society, the Poppy League, the Seamen's Institute, the Rotary, the Kiwanis, the Society St. Vincent de Paul, the French Canadian National Society, La Societe St.-Jean-Baptiste, the Knights of Columbus, The Association of Poets and Writers. Every week during the last winter we broadcasted talks under the auspices of the National Council of Education, this in co-operation with the Council and absolutely free of charge.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed private broadcasters were obliged to address the concerns of their listeners, because their survival depended on the programming interests of their audiences.

The level of programming provided by the early broadcasters should be seen then in the context of a rudimentary radio technology and a regulatory framework that was, at times, puzzling to the pioneers. In fairness to the regulators of the day, it should also be realized that they were trying to supervise the astounding growth of a new form of

communications without themselves having full knowledge of all its technical aspects or its potential for altering social systems. "I think primarily there was a lot of ignorance in the Department of Marine and Fisheries about radio broadcasting," Gerry Quinney recalled, "they were the policemen and they really didn't know what the hell they were doing. But they had to make believe that they were doing something so they felt that if they made restrictions people would believe they were authorities."<sup>86</sup> Yet even Quinney acknowledged there was a practical explanation for some of the Department's regulations such as the requirement that stations in the same centre share frequencies. For example, in Vancouver, stations CKWX and CKMO, now CFUN, were on the same frequency. "You couldn't keep operating anymore than a couple of hours before your batteries ran down and you had to charge them," said Quinney, "so they at least kept the wave length live anyway."<sup>87</sup> However this technical handicap was remedied somewhat when, in April, 1925, E. S. "Ted" Rogers, the founder of radio station CFRB in Toronto, invented the "batteryless" radio, the call letters "RB" standing for "Rogers Batteryless."<sup>88</sup>

Other regulations during this period stipulated that "mechanically operated musical instruments" were forbidden between 7:30 p.m. and midnight which meant that stations could not play phonograph records.<sup>89</sup>

This latter regulation gave rise to considerable live programming which stations were forced to provide in the evening hours. As well "phantom" stations came into being as the Department of Marine and Fisheries tried to bring some sense of organization to the burgeoning radio industry. A "phantom" station was defined as "one which owns no physical equipment but is allotted a distinctive call signal and is licensed to operate over a station having physical equipment."<sup>90</sup> Vic George has credited Commander

C. P. Edwards, the Director of Radio in the Department of Marine and Fisheries, for introducing the "phantom" technique. George recalled that the Department had to deal with a "whole rash of different radio transmitters" that were all struggling for a frequency allotment.<sup>91</sup> The licensing of "phantom" stations did manage to "keep down the number of transmitters fighting for space on the air."<sup>92</sup> Besides "the frequency control was not as good" as it is today and "transmitters were not as sophisticated" as they are now.<sup>93</sup> In George's view, "these were good reasons for keeping down the number of transmitters on the air."<sup>94</sup>

However the regulation which clearly stymied innovation occurred, in the late 1920s, when the government became involved in the radio industry. At that point, the private broadcasters were served notice that, in the event of nationalization of the broadcasting system, they could not claim compensation for expenses incurred in modernizing their equipment or streamlining their operations generally. Commander Edwards made this stricture clear to members of the 1932 Commons Committee on broadcasting. Asked by Committee member W. D. Euler "What is the value of the total equipment in Canada to-day?", he replied:

That is rather difficult to say Mr. Euler. Not many stations in Canada have the original equipment they started with. They have all improved now. In the licence we give them, we say, "Any money you spend you have to waive compensation for it", and that has acted as a detriment to improvements. Our department estimates, very roughly speaking, that to go out and replace every station in Canada to-day, would cost somewhere around \$1,800,000. But, then, just what value the licensee puts on his station is another matter.<sup>95</sup>

Later in this first Parliamentary enquiry into broadcasting, Commander Edwards reiterated the Department's position adopted after the Honourable

P. J. Cardin had announced on June 1st, 1928 that a Royal Commission would be appointed to examine the radio situation in Canada:

On and after that date every increase, every new station, every increase in power, any change made in any licence, was made with the stipulation that the licensee agrees to waive all claim for compensation in the event of nationalization, and the licence had embodied on its face a statement with reference to cancellation in the event of nationalization.<sup>96</sup>

Clearly the private broadcasters had been discouraged from expanding their operations.

The popular notion that all private broadcasters have traditionally operated profitable businesses can be dispelled quickly when this early era is examined. The industry was characterized by numerous bankruptcies and changes of ownership. This assumption, that success was inevitable, has been nurtured through an over-emphasis on the career of Roy Thomson and his remark that a television broadcasting permit was "like having a licence to print your own money."<sup>97</sup> The concentration of ownership in broadcasting developed during the 1930s when Thomson, the Siftons and Taylor, Pearson, Carson, a trio of management specialists, dominated the industry. These three organizations were the only group enterprises that arose during the inter-war years.<sup>98</sup>

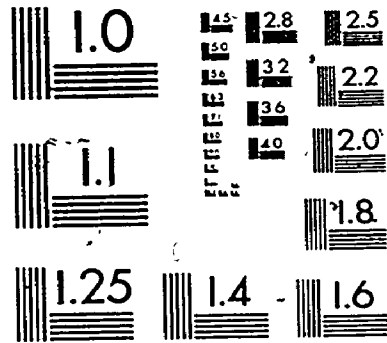
The Sifton empire dated back to Sir Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior in the Laurier government, who, perhaps more than any other single individual, was responsible for the rapid growth of western Canada's population in the early twentieth century. He founded the Winnipeg Free Press and his sons, Victor and Clifford, expanded the family operation through later acquisitions of radio stations in Hamilton, Winnipeg and Regina.<sup>99</sup>

Hugh E. Pearson, James Taylor and Harold Carson were essentially broadcast consultants who advised station owners on their operations. Originally they owned no stations of their own besides CJOC in Lethbridge, Alberta, but later the group purchased a financial interest in several radio outlets. At a time when announcers were not very well trained and had to work in makeshift studios, this trio conducted announcing schools and assisted station managers in virtually all aspects of the industry including sales and programming.<sup>100</sup> As for models upon which to base a broadcasting style, regional broadcasters tended to look to central Canada, because most of the major radio productions originated in Toronto and Montreal. As well, announcers naturally sought larger centres to market their talents and these two cities often attracted ambitious broadcasters. In the words of Gerry Quinney, "you were sitting in Regina and saying, well, if this is how the big boys are doing it, this is how we have to do it and you imitated them."<sup>101</sup> The centralization of programming, which is so evident today in the operation of Canadian broadcasting networks, was also characteristic of this pioneer age.

Almost right from the beginning of broadcasting in Canada, regulators clamped tight restrictions on the industry which virtually prohibited large profits from being made. In 1922, private stations were specifically not allowed to levy any kind of toll for the services they provided by broadcasting entertainment and information programs.<sup>102</sup> Moreover "indirect" advertising was permitted, only in 1928, almost ten years after broadcasting had started in Canada.<sup>103</sup> This form of advertising meant that a sponsor's name at the beginning of a program could be mentioned but no details of the product given. As a result, companies initially failed to see much advantage in radio as a form of advertising. Moreover



# 2



no radio station licence could be transferred without the consent of the Minister of Marine even if a broadcaster saw the chance of selling to a wealthy buyer. This coupled with the fact that licences could be issued only to British subjects gave the government extensive control over the economic aspects of the industry.<sup>104</sup> As a business then, radio generally was not a leading money-maker but rather served to promote other existing enterprises. The Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific Railways got involved in broadcasting, largely to gain increased numbers of train travellers and to promote their hotel accommodations. Passengers could listen to radio on trains by wearing head sets and, in the case of the CPR especially, musical programs could originate in hotels owned by the railway.<sup>105</sup> But it was well into the 1930s before advertisers recognized that radio could sell their products and the legislative strictures governing advertising began to be overcome. Sponsorship of radio newscasts was still several years away and the Canadian Press, the country's national news agency, was certainly not eager to see this new medium encroach upon its monopoly on news gathering in Canada.

While the economics of the industry were closely supervised by the Canadian government, there was, especially during the late 1920s, a noticeable lack of coherent regulation of broadcasting in North America as it related to allocation of frequencies. Surprisingly it was not until 1941 that a formal treaty was signed governing allocation and power of stations.<sup>106</sup> However in 1927 a chaotic regulatory situation had been somewhat remedied by a "gentlemen's agreement" between Canadian and United States negotiators.<sup>107</sup> The United States had agreed to leave Canada the six clear radio channels that had previously been allocated to her in October, 1924.<sup>108</sup> In noting the lack of regulation of broadcasting

during this period, Professor Prang has chosen, at the same time, to play down the efforts of the pioneer broadcasters:

Not only were Canadian stations weak in power, but by an arrangement between Canada and the United States, based primarily on population rather than on the area served, they had access to only six clear channels, shared eleven others with American stations, and were frequently drowned out by their more powerful neighbours. Although Canadians had produced some programmes of high quality there was general consent in Canada that the standard of Canadian programmes of all kinds was inferior.<sup>109</sup>

However Commander C. P. Edwards was not quite as pessimistic in his assessment of the radio situation even though Canada required more clear channels:

- Canada cannot, of course, get along with this number of channels, and our solution so far has been to find what we call holes in the ether where we place a station half way between two American channels. There is a certain amount of interference but it is working out fairly well. It cannot continue, because as the stations increase in power interference increases and we need to have a permanent arrangement; as a temporary arrangement we have now 25 channels. Our main interference on the 6 exclusive channels is from the high power stations in Mexico and Cuba.<sup>110</sup>

Professor Prang's characterization of Canadian programming as "inferior", during this early period, should be measured against an appraisal of the broadcasting system by Doctor Augustin Frigon, a member of the Aird Commission. From him came the somewhat unusual statement that "there are a great number of citizens in Canada who would like to use radio but who are prevented from doing so because the present system is giving what the majority of the population like to listen to."<sup>111</sup> Apologists for state ownership of broadcasting have consistently refuted this kind

of observation.

Professor Prang has also pointed somewhat negatively to the efforts of the early broadcasters who tried to provide network programming in Canadian radio. "There was a national Canadian network of limited scope," she has written, "wire service was provided by the CNR and CPR and time was purchased from local commercial broadcasters across the nation. This arrangement provided an average of one hour's coast-to-coast broadcasting per day during the winter and half an hour in the summer."<sup>112</sup> Again the state of the technology has to be remembered when assessing the level of network programming during this early period. However, even with this obvious drawback and the high costs involved in linking stations together, the pioneer broadcasters are deserving of praise.

The story of Henry Thornton and the Canadian National Railway's role in early Canadian radio has been described in other scholarly studies.<sup>113</sup> Sir Henry has frequently been applauded for using radio to promote national consciousness in Canada, although it should be realized that the CNR radio network was mainly comprised of privately-owned stations. At no time did the CNR own more than three broadcasting outlets. These were CNRO in Ottawa, CNRA in Moncton, and a Vancouver station CNRV.<sup>114</sup> The CNR leased time on more than a dozen private stations across Canada under what was known as a "phantom" arrangement.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the railway was allowed to use its own call letters on the stations it did not own, while its programs were sent on a network basis. Frequently the private stations, which had temporarily surrendered their call letters to the railway, originated programs sent over the CNR network. J. T. Carlyle, a former secretary of the railway's radio department, explained

how the "phantom" technique operated on the stations which were connected with telegraph lines:

At five o'clock we would send a wire to Winnipeg saying you will fill 7 to 7:30 p.m. CFCN Calgary will fill 7:30 to 8 and Vancouver will fill 8 to 8:30. That is the way we used to set it up and that was when we were on every night when we had the network.<sup>116</sup>

Recalling that "there were a lot of good programs on the network", Carlyle described how a private station in Toronto played an important role in the network by broadcasting the Toronto symphony orchestra:

We didn't have a station then in Toronto. We were using CKNC owned by the battery people up on Davenport Road. We used their station and rented it for quite a while.<sup>117</sup>

In 1932, CKNC, which had been originally owned by Eveready Battery and later by the Canadian National Carbon Company, claimed to have "originated more chain broadcasts for Canadian manufacturers than any station in Canada."<sup>118</sup> In a memorandum to the 1932 Commons Broadcasting Committee, the station management made this observation:

It is a rather startling fact that CKNC, a so-called low-powered station, produced and originated in its own studios and broadcast over its own transmitter in the capacity of a key station, more chain programs than any one of the high-powered stations in Canada, and practically as many chain programs as were originated by all of the high-powered stations combined.<sup>119</sup>

Perhaps one of the reasons for the CNR network being so successful was the admiration private broadcasters had for Henry Thornton who saw radio as a means of promoting train service. When he set up the railway's radio department, Sir Henry hired W. H. Swift, a graduate electrical engineer from New York, as the director of radio. It was Swift who was

largely responsible for establishing the present day Canadian Association of Broadcasters, a body which represents the private broadcasters in Canada.<sup>120</sup> In 1929, the manager of station CKGW in Toronto, R. W.

Ashcroft, praised Thornton's efforts:

Great credit is due to the officials of the Canadian National Railways for having "blazed the trail" for chain broadcasting in Canada, with their coast-to-coast radio-telephone lines.<sup>121</sup>

At Ashcroft's suggestion, the CNR had decided to opt for sponsored programs:

Nearly two years ago, I suggested to them that they accept first-class sponsored commercial programs for their three stations, and this they recently decided to do.<sup>122</sup>

Ashcroft also noted the reluctance of the Canadian Pacific Railway to initiate network broadcasting in a major way:

The Canadian Pacific Railway Company is also equipping its lines for the transmission of radio programs, but, in their case, the tail has, so far, wagged the dog, and they are, at present, only using radio as any ordinary hotel, restaurant or cabaret does; that is to say, by allowing local radio stations to use their music as a 'filler'.<sup>123</sup>

However the following year, in 1930 when the national carrier-current system of the privately owned company was completed, the CPR entered the radio field with greater enthusiasm.<sup>124</sup>

The CPR had established new radio studios in the Royal York Hotel in Toronto and began broadcasting such popular musical programs as the "Musical Crusaders", which introduced a group of musicians who were making a cruise around the world on the Empress of Australia.<sup>125</sup> The programs, which were aired on Sunday afternoons between 4:15 and 4:45 eastern standard time, were written and planned by Stanley Maxted, a well

known Canadian tenor.<sup>126</sup> The "Musical Crusaders" were heard not only nationwide in Canada but also over a network of stations in the Eastern and Middle-western States affiliated with station WJZ in Newark, New Jersey. The cities in the United States that received these broadcasts included New York, Rochester, Detroit, Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Kansas City, Lincoln, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Boston and Springfield.<sup>127</sup> The broadcasts were sent outside of Canada after arrangements had been made with the National Broadcasting Company which originally organized two networks when it had been established in 1926. The "red" network of NBC was centred around station WEAJ in New York and the "blue" network had been erected around WJZ, the New York flagship station belonging to the Radio Corporation of America.<sup>128</sup> Other programs aired on a network basis by the CPR included "Melody Mike's Music Shop" billed by the railway as a cast of "outstanding Canadian performers in their various fields of musical endeavour."<sup>129</sup> Listeners were urged to tell their friends "to listen in on Melody Mike's coast-to-coast Canadian Pacific Railway broadcast each Monday."<sup>130</sup> Radio programs heard on Friday evenings were divided into two half-hours, the first consisting of vocal and light symphony programs and the second of dance music provided by Fred Culley's Royal York Dance Orchestra.<sup>131</sup> The vocal half-hours were directed by Alfred Heather and the symphony half hours by Rex Battle's Light Symphony Orchestra. On November 21, 1930, the celebrated ensemble known as the "English Singers" gave their first radio program on the North American continent, during the Canadian Pacific Railway hour, as part of the railway's ongoing attempt to foster the development of music in Canada.<sup>132</sup>

The CPR radio network eventually comprised twenty-one stations across Canada but, unlike the CNR, none of them was owned by the railway company.<sup>133</sup>

CPR fed their programs nationally over telegraph lines and offered them to any private station provided that the local broadcaster paid the transmission cost from the CP location in his community to the radio studio. As Austin Weir has noted, "with orchestras in several of its hotels, the CPR could now feed concert and dance programs daily across Canada at little additional cost."<sup>134</sup>

One of the earliest radio chains that historians, for the most part, have tended to overlook was the Trans-Canada Broadcasting Company managed by R. W. Ashcroft. In 1929, the latter claimed credit for "practically all of the pioneer work in connection with commercial chain broadcasting in Canada" that had been done "during the past year."<sup>135</sup> This network, whose flagship station CKGW in Toronto had been established on March 4, 1928, was in operation for five years until 1933.<sup>136</sup> The network broadcasts provided by this chain of private stations included the ceremonies marking the opening of Parliament in 1930; the first Christmas day message of His Majesty, King George, in 1931; the opening of the Indian Round Table Conference on November 12, 1930; several addresses of the Prince of Wales; and a series of educational broadcasts under the auspices of the National Council of Education. Ashcroft personally paid the university professors who presented these broadcasts on the Trans-Canada Network.<sup>137</sup> He also took credit for making possible "the admission into Canada of the first U.S. musical program ever put on the air from a Canadian station."<sup>138</sup> As well during its first year of operation, the network "staged programs in Canada and broadcast them from coast to coast in the U.S."<sup>139</sup>

Another often overlooked pioneer of network broadcasting was Vic George who joined station CFCF in 1930. The depression had a staggering



effect on the radio industry and, in 1931, the CNR had decided to close its radio department.<sup>140</sup> Because of his previous years with the CNR station in Moncton, George was aware that Canadian National had high quality carrier current facilities linking most Canadian cities east of Winnipeg. Moreover the stations owned by both the CNR and private interests were striving to improve their programming at a time when the industry was strained financially. George soon proposed a new network arrangement:

I went back to my old friends in the CNR and proposed that they provide the network lines and a few programs from their stations. Other stations would make good shows available all on a no pay, no charge basis and we would all win. To my great delight, this proposal was accepted and soon after stations from London, Ontario to Halifax were happy participants in a co-operative network that worked just great for a couple of seasons.<sup>141</sup>

Besides London and Halifax, the network comprised stations in Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton and Fredericton. Listeners in all of these cities were able to hear this exchange of programs among stations from early 1931 to 1933.

But the pioneer era was coming to a close after the government had taken a more active interest in this relatively young industry. The co-operative network established by George was promptly brought to an end:

It might still be working if it hadn't been for the Aird Commission and the original CBC which was called the Canadian Radio Commission. Its first act was to expropriate our mutual network without so much as a thank you. Next it offered higher fees to the performers, we had brought into prominence, and to the surprise of absolutely no one they all accepted. Soon after they took away from us, at CFCF, the NBC "red" network affiliation and used it themselves leaving us with the NBC "blue" network that was far less commercial and carried features like the Chicago Civic Opera.<sup>142</sup>

To this day, George and other private broadcasters have remained puzzled at this unusual move, by the first regulatory body established for Canadian broadcasting. In fact, a certain bitterness still lingers from this action and is most evident when private broadcasters are accused of being interested merely in reaping healthy profits from the communities they serve.

As George explained:

I could never quite understand the priority of this. Maybe this will explain why some of us growl when we hear newcomers assuming that the early broadcasters did nothing to earn their place in the economy.<sup>143</sup>

In any event, the pioneer days of broadcasting were nearly at an end. For more than a dozen years, those who had chosen to experiment with this new medium had to deal with a technology that was not only often misunderstood but also one that was quite cumbersome and unreliable. As a result, the art of programming had to give way to the mechanics of broadcasting. During the early 1920s, in particular, stations struggled to simply maintain their broadcast signal. Yet even with these kinds of technical handicaps, the range of local and regional service, in the context of these early broadcast conditions, was commendable. Toward the end of the 1920s, the private broadcasters were successful in forming networks as their mastery of the technology became more proficient and as the transportation industry in Canada got more involved in radio. Given the temper of the times as the Depression approached, it is surprising that these entrepreneurs even continued in such a risky business. Some of them, such as Roy Thomson, were more successful than others. But in London, Ontario, for example, while the Blackburn family prospered, three other stations, which started early operations, were forced to close down during the 1920s.<sup>144</sup> With the government overseeing the

economic aspects of their broadcast businesses, the private owners searched long and hard to find their place in the Canadian economy. The appointment of the Aird Commission in 1928 made their position even more untenable as the spectre of nationalization now hung over them.

Until this enquiry, a radio set licence fee of one dollar had been intended, in part, to help subsidize the private stations. However, it appears that relatively few owners were willing to accept this form of subsidy. The fee on radio sets also helped to pay the salaries of radio inspectors who toured the various stations in Canada.<sup>145</sup> Thus, through the licencing system, the government was still able to supervise the broadcasters even though there was no broad governmental policy that focused on the cultural aspects of radio. This situation was now about to change. Before a new broadcasting Act was passed by Parliament, the Aird Commission, Alan Plaunt and the Canadian Radio League, showed an eagerness to harness this new industry and make it serve national purposes. The birth of public broadcasting in Canada was near.

## CHAPTER III

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> K. Z. Paltiel, Political Party Financing in Canada (Toronto, 1970), 76.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Rutherford, "The People's Press: The Emergence of the New Journalism in Canada 1869-99", Canadian Historical Review (June, 1975), 173.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; 174.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Nolan, "Political Communication Methods in Canadian Federal Election Campaigns 1867-1925", Canadian Journal of Communication, VII (Mar. Apr. May, 1981), 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Curlook, "Marconi from Signal Hill ... a Canadian retrospective", Broadcaster (October, 1981), 60.

<sup>9</sup> For further details of Marconi's early experiments and of "Radio's Age of Organization" see Robert Sobel, The Manipulators: America in the Media Age (New York; 1976), 126.

<sup>10</sup> Christine Curlook, "Marconi from Signal Hill ... a Canadian retrospective", Broadcaster (October; 1981), 63.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> For further details of Fessenden's radio experiments, see Robert Sobel, The Manipulators: America in the Media Age (New York, 1976), 127 and for a study of Fessenden's life and radio career see Helen M. Fessenden, Fessenden: Builder of Tomorrows (New York, 1940) and Ormond Raby, Radio's First Voice: The Story of Reginald Fessenden (Toronto, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 7.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 5.
- 16 For a discussion of Harold Innis and the Laurentian thesis, see Ramsay Cook, The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada (Toronto, 1971), 127-128, 144-146, 154. See also Donald Creighton, Harold Adams Innis: Portrait of a Scholar (Toronto, 1957), 96-106.
- 17 Margaret Prang, "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada", Canadian Historical Review, XLVI (March, 1965), 1.
- 18 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 440.
- 19 Reverend John E. O'Brien, "A History of the Canadian Radio League: 1930-1936" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southern California, 1964), 5.
- 20 Ibid., 33-40, and Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 19-27, and Margaret Prang, "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada", Canadian Historical Review, XLVI (March, 1965), 3-4.
- 21 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 21.
- 22 The Radio Amateur's Handbook (Newington, Connecticut, 1965), 393-395.
- 23 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 1.
- 24 Ibid., 9 and E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 19. Weir has told how "the extraordinary coverage in those days explains why reasonably consistent reception on CNR trains during long transcontinental journeys could be had despite the limited number of relatively low-powered stations." There was one occasion when CFCN Calgary and CHNS Halifax broadcast programs to one another.
- 25 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 6, April, 1932, 265.
- 26 Ibid., 270.
- 27 Ibid.

28 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, PAC, Sound Section, Interview Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.

29 Kenneth Bambrick, unpublished, untitled manuscript on early Canadian broadcasters, 10 and T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 10.

30 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951, (Toronto, 1969), 21.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 12, April 14, 1932, 521.

34 Ibid., No. 9, April 7, 1932, 390.

35 Ibid., 386.

36 Ibid., No. 1, March 11, 1932, 14.

37 Ibid., 24.

38 Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (Ottawa, 1929), 27-29.

39 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.

40 Ibid.

41 PC-2108, December 6, 1928, Canada Gazette, LXII (1929), 2306.

42 Ibid.

43 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Vic George, January 21, 1977.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid., Interview, Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Barbara Byers, "Saskatoon ... ready to take off and ready to compete in FM", Broadcaster, (April, 1981), 29.

49 Barbara A. Moes, "History and modernism merge at CFRN in Edmonton", Broadcaster, (October 1981), 24.

50 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Vic George, January 21, 1977.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., Interview, Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.

54 Ibid.

55 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television," (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1976), 8.

56 Ibid.

57 Robert Sobel, The Manipulators: America in the Media Age (New York, 1976), 137-140.

58 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Vic George, January 21, 1977.

59 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 15, April-20, 1932, 695.

60 Ibid., No. 16, April 21, 1932, 712.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Bob Collins, "Remember When Radio was the Rage", Maclean's Magazine (August 15, 1953), 36.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 13, April 18, 1932, 591.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., No. 9, April 7, 1932, 382.

72 Ibid.

73 Michael Nolan, "Presentation for the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission with respect to Concentration of Ownership in Private Broadcasting and the question of Cross-Ownership", April 25, 1979, 3. This brief commissioned by the London Free Press Holdings Limited, CFPL Broadcasting Limited, and London Free Press Printing Company Limited is filed with the CRTG:

74 Ibid., 4.

75 PAC, Department of Marine and Fisheries Files, W. Sherwood Fox to Donald Manson, March 25, 1929.

76 Ibid.

77 London Free Press, October 24, 1925.

78 Michael Nolan, "Presentation for the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission with respect to Concentration of Ownership in Private Broadcasting and the question of Cross-ownership", April 25, 1979, 4.

79 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 14, April 19, 1932, 638.

80 Ibid.



- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibid., 639.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid., 640.
- 85 Ibid., No. 16, April 21, 1932, 718.
- 86 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 John Robert Colombo, Colombo's Canadian References (Toronto, 1976), 102 and T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 39-40. Allard claims the "batteryless" radio was invented in 1924 and marketed a year later.
- 89 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 13.
- 90 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 1, March 11, 1932, 4.
- 91 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Vic George, January 21, 1977.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 1, March 11, 1932, 13.
- 96 Ibid., No. 4, March 18, 1932, 105.
- 97 Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, -Vol. 1 (Ottawa, 1970), 47.
- 98 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 44.

- 99 Ibid., 47.
- 100 Ibid., 46.
- 101 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.
- 102 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 13.
- 103 Ibid., 12.
- 104 Ibid., 86.
- 105 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 6.
- 106 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 142.
- 107 Ibid., 143.
- 108 Ibid., and Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 19.
- 109 Margaret Prang, "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada," Canadian Historical Review, XLVI (March, 1965), 4.
- 110 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes and Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 1, March 11, 1932, 7.
- 111 Ibid., No. 3, March 17, 1932, 82. Dr. Frigon's somewhat ambiguous observation is also quoted in T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 84.
- 112 Margaret Prang, "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada," Canadian Historical Review, XLVI (March 1965), 3.
- 113 For a discussion of Thornton and the CNR, see Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 22-27 and E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting (Toronto, 1965), 5-18.
- 114 R. B. Bennett Papers, PAC (microfilm), R. W. Ashcroft article, "Government vs. Private Ownership of Canadian Radio", January, 1931, 389176, M-1314. This article by Ashcroft drew attention to the description

of the CNR network as "a chain of Canadian National Railway radio stations", of which fourteen or fifteen are privately owned.

115 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, J. T. Carlyle, Toronto, October 1, 1976.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 14, April 20, 1932, 677.

119 Ibid.

120 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, J. T. Carlyle, Toronto, October 1, 1976.

121 R. B. Bennett Papers, R. W. Ashcroft address to the Annual Meeting of the Association of Canadian Advertisers, Toronto, "The Fifth Estate"; October 15, 1929, 389142, M-1314.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 79.

125 Canadian Pacific Corporate Archives (CPCA), Windsor Station, Montreal, promotional material outlining the "Canadian Pacific Railway Radio Programmes". The GPR noted that "the winter programme of radio broadcasts" showed a marked increase "in the volume of entertainment over the air which the railway sponsors."

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Robert Sobel, The Manipulators: America in the Media Age (New York, 1976), 138.

129 CPCA, promotional material outlining the "Canadian Pacific Railway Radio Programmes."

- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Ibid., and E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 79.
- 132 CPCA, promotional material outlining the "Canadian Pacific Railway Radio Programmes".
- 133 R. B. Bennett Papers, "Government v.s. Private Ownership of Canadian Radio", January, 1931, 389176, M-1314.
- 134 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 79.
- 135 R. B. Bennett Papers, "The Fifth Estate", October 14, 1929, 389142, M-1314.
- 136 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 7, April 5, 1932, 329.
- 137 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), and House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 15, May 14, 1936, 649
- 138 R. B. Bennett Papers, "The Fifth Estate", October 5, 1929, 389142, M-1314.
- 139 Ibid.
- 140 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview Vic George, January 21, 1977.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 Ibid.
- 144 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 42.
- 145 PAC, Department of Marine and Fisheries Files, "Memorandum, Radio Branch, Department of Marine and Fisheries," July 20, 1923.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Genesis of Nationalization

On a sultry summer evening, in the mid 1920s, a youngster, by the name of Robert Bowman, was listening to his crystal set in bed at his family's Cloverdale Road home in Rockcliffe Park, Ontario. His father, Charles A. Bowman, caught him in the act and was persuaded by his son to put on a set of earphones to hear a Chicago radio station.<sup>1</sup> The elder Bowman, "a newspaperman with little regard for radio", was intrigued by this new form of communication and he began to give serious thought to the subject of radio generally and, in particular, to the concept of a national broadcasting system for Canada.<sup>2</sup> C. A. Bowman was to serve later as a member of the Aird Commission and, by historical coincidence, Graham Spry, a co-founder of the Canadian Radio League, was to inhabit the premises of 446 Cloverdale Road in Rockcliffe after the Bowmans departed.

Since the appointment of the Aird Commission on December 6, 1928 marked the first official government initiative in broadcasting, it is worth examining the social and political circumstances which prompted this enquiry into radio.<sup>3</sup> Until 1928, the federal government had shown only a casual interest in the new electronic medium. There was no over-all policy for broadcasting in Canada; instead the subject was treated on an ad hoc basis with the government reacting periodically to new developments. This period of federal detachment ended with the formation of the Royal Commission, the first of a long line of public enquiries that were to punctuate the history of Canadian broadcasting.<sup>4</sup> The timing of the Aird Commission's appointment

has tended to make it convenient for public broadcasting apologists to wrap the subject of early radio in a cloak of Canadian nationalism. The last Imperial Conference in 1926 had seen "a profound readjustment in Commonwealth relations" with greater autonomy for the Dominions.<sup>5</sup> In the following year, federal and provincial politicians made their first attempt at devising an amending formula to patriate the constitution, the beginning of a painful process that was not to be completed for another fifty-five years.<sup>6</sup> Also in 1927, Canada celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation and radio acquired a national voice - a circumstance that was not lost on Prime Minister Mackenzie King. In crowded living rooms and public places across the land, his and the Governor General, Lord Willingdon's, voices were heard by millions.<sup>7</sup> Yet it may be that the forces of nationalism, in the latter half of the 1920s, have been somewhat exaggerated as an explanation for the government intervening in broadcasting which, until 1928, had been left largely to the private sector.

After the 1926 federal election, Canada appeared to have found a sense of nationhood. But as W. L. Morton has perceptively observed:

That was a victory of nationalism, but a superficial victory, for the troubles of Canada were more fundamental than nationalism could be. They were the difficulties of secular change - economic, social, and moral - and could be changed only by experience and suffering, not by the expedience of politicians. Nationalism was a mist that hung over the vortex of Canadian life; it was, in its drift and changes, lit by sunlight, eye-catching and seemingly solid, but it was in large part mist.<sup>8</sup>

The subject of radio can be viewed in this context as well. By the late 1920s, radio was a perceived threat to newspaper owners, such as the Southams, who had visions of this new medium cutting deeply into their

advertising profits. As Graham Spry has explained, "the owners could see that radio would threaten the revenues of the chain."<sup>9</sup> Wilson, Harry and Fred Southam owned a number of Canadian newspapers including The Ottawa Citizen which had C. A. Bowman as its editor. The Southams eagerly supported some form of public broadcasting because they felt, in that way, "it would be easier to manipulate a government than a powerful private owner."<sup>10</sup> Therefore it can be seen that the "protective impulse" was in evidence during this period.<sup>11</sup> Newspaper-businessmen appeared ready to turn to the state rather than allow market forces to determine the future of radio and its impact on society. Viewed in this light, the Aird Commission, as an outgrowth of Canadian nationalism, appears to be "in large part mist."<sup>12</sup>

Religion also played a part in bringing about this enquiry after the government faced protests over the behaviour of the International Bible Students Association, the forerunner of the Jehovah's Witnesses, whose vitriolic behaviour on radio irritated other religious sects. Moreover the Commission was appointed at a time when the Mackenzie King government was in a period, according to Donald Creighton, "of not very dignified inertia."<sup>13</sup> A Royal Commission on broadcasting thus gave the appearance of government action and, at the same time, helped defuse the religious controversy that had surrounded radio. The King government appeared to be in a state of drift and, after the bottom dropped out of the New York stock market, his government was turfed out of office on July 28, 1930.<sup>14</sup>

Just two years before the appointment of the Aird Commission, in the words of Arthur Lower, "King went to London with memories of Lord Byng's refusal of dissolution fresh in his mind and the Jacksonian democratic ideas of his grandfather in his family tradition."<sup>15</sup> C. A. Bowman accompanied

him as public relations member of the Canadian delegation attending the 1926 Imperial Conference. While in England, Bowman was able to impress upon King the importance of a publicly-owned system of radio after arranging for the Prime Minister to address the British people through the broadcasting facilities of the British Broadcasting Company.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter Bowman managed to exert considerable influence on Canada's broadcasting history through his role as editor of The Ottawa Citizen and with his impressive list of public contacts. Alan Plaunt would later have complete access to Bowman's personal files in his campaigning on behalf of the Canadian Radio League. Historians have often relied, for the most part, on an interview between Bowman and Alan Thomas recorded at Nanaimo, British Columbia on February 18, 1960 for details of his activities with King and as a member of the Aird Commission. However Bowman's memoirs published six years later provide probably a clearer insight into the extent of his influence, on leading public figures of the late 1920s, and also reveal a great deal about the manner in which the first government enquiry into broadcasting was conducted.

Besides King and Bowman, the Canadian delegation to the 1926 Conference in England included Vincent Massey, soon to be appointed Canada's first minister to Washington, Dr. O. D. Skelton, Deputy Minister of External Affairs, and General James MacBrien, Chief of the General Staff.<sup>17</sup> MacBrien, a neighbour of Bowman in Rockcliffe, had been commissioned to prepare the draft on Canada's position as it related to Imperial defence.<sup>18</sup> Bowman and Skelton were also close colleagues and, in their early years in Rockcliffe, often picked wild strawberries together and went swimming in Mackay's Lake.<sup>19</sup> The delegation travelled together on the White Star liner "Baltic" and stayed at the Ritz Hotel in Piccadilly. Soon after their



arrival, Gladstone Murray, a Canadian and public relations director for the BBC, contacted Bowman about having Mackenzie King do a national broadcast. When Bowman first made the suggestion to the Prime Minister, King hedged at the idea claiming that his duties at the Conference were too onerous to allow time for such a broadcast. He finally agreed to speak to several million British people provided that Bowman would write the speech.<sup>20</sup> When the time for the broadcast had arrived, he still had not been able to get King to read over the speech. "He had never before spoken into a microphone", Bowman wrote, "but he had none of my misgiving."<sup>21</sup> With King, when he made his historic address over the BBC, were Gladstone Murray and John Reith, the Director-General of the Corporation, who described the radio speech as "the first national broadcast by any prime minister from the overseas Empire."<sup>22</sup> In writing the radio address, Bowman had decided to focus on the geography of Canada. Claiming that "Rudyard Kipling's Our Lady of the Snows had given an unfavourable impression" of the Canadian winter, he chose to accentuate the positive:<sup>23</sup>

Our broadcast told of the glorious winter landscape; white under the blue sky and golden sunshine. It gave a glowing picture of a day on skis in the Gatineau Hills - over the "Top of the World" and down the Canyon Trail - as though Prime Minister King had actually done that himself.<sup>24</sup>

John Reith maintained that the broadcast had given British listeners a new perspective on life in Canada and heartily thanked the Prime Minister. While he was always careful about major speeches, King apparently treated this particular radio address in a somewhat hurried manner and was thankful for Bowman's assistance.<sup>25</sup> As Bowman recalled, the broadcast "initiated Mackenzie King into the significance of national broadcasting. My vision of a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation began to become practical politics."<sup>26</sup>

Although King's performance at the 1926 Imperial Conference has not received the endorsement of all historians, Canada, nevertheless, made considerable headway. The words of the Balfour Report clearly revealed that the Dominions seeking greater independence had managed to re-arrange Imperial affairs:

They are autonomous communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any respect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>27</sup>

In the three years following the Balfour Declaration, Canadian legations were opened in Washington, Paris and Tokyo. In 1928, Canada, which was now well on the way from colony to nation, received the first British High Commissioner.<sup>28</sup> This growth in international stature was paralleled by the emergence of an expanded civil service dominated by a handful of individuals who were to have an enormous influence on Canada's public life in succeeding generations. As C. A. Bowman has written:

The animating spirit of this forward step in Canadian independence, Dr. O. D. Skelton, deputy minister of External Affairs, had already indentured a staff of promising apprentices - including Lester Pearson, Norman Robertson, Hugh Keenleyside ... later to graduate as Canadian ambassadors and United Nations builders.<sup>29</sup>

Hugh Keenleyside has recalled that Lester Pearson had been urged to enter the External Affairs Department "by Dr. Skelton on the suggestion of Vincent Massey, who had recently been appointed Canadian Minister to the United States and who had known Mike at the University of Toronto."<sup>30</sup>

Prior to moving to Ottawa, Keenleyside himself had considered working in Vancouver and had been in contact with a prominent Canadian who was later

to become an ally of Alan Plaunt and the Canadian Radio League as well as a member of the first Board of Governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation:

I had talked with General Victor Odlum about a post as a general assistant to him in Vancouver. He was, among many other things, a member of the legislature, publisher of the Vancouver Star, and head of Odlum, Brown investment firm. He also continued some of his military responsibilities.<sup>31</sup>

Keenleyside was about to take up his duties on the west coast when results of the qualifying examinations he had written were announced by the Department of External Affairs. "I was told that I had qualified at the top of the list for appointment as third secretary", he recalled, "and I was asked if I could come to Ottawa for an oral examination."<sup>32</sup> General Odlum told him, "You won't make any money, but you will find much of interest in a diplomatic career, and starting at this time you can help build up the service and have great opportunities to serve our country."<sup>33</sup>

However this buoyant and optimistic mood in the country was broken somewhat by the Beauharnois scandal when, in the words of C. A. Bowman, Mackenzie King "allowed himself to be taken in tow by a crafty promoter."<sup>34</sup> While sailing home on the "Majestic" from the Imperial Conference, the Prime Minister avoided Bowman, Vincent and Alice Massey and "dined as guest of the Beauharnois promoter, in a saloon known as the Ritz - on a different deck, where passengers paid extra for meals exclusively served."<sup>35</sup> However, from a political standpoint, it was costly dining for King, because in 1929 the Beauharnois private interests were allowed to divert part of the St. Lawrence River to line their pockets in a hydro-electric power deal. Mackenzie King thereafter entered "the valley of humiliation."<sup>36</sup> His regime stumbled along, in the years before the depression struck, groping for some form of

initiative that would show a degree of competence in difficult times. It was in this political atmosphere that C. A. Bowman saw that "a national broadcasting policy for Canada had been hoisted to The Citizen's editorial masthead."<sup>37</sup> In March and April 1928, Bowman wrote a series of articles that received national exposure in the Southam newspapers and also, through his behind the scenes activity, sought to rally the support of prominent Canadians behind the notion of a publicly-owned broadcasting system. By the time he was appointed to the Aird Commission, Bowman's position was well known:

The dominion parliament is going to be confronted with the problem of deciding whether Canadian radio broadcasting is to be left in private hands as it is in the United States or to be operated as it is in Great Britain under the direction of a national broadcasting commission. With the experience of the United States, where chaotic conditions in radio broadcasting were allowed to develop for lack of public control, it would seem the height of folly on the part of Canada to allow this great new public service to drift into similar conditions.<sup>38</sup>

Bowman's articles on broadcasting appeared in The Citizen, Hamilton Spectator, Winnipeg Tribune, Calgary Herald, Edmonton Journal and Vancouver Province.<sup>39</sup> He also recalled that "Senator W. H. Dennis, independent publisher of the Halifax Herald also gave my articles publicity in the Maritime Provinces."<sup>40</sup> On another occasion, the Senator "dubbed me an honorary Nova Scotian."<sup>41</sup>

The 'old boy' network in Ontario served Bowman well in his campaign for public broadcasting. On April 4, 1928, he wrote to his friend Charles A. Magrath, who had succeeded Sir Adam Beck as chairman of Ontario Hydro. In particular, Bowman urged Magrath to interest Premier Howard Ferguson in his ideas for broadcasting in Canada and, not surprisingly, stressed

the British connection in his correspondence:

While the enclosed page has a short editorial on the benefit of Hydro to the people of this community, I am marking the leader on the radio question in the hope that you may have the opportunity of interesting Mr. Ferguson in it. While he may not be very enthusiastic about any question discussed in The Citizen, I feel sure that the increasing influence of the United States publicity through the medium of radio broadcasting must be of concern to him. Control and operation along British lines under a federal broadcasting Commission, something like the British Broadcasting Commission would have to be dealt with by the Dominion authorities, but it may become a provincial question too.<sup>42</sup>

Bowman also seemed aware that Premier Ferguson saw the Ministry of Education as "the nerve centre of politics."<sup>43</sup>

In Great Britain a steadily increasing use of radio is being made for educational purposes. Schools of this province may some day want to give the children benefit of this new educational instrument. Many people regret that the motion picture industry has been allowed to pass into the hands of United States promoters, but it would be far more regrettable to allow radio broadcasting to be so lost to the community. Some kind of interprovincial conference on the subject may be deemed desirable before another year. In any case, Ontario leaders might profitably give some thought to it.<sup>44</sup>

Magrath followed up Bowman's suggestion in a letter to Ferguson on April 23, 1928 in which he said that "Mr. Bowman of the Ottawa Citizen has been actively pushing the idea of a radio policy leading to public ownership or control."<sup>45</sup> Magrath too was aware that a broadcasting system based upon the British model would undoubtedly impress the Ontario Premier who made frequent trips to England and established Ontario House in London to promote British trade.<sup>46</sup>

I am taking the liberty to enclose his letter to myself of April 4th with editorial of April 3rd. You will also find enclosed editorials which appeared on the 7th and 10th. His concluding words in the last issue have more in them than appear on the surface: "under national ownership and operation - associated as much as it is technically possible with British and European broadcasting."<sup>47</sup>

The following day the Premier replied to Magrath and managed to take a verbal swipe at The Citizen in the process:

It is rather remarkable that I have just been thinking out something to say publicly along this very line. The insidious penetration of American atmosphere; one of the greatest dangers with which this country is threatened - broadcasting and moving pictures - are our greatest menace in that respect. I am very glad to have the editorials from The Citizen. If The Citizen would consistently stick to high national ideas of this kind, I would be one of its most enthusiastic agents.<sup>48</sup>

In the following month, the Southam Publishing Company was fully behind Bowman's radio campaign. Thus on May 11th, 1928 Fred Southam, President of the Company, wrote to his brother Harry:

The correspondence between Messrs. Bowman, Magrath, and Ferguson which you submit with your letter of the 10th instant emphasizes another form of American propaganda which we, in Canada, are permitting largely by default, and Mr. Bowman does well to call attention to it. I am glad to note that Premier Ferguson is fully seized of the danger. I consider this matter of such importance that I am sending copies of the correspondence to the several newspaper executives, with a request that they give it consideration.<sup>49</sup>

Representatives of the print medium would be aware that Canadians were showing a willingness to listen to popular radio programs, a development that could affect their revenue base, if advertisers chose to switch in large numbers to this new form of communication. It was hardly surprising then that the Southam Publishing Company endorsed Bowman's crusade which was

to be continued by Alan Plaunt and the Canadian Radio League.

Religious organizations eagerly embraced radio in the 1920s and the government eventually saw a Royal Commission as its way out of a controversy that had grown in intensity between 1925 and 1928. The International Bible Students Association operated stations in Edmonton, Saskatoon and Vancouver. As well, they had received a phantom licence with the call letters CKCX in Toronto which used the facilities of station CJYC owned by Universal Radio of Canada, an organization of International Bible Students but not the Association itself.<sup>50</sup> Ernie Bushnell, a pioneer broadcaster, has recalled the religious controversy which has generally been seen as a contributing factor prompting the formation of the Aird Commission:

The Bible Students station CJYC shared a frequency with the Toronto Star station CFCA and that is what started the nationalization of radio. Reverend William Cameron was the pastor of Bloor Street United Church and he was very eloquent. The Bible Students had the air from about 8:30 to 10 and CFCA had the air from 7:30 to 8:30. Bill was almost an evangelical type of minister and he got wound up with his sermon. Come 8:30 the Bible Students went on the air and the howls you could hear all over the continent.<sup>51</sup>

The Bible Students attacks on other religions brought a wave of petitions to the government until finally P. J. A. Cardin, the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, announced on June 2, 1928, that a Royal Commission would be appointed to study radio.<sup>52</sup> According to Ernie Bushnell, the editor of the Toronto Star, J. H. Cranston, helped to influence the government in the wake of the Bible Students controversy:

He was a great friend of Mackenzie King's and he came down to Ottawa raising cane about what had happened. I believe it was he who suggested that radio should be nationalized and that was the beginning of the idea of nationalization.<sup>53</sup>

The government had decided to close down the stations operated by the Bible Students, a move which, according to Donald Manson, then a member of the radio section of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, brought an angry public response. As Bushnell explained, "I can remember him telling me that they had over eighty bags of mail come in protesting against the cancellation of these stations."<sup>54</sup> From 1928 until today in the age of the "electronic church", no regulatory agency has granted a broadcasting licence to a religious group.<sup>55</sup> The reason given for their denial is that religious groups are unable to adhere to the dictates of the Broadcasting Act which calls for "a reasonable, balanced opportunity for the expression of differing views."<sup>56</sup> However, as Kenneth Bambrick has written, there are a couple of notable exceptions:

Despite the policy, there are still two church-oriented stations in Canada: VOWR - the Voice of Wesley Radio - and VOAR - the Voice of Adventist Radio both in St. John's Newfoundland. They were operating prior to that province entering Confederation, and were granted special dispensation to continue.<sup>57</sup>

Religion and the economic concerns of newspaper owners had combined to bring the government actively into the radio field.

After his editorials had appeared in the Southam newspapers, C. A. Bowman received a call from office of the Prime Minister. Mackenzie King, who had once presented Bowman with a review copy of Industry and Humanity, told the editor of The Citizen that it had been decided he should serve as one of the three commissioners.<sup>58</sup> Bowman suggested "W. D. Herridge, K. C., one of Canada's best informed legal minds on radio technicalities."<sup>59</sup> The Prime Minister replied that he and Herridge were old friends but felt that Bowman, Sir John Aird, President of the Bank of Commerce, and Dr. Augustin Frigon, principal of Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, should be



the three commissioners.<sup>60</sup> Behind the appointment of the Aird Commission has to be seen the hand of Vincent Massey who had lunched with Bowman on April 14, 1928 and discussed the possibility of such a Commission to study the radio question.<sup>61</sup> As Claude Bissell has written, "when in 1928 the King government decided to set up a radio commission, Vincent suggested two out of three of the commissioners - Charles Bowman, editor of the Ottawa Citizen, and Sir John Aird, the president of the Canadian Bank of Commerce."<sup>62</sup> In Massey's life, "activities - in music, drama, painting, education, and in what was to be known as the mass media, - had to be combined with a pre-eminent commitment to diplomacy and politics."<sup>63</sup> Mackenzie King had accepted Massey's advice. The Aird Commission was set to begin its work.

Since the three individuals who served on this first Royal Commission into radio broadcasting helped to lay the foundation for the present day broadcasting system, it is worth considering briefly their professional backgrounds which, in part, dictated the social perspective each brought to the radio question. C. A. Bowman, as described earlier, clearly saw radio as a threat to newspapers. Bowman was born in Northumberland, England, and was educated as an engineer at Rutherford Engineering College, Newcastle-on-Tyne.<sup>64</sup> A Christian Scientist, he joined The Ottawa Citizen in 1913 after being dismissed "from the Civil Service, by Order in Council, October 14 1912."<sup>65</sup> According to Bowman, "the Order in Council originated with Dr. J. D. Reid, acting minister of Railways and Canals. He put it through three days after my name appeared in The Citizen, saying that I had won the \$200 dollar prize in a nationwide competition promoted by the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers."<sup>66</sup> The competition was aimed at encouraging draft plans to organize the government's technical services on

a more efficient basis. Bowman's proposal called for a national engineering authority to administer the technical aspects of harbours, railways and canals and "as free from politics as the Supreme Court of Canada."<sup>67</sup> After his dismissal from the government, he began a lengthy association with the Southam brothers and wrote a daily "Third Column" in The Citizen.<sup>68</sup> Bowman held some strong views on advertising as it pertained to newspapers and radio. He felt it was "not fair to clutter the air up with advertising."<sup>69</sup> As Bowman explained, "take any local community now - and I may be accused of speaking as a newspaper man - but every little community has its small weekly paper and it gives that community adequate service in advertising, and it does not seem fair that this new instrument should be used for advertising purposes."<sup>70</sup>

Sir John Aird, chairman of the Royal Commission, was a conservative appointee with a vengeance. Seventy-three years old at the time of his appointment, he once said that he had owned a radio but had later thrown "the damned thing out."<sup>71</sup> In a similar vein, Sir John remarked, "I have often said to myself, listening to something coming in over my own radio, that I would kick the thing out of the house, or something like that."<sup>72</sup> He had started his career with the Bank of Commerce in 1878 working in branches at Seaforth, Toronto and Winnipeg.<sup>73</sup> He became General Manager in 1911, Vice-President in 1920 and, when appointed chairman of the Royal Commission on radio, was the head of the bank.<sup>74</sup> Knighted in 1917, Sir John had a skeptical attitude toward government subsidies to private entrepreneurs given his bank's dismal experiences with railway enthusiasts. As Herschel Hardin has written, "the ghosts of Mackenzie and Mann who, in their railroad days, had stuck Aird's bank with worthless Canadian Northern collateral - except that the government agreed to pay for it anyway during

nationalization (Aird was general manager of the bank at the time) - haunted the private broadcasters' lobby."<sup>75</sup> Sir John himself said, "the possibility of subsidies from the Dominion treasury to private broadcasting stations has been mooted, but the experience of Canada with subsidies during the period of building competitive railways has hardly been so satisfactory as to warrant a proposal that it be repeated in the building of competitive broadcasting stations or chains of stations."<sup>76</sup>

The third member of the Aird Commission, Dr. Augustin Frigon, "had studied at the Sorbonne, and contributed much to science studies in the province of Quebec."<sup>77</sup> He had been appointed to serve on the Montreal Electrical Commission by the Public Service Commission of Quebec and was to bring to the Aird Commission "an electrical engineer's understanding of the technical side of a great new industry."<sup>78</sup> In Frigon's view, broadcasting could simply not serve the country properly, if it turned a profit. He explained his position in these terms:

It might be the proper time to point out that the policy of radio broadcasting should depend on, whether we consider broadcasting as a business or as a medium to be used for the benefit of the country. If it is a business, well, some control of programs, or of the activities of the stations would be sufficient, but if it is to be used for the benefit of the country, from all points of view, it can hardly be a profit-making business. That is the fundamental fact of the whole case, whether broadcasting is a business for profit-making purposes or an instrument to be used for the benefit of the public at large.<sup>79</sup>

Moreover Frigon had an aversion to advertising on radio claiming that it was not consistent with proper education. As he explained:

We heard the results of a baseball match the other day on the train, but every now and again the announcers would cut in to advertise. That is poor education; it is lack of taste.<sup>80</sup>

According to Bowman, both Frigon and Aird "took cautious views on the question of national broadcasting. Neither had any use for public ownership. They had preconceived notions averse to the B.B.C. They favored private enterprise."<sup>81</sup> However it can also be seen that the two members had "preconceived notions" about the private enterprise system as it pertained to radio. Clearly economic considerations appeared to weigh heavily on the commissioners. While Frigon did not have Aird's "sentiment about the British connection" he did have "Quebec's healthy regard for Canadian independence."<sup>82</sup> These factors too were significant in influencing the Commission's recommendations on broadcasting.

The secretary of the Commission was Donald Manson, an influential civil servant, who presided over the final drafting of the report. Manson, who had begun working with the Canadian Marconi Company soon after the first Radiotelegraph Act was passed by Parliament in 1905, was chief inspector of radio in the Department of Marine and Fisheries when he joined the Aird Commission. Frank Foster, who began working in radio communications with the federal government in 1935, has assessed Manson's extensive contribution to the Aird Commission:

As Secretary of the Royal Commission Manson had custody of all the briefs and evidence submitted to the Aird Royal Commission. He was advisor to the Royal Commission in all matters related to broadcasting. Donald Manson took the two drafts of Bowman and Frigon and combined them into a single report which was signed by the three Commissioners. He summarized the comments about the report of the Royal Commission and kept the Commissioners and other supporters informed.<sup>83</sup>

As well "for many years Donald Manson had kept a special fund of his own money which he used to entertain radio experts who visited Ottawa from other countries."<sup>84</sup> Manson also had a network of worldwide contacts and "was recognized as the Canadian expert on broadcasting and radio

communications."<sup>85</sup> Both Manson and Frigon later joined the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and each eventually became general manager.

C. A. Bowman took exception to the role often attributed to Manson's work with the Aird Commission. In particular, Bowman was extremely perturbed at a CBC broadcast explaining Manson's role in the preparation of the Commission's report:

On an occasion, years later, in a memorial tribute to Donald Manson, one of the C.B.C.'s broadcasters, Peter Stursberg, said: "So he (Manson) saw to it that the members of the Aird Commission thought the way he did. When I asked him who wrote the report, he replied without any false modesty - "I did. I wrote every word of it except the last paragraph which said what a good horse I was." This misleading statement attributed to Donald Manson, by a national broadcast over the C.B.C., would have greatly embarrassed him. No person saw to it how any member of the Royal Commission should think."<sup>86</sup>

Bowman repeatedly claimed that "we had scrupulously refrained from trying to influence one another on possible recommendations."<sup>87</sup> Yet there is some evidence, in his memoirs, that he did some gentle nudging of the other two commissioners to move them more in his direction. When the Commission was visiting New York, Bowman asked the chairman of NBC, "what provisions is the National Broadcasting Company making with regard to Canada?"<sup>88</sup> The American broadcasting executive answered, "we intend to give Canada complete coverage as in the United States."<sup>89</sup> According to Bowman, this answer had a telling effect on Aird and Frigon:

A loyal knight of the British connection, Sir John became thoughtful when I later commented, "Canada could become dependent upon the United States for radio broadcasting, as we are on films from Hollywood." He reacted with, "We had better book passages to England at an early date." While still in New York, he reserved cabin accommodation for himself on the "Mauritania."<sup>90</sup>

An examination of the Commission's hearings and assessments of the Aird Report, to some extent, have been provided elsewhere. The travels of the commissioners throughout England, Europe and Canada, where they visited the provincial capitals, have been frequently portrayed as a radio fact-finding mission dutifully undertaken by an enlightened trio. For example, James A. Cowan heaped praise on their efforts:

The Aird Commission went methodically and efficiently about its work. It was led by one of the most distinguished of living Canadians. The fact that he was willing to devote so much personal attention to the problem is in itself significant. The commission worked from December, 1928 to September, 1929 and travelled between 30,000 and 35,000 miles. It made a report which was clearly based on the most thorough examination of radio conditions ever carried out in this country.<sup>91</sup>

It is worthwhile contrasting this lofty description with some of Sir John Aird's performances before private luncheons at the Vancouver Club on the harbor front, the Ranchman's at Calgary, the Manitoba Club in Winnipeg and the York Club in Toronto. C. A. Bowman captured another side of the Aird Commission which was not all decorum and respectability:

The men of affairs in Canada's favored clubs were told of Germany's strides back to industrial strength. We had spent three frigid days in Berlin. Hitler sold 50,000 copies of Mein Kampf in that year 1929. He had put into writing the kind of Germany he intended to make. But who wanted to hear about Hitler's ranting? From Germany, Sir John's confidential talk would go on to Soviet Russia. There, too, he would say, were impressive signs of development, including hydro-electric power. We had never been near Soviet Russia, or anything Russian ... but it served to impress our Club audiences.<sup>92</sup>

In assessing their study of radio, it is important to realize that the commissioners did not fully understand and seldom concerned themselves "with technical operations" relating to the new medium.<sup>93</sup> While the

report represented an "important milestone in the development of policy for the regulation and supervision of the Canadian broadcasting system", as Frank Foster has suggested, "one should bear in mind that their knowledge of radio was not equal to that of today."<sup>94</sup> The commissioners assumed that "for a given transmitter power, ether would carry radio signals over the same distance at any location in Canada. Ground conductivity and directional antennas were not considered in their deliberations."<sup>95</sup> As well the commissioners, at times, seemed exceedingly unaware of the state of broadcasting in Canada and of the level of service provided by the private broadcasters. Travelling in their private railway car "Atlantic", the commissioners arrived in London, Ontario for a public hearing in the offices of the Chamber of Commerce on May 14th, 1929. Three submissions were presented to the commission including one from the London Free Press, which owned station CJGC, and was represented at the hearing by Mr. H. Lincke. He had several exchanges with C. A. Bowman during the hearing and one of these was as follows:

Mr. Bowman: Can we afford to organize a system of chain broadcasting?

Mr. Lincke: We are maintaining one now in the stage of development through the Trans-Canada Broadcasting Company.

Mr. Bowman: One that would compete with the U.S. broadcasting.

Mr. Lincke: It is competing now. The chain broadcasting coming through here are holding the interest of the listeners over long established U.S. stations.<sup>96</sup>

The hearing in London dealt heavily with the costs involved in maintaining a national system of broadcasting, a factor which greatly concerned all commissioners. Sir John Aird, a banker, naturally wanted to know how the

private broadcasters planned on financing such a system. The representative of the London Free Press was reminded that, in Germany, listeners paid six dollars a year in fees for radio set licences, an amount six times the Canadian rate:

Chairman: In your opinion then all expenditure should be assumed by the Government.

Mr. Lincke: No I do not think the Government should assume the cost of operating stations or maintaining programmes.

Chairman: Do you think that private enterprise would meet all those charges and give you a first class programme?

Mr. Lincke: I think we can, Yes. We have demonstrated that here since last Fall.

Chairman: You must get away from the local idea. You must consider Canada as a whole. There are many districts in Canada who could not afford that.

Mr. Lincke: If they are poor, why charge them \$6.00 for a radio license.<sup>97</sup>

There was also an interesting colloquy between Bowman and Lincke, two newspaper men, over the merits of advertising on radio:

Mr. Bowman: Speaking as a newspaper man would it be your belief that the revenue should come from advertising?

Mr. Lincke: Yes.

Mr. Bowman: Do you think that advertising detracts at all from the amount spent in newspaper advertising?

Mr. Lincke: No. If radio advertising is properly applied, it stimulates and rather increases than detracts.

Mr. Bowman: Radio advertising is an additional sum of expenditure on advertising.

Mr. Lincke: Yes. It in no way detracts.

Mr. Bowman: Is the additional charge on the consumer?



Mr. Lincke: No. The increased produce would take care of any overhead cost by radio.<sup>98</sup>

In Toronto, where the commission held a hearing on May 17, 1929, it was clear that Bowman frowned on competition in the market place which forced some stations to operate at a loss. "The point I want to get at is this", he said, "here we are told by the station operators that they are operating at a loss and yet you feel that conditions should be maintained although competition is quite clearly causing these duplicate stations to be operating at a loss."<sup>99</sup> In reply, Mr. W. S. Campbell, a representative of the Canadian Manufacturers Association replied, "the operator is like the individual. He can choose his own way through life, and if he chooses to operate at a loss, it is his own business."<sup>100</sup> This economic concern of the commissioners was also addressed by Mr. A. MacKenzie who appeared at the hearing on behalf of station CKNC in Toronto. He noted, in his answer, the impact that the appointment of the Aird Commission had had on the radio industry:

"This question of a loss is perhaps using a wrong term as far as Toronto is concerned. We are operating without any large profit, but it is a fact that, within the last year, broadcasting has passed beyond the realm of a losing business. Some years ago there were 6 newspapers in Toronto, now there are only 4. It is the survival of the fittest. Two have passed out and the rest are flourishing - that is true of various institutions. Had this investigation of broadcasting not developed, you would have operating in Ontario today, two or three high power stations with the owners not making any large profit, but I think breaking even."<sup>101</sup>

The Commission held its last public hearing in Ottawa on July 3, 1929 and submitted its report to the government on September 11th.<sup>102</sup> Broadcasting was to be placed "on a basis of public service" and the stations providing this kind of service were "to be owned and operated by one national company."<sup>103</sup> The nucleus of the system was to be seven 50,000 watt

stations.<sup>104</sup> Moreover "provincial authorities" were to have "full control over the programs of the station or stations in their respective areas."<sup>105</sup> This latter recommendation like so many others in the Aird Report was never adopted, in subsequent broadcasting legislation, but is under active consideration again, in Canada, with the advent of Pay-TV.<sup>106</sup> On the subject of chain broadcasting to which the commissioners had devoted so much time in hearings, their comments were surprisingly terse. "We think that an interchange of programs among different parts of the country should be provided as often as may seem desirable", the report stated, "with coast to coast broadcasts of events or features of national interest, from time to time."<sup>107</sup> The national system was to be financed in three ways, a radio licence fee of three dollars, a subsidy from the federal government of one million dollars annually, and "indirect advertising" which was to produce revenue of seven hundred thousand dollars.<sup>108</sup> "An example of indirect advertising", according to the commissioners, "would be an announcement before and after a program that it was being given by a specified firm."<sup>109</sup> "Direct advertising", which was defined as "extolling the merits of some particular article of merchandise or commercial service", was forbidden.<sup>110</sup> Essentially then, the commission recommended "a publicly owned system, with no private stations, and programs which should have only a limited commercial content in the form of "indirect advertising."<sup>111</sup>

Professor Peers has written that "the Aird Report was solidly based on the sentiment of Canadian nationalism and reflected a noble concept of broadcasting purpose and potential."<sup>112</sup> Saturday Night magazine described the nine page document, excluding appendices, as "a model of conciseness and decisiveness."<sup>113</sup> Yet it can be argued that the report, to some extent, appeared to be an ambiguous document. Moreover its contents were,

at times, completely at variance with the testimony of the commissioners in their appearances before the 1932 Commons Broadcasting Committee.

One of the most frequently quoted lines from the report appears on page six, where the commissioners claimed there had "been unanimity on one fundamental question - Canadian radio listeners want Canadian broadcasting."<sup>114</sup> Perhaps because of the nationalistic overtones to these words, they have been often cited to buttress arguments for public ownership. However this quotation should be seen in the context of the full report. For example, on page eight, the commissioners noted that "it is well, perhaps to point out here the necessity of locating broadcasting stations at suitable distances from centres of population to obviate blanketing of reception from outside points. The need for this has been amply demonstrated to us."<sup>115</sup> In other words, the commissioners knew Canadians were still eager for popular American programs. C. A. Bowman's testimony before the 1932 Commons Broadcasting Committee made this quite clear:

I think that is the rule, that no station can be located in a position where it is going to interfere with reception from outside sources, and those seven stations would be most carefully placed so that they would not interfere with the United States or any other kind of outside reception, so that anyone in Canada would still be at liberty to listen to Amos and Andy, Clara, Lou and Em; and if it is Dempsey and Tunney, or somebody else, this plan of ours would not prevent anyone from hearing those things if they wanted to.<sup>116</sup>

Bowman went on to tell the Commons Committee that the best the Commission was hoping for was an even split between Canadian and American programming:

We would like to see that our Canadian people would get at least a 50-50 share of broadcasting. They would have something just as attractive from Canadian sources as they have from outside.<sup>117</sup>

The central recommendation of the commissioners - the proposed establishment of seven 50,000 watt stations - was seriously questioned by private broadcasting pioneers. W. W. Grant, owner of station CFCN in Calgary, which still serves central and southern Alberta, was highly skeptical:

I do not think there would be satisfactory coverage with seven 50,000-watt stations. We are liable to be led away with the mere mention of a 50,000-watt station as a broadcasting station that will smother the country but it must be remembered that a 50,000-watt station as far as the received strength of signal is concerned in a particular location is only nine times stronger than a 500-watt station.<sup>118</sup>

Grant, who obviously had a sound technical understanding of the radio spectrum, explained the problems of "sky wave reflection" to the Commons Broadcasting Committee:<sup>119</sup>

The direct ground wave going direct from the station to any given point naturally goes in all directions, and it hits what is called a heavyside layer. It is reflected to earth again at a certain point, which may be anything from 50 to 200 miles, and where it hits that particular location it has the effect of interfering with the direct ground wave or musing it up so that it is an unintelligible signal.<sup>120</sup>

He then proposed his solution for nation-wide radio coverage:

We have those conditions today. They are more thoroughly understood now than they were understood when the Aird Commission Report or the Aird Commission suggestions were gotten out. So to say that you are going to give complete coverage in Canada with seven 50,000-watt stations why I do not think it is sound at all. It would be much sounder, in my opinion, to have three times as many 5,000-watt stations.<sup>121</sup>

Grant's opinion was that the problems of sky wave reflection could "make a 50,000-watt station fade out completely in fifty miles distance."<sup>122</sup>

In his appearance before the Commons Committee, Sir John Aird was questioned at length about the Commission's recommendations for "indirect advertising" on the national system. Under questioning from committee member R. K. Smith, the Commission Chairman gave the following example of such advertising:

Take the Canadian Pacific Railway. I would have no objection - taking the case of the Empress of Britain - to the Canadian Pacific Railway announcing that that great ship was coming to Quebec, and probably saying something about its facilities and accommodation, but that would be all they could say, either before or after. The same way with the Canadian National Railways in regard to any special feature of their service. I would not allow them to enter into a long dissertation.<sup>123</sup>

This example appeared to baffle the Commons Committee because, on page ten, the Aird Report had placed definite strictures on "indirect advertising" which was to be confined to "an announcement before and after a program that it was being given by a specified firm."<sup>124</sup> Another member of the committee, W. A. Beynon, asked Sir John, "if you announce the accommodation of that ship it is direct advertising, is it not?"<sup>125</sup> The Commission's Chairman replied, "No, I would not say it was. It would be a special advertising. I would not like them to go on and on about the advantages of their hotels."<sup>126</sup> Later, committee member J. O. Gagnon, who was obviously frustrated somewhat by Aird's testimony, concluded that "the example given at page 10 is in flat contradiction to the example given by Sir John a moment ago about the C.P.R."<sup>127</sup> It was also Sir John's opinion that advertising "is going to die out. That is, direct advertising. The medium of advertising, as I said just now, is the newspapers."<sup>128</sup> At this point, another member of the Commons Committee, W. D. Euler, reminded Aird of a witness who said that "when television comes the newspapers will have to go out of business altogether."<sup>129</sup> To this, Sir John replied, "the

millenium will be at hand then."<sup>130</sup>

It should be understood that the Commission did not equate its proposal for a national company with state or government ownership. Dr.

Frigon explained this portion of the report:

We came to this conclusion, that if you want to accept the last point of view, that is, broadcasting in the interests of the nation or in the interests of the public, it cannot be left to private enterprise. We did not want to make it either a government department or a government-owned system. We have tried to devise something in between, something which will not be run for the purpose of making money and which, on the other hand, would not be some department of the Federal government. So we recommended a company which would own and operate the whole system. This company to be composed of representatives of the Federal government and of the provinces.<sup>131</sup>

Yet from Sir John Aird came a slightly different interpretation of the report:

For instance, supposing this company were to endeavour to do something that was really inimicable to the interests of Canada, I believe the government would have the right to step in and say you shan't do that, it is only in such a case as that where the Government of Canada would interfere, where it is not in the interests of the country. Take in the case of war, you might have traitors, which I do not think is likely because they are all loyal citizens, but that is the idea, of keeping it out of a department. It is entirely different from the department of War or the department of Finance.<sup>132</sup>

The Commission's recommendation for a nucleus of high powered stations "owned and operated by one national company" undoubtedly was the source of some confusion.<sup>133</sup> To Dr. Frigon, this section of the report did not mean government or state ownership. To Sir John "public ownership" could mean intervention by the government of the day in certain instances. This

new form of structure proposed by the Commission, somewhere between "private enterprise" and a "government department or a government-owned system", was perhaps the vaguest part of the report.<sup>134</sup> When Sir John Reith received a copy of the report in London, he immediately singled out the problem the commissioners had never addressed:

Who is going to be in charge? Is it the Chairman of the Board? Or do the Board appoint a Chief Executive? If so, how will he get on with the Provincial Directors who have to have full charge in their provinces? I do not see one real authority anywhere.<sup>135</sup>

Not surprisingly, the financial provisions of the report drew the wrath of private broadcasters. R. W. Ashcroft, an advertising man of some thirty years, was harshly critical of the Commission's suggestion that about seven-hundred thousand dollars would be derived from "indirect advertising."<sup>136</sup> Thus he told the Association of Canadian Advertisers:

They estimate that you advertising men will pay the Government, the first year, \$700,000 for the privilege of broadcasting such programs. Seven hundred thousand fiddle-sticks! How much advertising value would there be in a radio program commencing with: "The next program is given by the Canadian Bank of Commerce", and ending with "The program you have just heard was given by the Canadian Bank of Commerce?" Would the Southams contribute part of the \$700,000 by putting a program on the air "given by the Ottawa Citizen?" Would the Polytechnic School in Montreal? Seven hundred thousand times "No!"<sup>137</sup>

Ashcroft also noted another ambiguous aspect to the Aird Report relating to sponsored programs:

Another glaring inconsistency in the report is that, after recommending the prohibition of Canadian sponsored programs, where mention is made of the sponsor's products, the Commission recommends that "The best programs" be imported from abroad, i.e., from the U.S.A. As you all know, the best U.S.A. programs are the sponsored

ones, advertising the sponsor's products. These are to be admitted on Canadian stations, and similar Canadian ones are to be debarred.<sup>138</sup>

Ashcroft wanted to duplicate in broadcasting "the system that we at present enjoy in Canada in transportation, telegraphs, hotels and express traffic."<sup>139</sup> In other words, "one Government-operated organization, under the wing of the Canadian National Railways" and "another privately-owned organization, utilizing the radio broadcasting transmission lines of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company."<sup>140</sup> However, for largely economic reasons, this kind of duplication was anathema to the Aird Commission.

Whatever its shortcomings, underlying the recommendations of the commissioners were a number of assumptions about Canadian broadcasting which were to be reiterated in future Royal Commission enquiries. These notions included the idea that broadcasting, as a public service, could unify Canadians and that some form of public ownership was essential, if a truly Canadian broadcasting system was to develop. A great deal of discussion about broadcasting, during the past fifty years, has flowed from these premises contained in the Aird Report regardless of their validity. The commissioners, in recommending a form of public ownership, had responded to a variety of social and economic concerns. Chief among these was the newspaper establishment's fear of the loss of advertising revenue to a new electronic medium.

After the report was submitted to the Government, in the fall of 1929, Donald Manson, the Commission's secretary, proved to be an extremely active public servant. He wrote to Sir John Aird who had left for Japan to attend the Kyoto conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations:



I must say, confidentially, that shortly after you left I proceeded to prepare a Bill which would carry out the recommendations of the Commission as expressed in their Report. This Bill is now in the hands of the Minister and I have every belief that it is the intention to carry out the recommendations as you made them.<sup>141</sup>

Other correspondence between Manson and Aird suggested an eagerness to harness broadcasting for the purposes of nation-building. In March, 1930, Manson informed Aird:

If the recommendations of the Commission's Report are placed in effect it means that large stations will be erected from coast to coast which will reach every listener in the settled area of the country. Such a system would be available for the Canadian Pacific Railways or any others who would wish to rent time on them. With a system of broadcasting stations of this class, Canada would, undoubtedly, lead the world. Once this is realized, I feel sure that neither the C.P.R. nor the C.N.R. would be satisfied with anything less.<sup>142</sup>

Similarly, in the following month, he wrote to the Commission's Chairman:

Our Engineers have also completed a report based upon the technical suggestions in regard to high power stations, etc., made by the Commission. This works out remarkably well and if we ever have the privilege of going ahead with the scheme, Canada may well be proud of its broadcasting system.<sup>143</sup>

In this same letter, Manson offered some advice to Sir John on how to counter criticism of the Aird Report:

I certainly do not see any reason why the argument, that the air will eventually be controlled by the U.S. companies if private enterprise is allowed to continue in Canada, cannot be used. To all right thinking people of this country there is no doubt in my mind but that it is one of the strongest arguments that can possibly be found.<sup>144</sup>

Within weeks of the submission of the Aird Report to the government, the Great Depression had begun to intensify and economic considerations preoccupied most world governments. Sir John's attendance at the Kyoto conference, which dealt with the impact of industrialization on the countries of the Pacific area, is illustrative of this mood. "Among the members of the Canadian delegation to the Kyoto conference", wrote Hugh Keenleyside, "were the Honourable Newton Rowell and his wife."<sup>145</sup> Rowell was "in a great state of euphoria because he had just won his appeal to the Privy Council on behalf of the women of Canada. From then on they were to be considered "persons" under the BNA Act and might, among other things, sit in the Senate."<sup>146</sup> Other IPR delegates included "Sir John Aird" and the "two Killams, Henry Angus from UBC, and Professor George Wrong from Toronto."<sup>147</sup> There was yet another member of the Canadian group, in the person of Alan Butterworth Plaunt, who had just graduated from Oxford and attended the Kyoto conference as secretary to the delegation.<sup>148</sup> The Canadian Radio League was soon to be in the making.

## CHAPTER IV

## Footnotes

- 1 Letter from R. T. Bowman to the author, February 4, 1980.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Pc 2108, December 6, 1928, Canada Gazette, LXI (1929) 2306.
- 4 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television", (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1976), 5, 11.
- 5 Charles A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 94.
- 6 W. L. Morton, "The 1920s" in J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown eds., Part One of The Canadians 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1968), 232.
- 7 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television", (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1976), 10.
- 8 W. L. Morton, "The 1920s" in J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown eds., Part One of the Canadians 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1968), 231-232.
- 9 Interview, Graham Spry, January 28, 1980.
- 10 Ibid., August 31, 1979.
- 11 For a description of the "protective impulse", see Michael Bliss, "The Protective Impulse: An Approach to the Social History of Oliver Mowat's Ontario" in Donald Swainson ed., Oliver Mowat's Ontario (Toronto, 1972), 174-188.
- 12 W. L. Morton, "The 1920s" in J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown eds., Part One of the Canadians 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1968), 232.
- 13 Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1970), 193.
- 14 Ibid., 197.
- 15 Arthur R. M. Lower, Colony to Nation, 5th ed. Rev. (Toronto, 1977), 488. See also H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King 1924-1932: The Lonely Heights, Vol. II (Toronto, 1963), 176-190.

16 Charles A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 95.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 98.

19° Ibid., 76.

20 Ibid., 95.

21 Ibid., 96.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., 97.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 112-113.

28 Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1970), 193.

29 Charles A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia), 113.

30 Hugh L. Keenleyside, Hammer the Golden Day: Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside (Toronto, 1981), Vol. 1, 213.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 214.

33 Ibid.

34 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 114.

35 Ibid.

- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid., 121.
- 38 Cited in Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 36.
- 39 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 121.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 C. A. Bowman Papers, PAC. (microfilm), Charles A. Bowman to C. A. Magrath, April 4, 1928, M-826.
- 43 Joseph Schull, Ontario Since 1867 (Toronto, 1978), 272.
- 44 C. A. Bowman Papers, Bowman to Magrath, April 4, 1928.
- 45 Ibid., Magrath to the Honourable G. H. Ferguson, April 23, 1928, M-826.
- 46 Joseph Schull, Ontario Since 1867 (Toronto, 1978), 279.
- 47 C. A. Bowman Papers, Magrath to Ferguson, April 23, 1928.
- 48 Ibid., Ferguson to Magrath, April 24, 1928, M-826.
- 49 Ibid., F. H. Southam to Harry Southam, May 11, 1928, M-826.
- 50 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 30 and E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 101.
- 51 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Ernie Bushnell, October 7, 1976.
- 52 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 34.
- 53 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Ernie Bushnell, October 7, 1976.
- 54 Ibid.

55 Canadian religious ministers have coined the phrase "electronic church" to refer to those who prefer a good preacher on television as opposed to a mediocre sermon in church. For a discussion of the interplay between religion and broadcasting regulation, see T. J. Allard, "Electronic Religion ... The CRTC Must Choose a Path", Broadcaster, (March, 1982), 58-59, 63. Revenue Canada has estimated that American television preachers, such as Jerry Falwell and Billy Graham, drew approximately ten million dollars from Canadian pockets in 1979.

56 Cited in A. John Beke, "Government Regulation of Broadcasting in Canada", Saskatchewan Law Review, XXXVI (1971), 240.

57 London Free Press, September 12, 1981.

58 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 122.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

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63 Ibid.

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65 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 1.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 2.

68 Ibid., 4.

69 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 3, March 17, 1932, 74.

70 Ibid.

71 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 123.

72 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 12, April 14, 1932, 499.

73 The Ottawa Citizen, December 6, 1928.

74 Ibid.

75 Herschel Hardin, A Nation Unaware: The Canadian Economic Culture (Vancouver, 1974), 260.

76 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 12, April 14, 1932, 494.

77 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 123.

78 The Ottawa Citizen, December 6, 1928.

79 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 3, March 17, 1932, 66.

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81 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 123.

82 Ibid., 125.

83 Frank Foster, Broadcasting Policy Development, 34. This undated study was financially supported by the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission. Foster describes the evolution of broadcasting policy in Canada from the early 1900s to the era of cable television.

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85 Ibid.

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87 Ibid., 130.

88 Ibid., 124.

- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid., 125.
- 91 James A. Cowan, "Does Canada Want Government Radio?", Maclean's Magazine (May, 1930), 9.
- 92 C. A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 130.
- 93 Ibid., 124.
- 94 Frank Foster, Broadcasting Policy Development, 33.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 PAC, Hearings of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, Vol. 1, London, May 14, 1929, 5.
- 97 Ibid., 9-10.
- 98 Ibid., 6.
- 99 PAC, Hearings of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, Vol. 1, Toronto, May 17, 1929, 14.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canada Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 41, 44. Professor Peers has noted that there is no record of the commission's hearings held in Western Canada. In all, there were hearings held in twenty-five cities, ten in the West and fifteen in the East.
- 103 Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (Ottawa, 1929), 6.
- 104 Ibid., 8.
- 105 Ibid., 7.
- 106 Globe and Mail, March 20, 1982. Both Quebec and British Columbia want Pay-TV companies licensed by the CRTC, on March 18, 1982 to get provincial licences, before they operate in those provinces.



- 107 Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (Ottawa, 1929),  
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- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951  
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- 112 Ibid., 51.
- 113 Cited in ibid., 44.
- 114 Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (Ottawa, 1929),  
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- 115 Ibid., 8.
- 116 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes  
of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 3, March 17, 1932, 79.
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of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 8, April 6, 1932, 378.
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- 120 Ibid.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 Ibid.
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of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 12, April 14, 1932, 505.
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10.
- 125 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes  
of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 12, April 14, 1932, 508.

- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Ibid., 509.
- 128 Ibid., 506.
- 129 Ibid.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 3, March 17, 1932, 67.
- 132 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 12, April 14, 1932, 501.
- 133 Ibid., Committee member R. K. Smith questioned Sir John at length on this aspect of the Aird Report.
- 134 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 3, March 17, 1932, 67.
- 135 Cited in Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 50 and in Reverend John E. O'Brien, "A History of the Canadian Radio League 1930-1936" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southern California, 1969), 55.
- 136 Report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting (Ottawa, 1929), 9.
- 137 R. B. Bennett Papers, PAC, R. W. Ashcroft address to the Annual Meeting of the Association of Canadian Advertisers, Toronto, "The Fifth Estate", October 15, 1929, 389148, M-1314.
- 138 Ibid., 389149.
- 139 R. B. Bennett Papers, R. W. Ashcroft article, "Government vs. Private Ownership of Canadian Radio", January, 1931, 389176, M-1314.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 PAC, Letters from the Secretary of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, Vol. 3, Donald Manson to Sir John Aird, December 16, 1929.
- 142 Ibid., Manson to Aird, March 21, 1930.

143 Ibid., April 3, 1930.

144 Ibid.

145 Hugh L. Keenleyside, Hammer the Golden Day: Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside (Toronto, 1981), Vol. 1, 371.

146 Ibid.

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148 Margaret Prang, N. W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist (Toronto, 1975), 454.

## CHAPTER V.

### The McGill-Oxford Cabal

Alan Plaunt's years at Oxford had served to stimulate his earlier interest in Canadian foreign policy, a subject of great concern to many Canadians in the 1920s. Canada's External Affairs Department was in the early stages of its development and the Canadian Institute of International Affairs came into existence in 1928. This latter organization, which Plaunt himself joined in 1930, had a membership which included several noted Canadians among them C. A. Bowman, chairman of the first government enquiry into radio, J. W. Dafoe and Newton W. Rowell.<sup>1</sup> In his radio campaign, Plaunt was to later draw support from several of these prominent individuals who shared his concept of broadcasting as essentially playing an educational and unifying role in Canadian society. Rowell, a former Ontario Liberal leader, was interested in the work of the Canadian Radio League and admired Plaunt. Rowell, who headed the Canadian delegation to the Kyoto Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, in 1929, "was essentially conservative - except in international affairs, in which he displayed both an active interest and a degree of enlightenment that was unusual among the Canadian business and professional men of his day."<sup>2</sup> Given Plaunt's near disdain for the business world, in Canada, and most of what it stood for, he and Rowell would seem to have been unlikely allies. Yet both shared a common interest in Canada's external relations and held similar views on how foreign policy should be conducted as Canada gained greater autonomy on the world stage. Margaret Prang has noted the easy

rapport that developed between the pair and how Rowell wanted a solid Canadian representation at the Kyoto conference:

He was well satisfied with the delegation of twenty-nine, plus staff and wives to the number of forty-three, who made the trip. In order to fulfill their long-standing desire to visit China, Rowell and Nell set out ahead of the rest of the Canadians and sailed from Vancouver in mid-September on the President Cleveland. They were accompanied by the secretary of the Canadian delegation, Alan Plaunt, a recent graduate of Toronto and Oxford for whom they both soon acquired a lasting affection. Reaching Yokohama after a far from pacific crossing they travelled across Japan via rail and proceeded to Shanghai.<sup>3</sup>

At the Kyoto conference, Plaunt renewed his acquaintance with Malcolm MacDonald, secretary to the British delegation headed by Lord Hailsham, who later became Lord Chancellor. MacDonald has recalled Plaunt's deep interest in the evolution of the Commonwealth and his "liberal ideas" in general on foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> For example, Plaunt favoured "an evolution of the white Dominion Commonwealth into a multi-racial Commonwealth" at a time when this kind of attitude was often looked upon with suspicion.<sup>5</sup>

As MacDonald has explained:

One of the things that Alan certainly displayed was a sense of absolute brotherhood and equality with the Chinese and Japanese or any other non-white people which, in those days, was not very common, not at all. Canada's outlook was more progressive on this sort of inter-racial thing than Britain's was at that time or America's or even Australia which was then known as "white" Australia.<sup>6</sup>

A leading item on the agenda at the Kyoto conference was the question of China's demand for an end to the so called "unequal treaties" that conferred extraterritorial rights on foreigners.<sup>7</sup> For example, foreigners from "white" countries were not tried in Chinese courts, if accused

of criminal offences, but rather in special courts which did not correspond to Chinese law. There was a fairly widespread feeling at the conference that these international agreements had to be altered in China's favour and that the unequal treaties should come to an end. "We didn't discuss whether the unequal treaties should stay," said Macdonald, "but how they could be brought to an end, perhaps step by step, and the Canadians had a very correct outlook on this. Alan absolutely agreed with all these views."<sup>8</sup> N. W. Rowell was of a similar opinion and on his return to Canada delivered several speeches from Vancouver to Montreal sympathetic to the nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>9</sup>

Plaunt's antagonistic attitude toward the British has both surprised and baffled observers of the often turbulent inter-war years in Canada's broadcasting history. T. J. Allard has written that "incredibly, Alan Plaunt was bitterly, almost venomously, anti-British and leaned so far toward the "continentalism" view of North America's future that he might easily, in pre-confederation days, have been an ardent advocate of the "Manifest Destiny" movement."<sup>10</sup> Ernie Bushnell, a member of the CBC's program department during the 1930s, has wondered if Plaunt's Oxford days somehow left him with a sour feeling toward the British people.<sup>11</sup> Yet Malcolm MacDonald has attributed Plaunt's outlook to no single incident, during his years in Britain, but rather preferred to place the man and his foreign policy views in a somewhat broader context:

The anti-British touch in Alan sprang from his pro-Canadian outlook and passion. Alan cared tremendously about Canadian independence in its international policy as well as in its national affairs. Alan became critical of Britain in some ways because a lot of people in Britain, between 1927 and 1929, still thought the Dominions should not be completely free and weren't experienced enough to run their own international affairs. Alan wanted an autonomous nation and

this, of course, had been recognized in principle but it sometimes wasn't recognized in practice.<sup>12</sup>

After the Kyoto conference, Plaunt, MacDonald and Margaret Southam, daughter of newspaper publisher Wilson Southam who was also a member of the Canadian delegation, travelled across the Trans-Siberian railway to Moscow.<sup>13</sup> Seeing Russia, in the late 1920s, was a travel experience treasured by many Western observers of world politics and intellectuals of the day. Just about the time that Plaunt was on his tour of Russia and soon to be returning to Canada, Graham Spry was looking for recruits to form a group or league for a radio campaign to advocate a public broadcasting system for Canada. He had been in touch with Gordon MacLaren, an Ottawa lawyer, who had been a contemporary of Plaunt at the University of Toronto and a member of the Kappa Alpha society.<sup>14</sup> MacLaren and Plaunt had been friends in Ottawa and, since Spry had been looking for recruits "with the time and a little money to travel", MacLaren had no hesitation in recommending Plaunt.<sup>15</sup> The introduction of Spry to Plaunt in the late summer of 1930 marked the first step in the formation of the Canadian Radio League, an organization which was to have a profound effect on Canadian broadcasting.

There is little doubt that the Canadian Radio League was largely responsible for galvanizing the government of R. B. Bennett into action on the radio question. Certainly the League appeared to have had a curious beginning and a questionable membership although its impact cannot be doubted. Between 1930 and 1932, which marked the first round of its activities, it managed to project the radio issue into the political arena and create a sense of urgency about the need for public broadcasting in Canada. The League was also represented before the

Supreme Court of Canada and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) in 1931 when the all important matter of jurisdiction over broadcasting was decided.<sup>16</sup> After the federal government chose to establish the first House of Commons Broadcasting Committee in 1932, the Radio League dominated the committee's proceedings.<sup>17</sup> To understand how this organization managed these accomplishments, it is worth considering the kind of society in which it operated, for the existing social environment allowed it to capture public opinion in a relatively short period of time.

First of all, Canada was a relatively small country in 1930 with a population of approximately ten million people. This decade was to see little growth which invariably meant that members of the so called "establishment" class in the business community, and those who made up the middle class intellectual segment of society were not large in numbers. The Depression was not a favourable time for emerging industrialists in Canada, a country which saw its exports decline greatly in the early 1930s.<sup>18</sup> Capital expenditures showed a seventy percent drop in new construction, machinery and equipment, an illustration of just how the downturn in the economy had begun to catch hold. For independent Canadian operations, which, in the best of times, generally needed new capital, it was a bleak period indeed.<sup>19</sup> Even if he had been so inclined, these overall economic conditions would hardly have encouraged someone like Alan Plaunt to begin a career in business after his Oxford days. Rather the times tended to foster, in conscientious individuals, a desire to perform some form of public service for their country. It is not insignificant that the careers of such noted mandarins as Norman Robertson began at this time, when the civil service was looked upon as a true



and noble profession.<sup>20</sup>

If the business class was a small, tightly knit group, it was no less so with the intellectual elite. In 1930, there were only about thirty-thousand full-time undergraduates enrolled at Canadian universities.<sup>21</sup> Just prior to World War Two, some thirty-five thousand undergraduates attended the country's thirty universities and colleges.<sup>22</sup> Less than a quarter of these were women. The smaller the society the fewer the opinion leaders in it and the easier for a pressure group, such as the Canadian Radio League, to persuade political leaders of the righteousness of its cause. Indeed it was entirely possible for someone such as Alan Plaunt, with his business and academic background, to be on a first name basis with many Canadians of influence in politics, the universities and the business community.

Alan Plaunt would not only have been aware of the sources of economic power in the financial centres of Toronto and Montreal but also his place in the Ottawa social structure was firmly fixed. He was one of the thirty founding members of the Five Lakes Fishing Club located in the Gatineau Hills about an hour's drive from Ottawa.<sup>23</sup> The club, which consists of "a primitive lodge beside a fished-out lake" remains to this day "an important forum for the exchange of mandarin views."<sup>24</sup> That Plaunt was among the early members is evidence that, throughout his public career, he was on close terms with the noted mandarins who were later to dominate the country's political life, many of whom established their careers in the Department of External Affairs.<sup>25</sup> Another founding member of this prestigious club was Fred Bronson, "one of the more enlightened of the Ottawa businessmen of the period" whose lumber background was similar to that of Plaunt.<sup>26</sup> Bronson was also one of a number of prominent Ottawa

citizens who gave financial assistance to the Radio League.<sup>27</sup>

The French connection was also an important asset for Plaunt which gave him a credibility when facing politicians and in his fund-raising. In this regard, his Ottawa valley family roots served him well. As the member of "an English speaking family derived from French", he could naturally be persuasive when promoting public broadcasting and a national broadcasting system as an important, new, unifying instrument in Canada.<sup>28</sup> "My grandmother was French speaking", Graham Spry recalled, "so both Alan and I, when I later met him, had these French connections, his much more significant than mine."<sup>29</sup> In Plaunt's case, it might be suggested that the times had helped to create the man. The political mood in Ottawa was one of intense political rivalry when the Canadian Radio League began its activities in the autumn of 1930. The year the League was established the Conservative party had just swept the Liberals out of office in an election campaign that saw intense personal rivalry develop between the Conservative leader, R. B. Bennett, and William Lyon Mackenzie King.<sup>30</sup> The July 28, 1930 election saw King go down to defeat as the Conservatives captured one hundred and thirty-seven of two hundred and forty-five seats. As J. M. Beck explained, "it was the most decisive victory they had won by themselves since Macdonald's day."<sup>31</sup> The Conservative party, which had its largest base of support in predominantly English-speaking Ontario, also had, for the first time since 1911, a considerable following in Quebec having elected twenty-four members from that province.<sup>32</sup>

During the early and mid 1930s, economic conditions in the country were to deteriorate drastically. Per capita income declined forty-eight percent with the sharpest drop occurring in Saskatchewan.<sup>33</sup> Class conflict was evident in the growth of the Communist party and in vicious

confrontations between the state and the working class - the Regina riot of July, 1935 being but the most spectacular clash.<sup>34</sup> Ethnic antagonism was also evident in the emergence of several Fascist organizations.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, despite these negative circumstances, there were a number of organizations that emerged hoping to uplift Canadians and the country generally. These groups included the Canadian Institute of International affairs, the League of Nations Society, the Canadian Clubs and the Canadian Radio League.<sup>36</sup> The latter organization co-founded by Plaunt and which promoted national harmony, between the two main language groups, could be seen as a positive force at a time of social distress. The fact that Plaunt's family background made him sensitive to both French and English Canada would hardly have gone unnoticed by influential Canadians.

The precise beginning of the League is difficult to determine given the wide range of interpretations about its origin. For example, Plaunt claimed that "the League began 'in vino' at Henri's cafe, Hull, Québec, in early October, 1930," where he and Spry discussed the possibility of forming an organization to improve the level of broadcasting in Canada.<sup>37</sup> The following evening on October 5, according to Plaunt, they met in his home at number one Clemow Avenue in Ottawa, with several other people, and decided to form a Radio League.<sup>38</sup> However Spry recalled the date as October 6th, which appeared in the minutes of the 1932 Commons Broadcasting Committee, and that, besides Plaunt and himself, others at the meeting included Margaret Southam and Tom Moore, President of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada.<sup>39</sup> Given Plaunt's impulse for reform and his intentions for broadcasting, he would easily have related to someone like Moore who held a prominent position in the upper echelons of the labour movement. The Congress, which had been founded in 1886, urged political

action that would improve the social condition of the working class, a humanitarian cause that Plaunt would have been eager to promote.<sup>40</sup> Still a slightly different version of the League's formation has come from T. J. Allard who claimed that the meeting at Plaunt's home occurred on the night of October 23rd after "a gathering of a sub-committee of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs."<sup>41</sup> Among the participants, according to Allard, was Norman Robertson who was later to become one of "the most influential mandarins on the Ottawa scene."<sup>42</sup>

While there is considerable disagreement about these informal gatherings, it appears to be unanimously agreed that the League's first formal meeting was held on December 8, 1930 in the ballroom of the Chateau Laurier hotel, a gathering of about "two or three hundred people including all the leading citizens of Ottawa."<sup>43</sup> The following day the Radio League was officially in business and operated from an office at 110 Wellington Street. "Unlike the private stations we were fighting we knew everybody," Spry recalled, "we were a small society here, and, of course, we were all bachelors and we were at all the big official functions of the day because bachelors were very few."<sup>44</sup> From December 9, 1930, to May 9, 1932, when the Commons Broadcasting Committee presented its report, the League was a highly active lobby group whose public relations tactics touched virtually all segments of society. In this regard, Alan Plaunt, as honorary secretary of the League, was probably the principal player. His tireless efforts in campaigning on behalf of public broadcasting seemed to reveal a man driven by a newly found cause.

Having returned from his world tour, Plaunt began working with C. A. Bowman and became "interested in his report and in Canadian radio

conditions."<sup>45</sup> As Plaunt recalled, "I studied the Aird Report, studied Bowman's files, the commissioners files, newspaper comments, technical journals."<sup>46</sup> Plaunt's determination and devotion to the radio campaign appeared to surprise many of his friends and family. "All this time the family were perplexed and mystified," he remembered, "I had no apparent pressing interest, yet here I was hammering a typewriter indefatigably for hours on end each day, rushing about with mysterious files, actually taking an interest in life!"<sup>47</sup> According to Plaunt, "the history of the League can best be told in terms of a series of "coups", of master strokes of strategy and execution" leading up to the creation of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission.<sup>48</sup> He set out to get "every University President, as many bank heads, organization heads as possible."<sup>49</sup> Right from the start, Plaunt steadfastly tried "to convince the newspapers of Canada to be patriotic and help in the movement to supplant an uncomfortably effective advertising competitor."<sup>50</sup> Plaunt felt that the Southams saw the League's radio campaign as a "bread" and "butter" matter but was convinced "that their original reactions were primarily those of public spirited citizens willing to approve a good cause."<sup>51</sup> The Sifton newspaper interest also gave Plaunt "assurances of support."<sup>52</sup> But the League had not gained widespread backing and many people "were sceptical of its motives" and wanted to know "who was behind it?"<sup>53</sup>

There is no doubt that Plaunt profited greatly from his Toronto and Oxford days which enabled him to form a network of contacts quickly after the Radio League's campaign got underway in earnest. His willingness to undertake the many petty tasks associated with the campaign was reflected in Graham Spry's comment to Brooke Claxton, the third member of the McGill-Oxford triumvirate:

Alan is a gentleman of leisure and will do our dirty work aided by Margaret Southam.<sup>54</sup>

The same letter served to underscore Plaunt's contribution to the League in helping to acquire financing from prominent Canadians:

We are raising a little money and Alan has done some preliminary cantering in Toronto. We have made a list of victims at \$100.00 a stroke and want to raise about \$1,000.00 for the costs of the agitation.<sup>55</sup>

In his first month of serious campaigning during November, 1930, Plaunt concentrated heavily on prominent citizens who would give the League financial assistance and respectability. In doing so, he turned to his old alma mater, the University of Toronto, when seeking the support of educationalists such as George Wrong, the dominant force in the History Department:

I was delighted to hear from Graham Spry that you have agreed to be on the side of the angels, if broadcasting and angels can be mentioned in the same breath. I imagine he described the diabolic activities of the Canadian Radio League to date.<sup>56</sup>

As he frequently did in his extensive correspondence, Plaunt also relied on N. W. Rowell's reputation to capture the support of other noteworthy figures, most notably Sir Joseph Flavelle, one of Canada's most respected businessmen:

I wonder if you could see Sir Joseph about this matter sometime during the week. If he would consent to allow the League to use his name it would give the Council great additional prestige especially since he is a conservative as well as a great Canadian. I do not suppose Mr. Rowell could spare the time to go too since he has two privy council cases on his hands now. But Mr. Rowell is entirely sympathetic to the plan and aims of the League, and this fact would probably carry weight with Sir Joseph.<sup>57</sup>

This approach to Flavelle, through Wrong and Rowell, was illustrative of the League's tactics which tended to give the appearance of endorsement by the Canadian economic elite.

Prior to the League's formal organizational meeting in December, Plaunt began building his network of followers across Canada. He wrote to his former Oxford colleague, A. E. "Dad" Grauer, telling him of their intentions to create "a national broadcasting company such as that suggested by the Aird Report."<sup>58</sup> Plaunt explained the League's strategy to Grauer in these words:

The League proposes to bamboozle Mr. Bennett into implementing the principle underlying the Aird Report, i.e., radio as a public service rather than as an advertising medium, first of all by the formation of a national council containing representative respectability, and secondly by organizing newspaper and other support through the country. So far we have succeeded in enlisting a great deal of support including backing of the Southam, Maclean and Sifton groups as well as individual papers and of a great number of individuals of prominence.<sup>59</sup>

Plaunt then proceeded to enlist Grauer, in one of the League's regional committees, and to try to give the fledgling organization a profile on the west coast:

Our next step is to organize "committees of correspondence" in various centres throughout Canada. You are asked to act as the local committee, and our first request is for the names of some prominent British Columbia people for window dressing. Will you give me these names by wire, and the League, which has unlimited backing, will duly reimburse you.<sup>60</sup>

During this early organizational stage of League activities, Plaunt was both a day to day lobbyist and the sole financial backer, although this was regarded as a temporary expedient. Plaunt also relied on two

main networks already established in Canada, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and the Association of Canadian Clubs of which Graham Spry was national secretary.<sup>61</sup> In November, 1930, Plaunt wrote to E. Nichols, General Manager of the Winnipeg Tribune, soliciting his support:

I don't imagine you have as yet heard of the Canadian Radio League which is now being formed with the object of convincing the Government that there is widespread national support of the principle of a national broadcasting company, broadcasting on the basis of public service. Most of the members of the group behind this proposed organization you know very well. They are largely the people from the Canadian Institute, and some of them are interested in the Canadian Club movement as well.<sup>62</sup>

Plaunt frequently boasted, in his letters to potential supporters and as he did to Nichols, that the League was in the process of winning over some noted Rhodes Scholars who represented a promising, new generation of Canadians.<sup>63</sup> In urging Nichols to help gather supporters for the League, Plaunt reminded him that the organization was non-partisan:

You can assure them that party politics are in no way involved, and that the group wishes simply to organize the public opinion always necessary to back a measure involving large expenditures.<sup>64</sup>

In his campaigning, Plaunt was unusually adept at appealing to a variety of groups while arguing the merits of public broadcasting. For example, in November, 1930, he sought to mobilize a prominent Quebec City lawyer, Louis St. Laurent, in the campaign to free Canadian media from an unhealthy dominance by the United States:

[because] the control of radio broadcasting like the control of the cinema and theatre, may slip completely into the hands of powerful commercial groups with strong American affiliations, it has been decided to form the Canadian Radio League.<sup>65</sup>



Plaunt also wrote to Reverend Alexandre Vachon, head of the school of chemistry at Laval University, underlining the importance of having French-Canadian members in the League:

Au point ou nous en sommes, il est surtout important d'avoir des membres canadiens-français. Peut-être pourriez-vous nous proposer d'autres noms canadiens-français? Nous serions heureux d'avoir votre conseil en cette occasion.<sup>66</sup>

As evidence of Plaunt's influence, not only were such figures as Louis St. Laurent listed as Radio League supporters but also Plaunt worked feverishly to gain the support of the English business community in Montreal. In a letter to Brooke Claxton, who was then practising law in Montreal, Plaunt was obviously pleased that "Frank Rolph, President of the Imperial Bank" had agreed to support the League's campaign for public broadcasting.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, Plaunt suggested a meeting, which would include Fred Southam, "Frank Scott and yourself to discuss ways of getting a lot of influential business support from Montreal."<sup>68</sup> Claxton agreed with Plaunt's approach noting that "to have the General Managers of the two leading banks would be a sign of great strength."<sup>69</sup> When the Radio League's campaign had gained momentum, Plaunt informed Claxton of "a scheme" he was "working out to get some leading people in financial, industrial, banking and insurance circles."<sup>70</sup> As he wrote, "I have lists of the top people in these four areas."<sup>71</sup>

Plaunt also answered those critics who argued that public broadcasting would exclude the popular American programs and expose the Canadian audience to mediocre and poorly trained Canadian broadcasters:

This does not mean, however, that fine American programmes will be excluded from the Canadian air. On the contrary, the Canadian broadcasting company could choose the best American programmes and relay them to every part of the Dominion. The point is: Canada ought to be in a

position to take the good and reject the inferior. Furthermore a high powered chain could relay the surpassing operatic and symphonic broadcasts of the great music centres of the world such as Berlin and Vienna.... To conclude the possibilities, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a national broadcasting system will imply a national orchestra and, when television is perfected, a national theatre.<sup>72</sup>

After the Canadian Radio League was formally established on December 8, 1930, Plaunt published a new booklet to help promote the organization by advocating "the operation of Canadian broadcasting as a national public service."<sup>73</sup> The League had previously claimed that it wanted broadcasting in Canada reorganized along the lines of the Aird Report. However, this new promotional material underlined the fact that although "the League accepts the general principle of the report of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting - namely broadcasting as a public service", it was not "entirely in accord with all the recommendations of that report, and has amendments to offer with respect to financing, the establishment of the national directorate, the selection of the provincial advisory bodies, and local broadcasting."<sup>74</sup>

This new initiative by Plaunt was not answered by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, the organization representing private interests, until April, 1931.<sup>75</sup> Then the Association published its response to the Radio League's campaign in a brochure with the heading "Facts respecting Radio Broadcasting under Private Ownership."<sup>76</sup> This extensive rebuttal of the Radio League's offensive has been perhaps too readily overlooked in other scholarly studies. Yet the private broadcasters, although facing internal problems within the CAB, were able to highlight several inconsistencies in the Radio League's campaign. To understand the positions of both sides, it is worth contrasting the Radio League's

booklet with that of the CAB.

Firstly, Plaunt had claimed that "the competitive system of privately owned stations has failed to give Canadians high grade Canadian radio service."<sup>77</sup> The CAB argued that this statement was not correct because "the number of Canadian firms using radio broadcasting for publicity purposes has increased very materially."<sup>78</sup> The Association claimed that this was "due to the fact that, owing to the broadcasting of a limited number of the best United States programmes, a much greater Canadian audience has been created for Canadian stations."<sup>79</sup> The private broadcasters also maintained that "formerly, broadcasting on Canadian stations was not considered desirable by these Canadian manufacturers, because they knew that Canadians were listening to American stations in preference to their own."<sup>80</sup>

The second area of disagreement centred on the League's assertion that "in the U.S. the radio consumer pays indirectly an average \$20 per annum for his radio services [while] in Great Britain under a state-owned system the license fee of ten shillings (\$2.50) covers a year's radio entertainment of a high order and variety."<sup>81</sup> The CAB argued that this statement was "quite incorrect", especially since the owner of a radio receiving set in the United States "pays no license fee, as in Great Britain and Canada, and has no other expenses for tubes, power, etc., that the British or Canadian radio receiving set owner does not have."<sup>82</sup>

A third argument raised by Plaunt related to the question of chain broadcasting in Canada. He maintained that "existing stations cannot provide an adequate coast-to-coast system for relaying continental and British programmes."<sup>83</sup> The CAB flatly rejected this statement claiming that it was not in accordance with the facts, and that "Canadian stations,

from coast to coast, have been doing this for over a year, especially when any international event of importance occurs."<sup>84</sup> It was further argued that "the larger stations in Canada have adequate facilities for broadcasting programmes of any type and would further develop these facilities, if assured of continuance of private ownership."<sup>85</sup>

Nor did the CAB accept Plaunt's contention that "Canadian national integrity and Canadian business is being threatened by growing American control of Canadian radio", a cultural alarm raised repeatedly by the Radio League in its campaign.<sup>86</sup> The private broadcasters clearly thought otherwise. They charged that "there is no truth in the statement of the Canadian Radio League that Canadian national integrity and business is being threatened by growing American control of Canadian radio, as no Canadian stations are owned, or controlled, by other than Canadian interests."<sup>87</sup> To buttress their view, the members of the CAB argued that "no programmes originating in the United States are broadcast in Canada, except when sponsored through Canadian organizations, employing Canadian labor and developing industry in Canada."<sup>88</sup>

Finally the CAB came down hard on the Radio League for claiming that "the best broadcasting hours are being handed over to United States exploiters of the Canadian advertising field."<sup>89</sup> This statement was described as "incorrect and misleading and may be dismissed because all firms using Canadian broadcasting stations are domiciled in Canada."<sup>90</sup> It was also noted that "the present Government is doing all it can to encourage United States firms to establish branch houses or factories in Canada."<sup>91</sup>

Clearly these two lobby groups had different views on the future of Canadian broadcasting. The Radio League generally favoured adoption of the Aird Report but, at the same time, wished to qualify the report's

recommendations with its own amendments.<sup>92</sup> Undoubtedly it wanted the public sector to be dominant. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters certainly wanted private ownership and operation ~~to continue~~, but the private stations also recognized that there had to be some form of government involvement in the radio industry. Though opposed to a state monopoly, the CAB was not against some form of governmental regulation:

There should undoubtedly be some form of control, such as the establishment of a proper system of Government regulation. A great deal of care would have to be taken in the matter of the personnel of the regulating Commission, and the powers conferred upon it, as upon these features would depend very largely the success or failure of the system. However, such matters can be adequately provided for, so as to ensure a proper standard of broadcasting, at the same time not depriving the public of the great advantages that will be derived from the encouragement of private initiative in the development of this very important means of communication.<sup>93</sup>

While these were basically the two positions, it is clear that there were divisions in both camps. The broadcasting struggle that occurred between 1929 and 1932 has perhaps been portrayed too frequently as a simple contest between the advocates of public ownership and private interests along ideological lines. However there were internal cleavages, on both sides, that revolved around cultural and economic considerations.

Early in 1931, the Radio League was confronted with a major problem in trying to deal with certain aspects of the Aird Report. French Canada wanted to ensure that its place in the broadcasting system would get proper recognition in any new scheme of broadcasting. The Radio League soon realized that it must try to reconcile federal-provincial tensions as well as English-French differences. Illustrative of the League's dilemma was a letter from Graham Spry to Georges Pelletier, Managing Director of Le Devoir, who had translated into French the League's booklet prepared by

Plaunt. Spry summarized the problem ahead:

Your letter to Mr. Plaunt raises a point upon which we have already had some difficulty. It is a point of the utmost delicacy; indeed it is the stretch of sea between Scylla and Charybis, and if we do not steer with caution we will run on the rocks. The question is the control of the programmes by the provinces, and it is being raised by opponents of a government broadcasting company in both English and French Canada. The Toronto Telegram is stating that the Canadian Radio League proposals mean teaching French to English Canadians; there is the hint of French domination. In Montreal, English-Canadians opposed to national broadcasting are saying that the Aird Report means that the provinces have full control of programmes and that French-Canadians will have entire control of broadcasting in Quebec. La Presse, on the other hand, states that the Canadian Radio League proposals mean English domination of French Canada.<sup>94</sup>

Spry then suggested a strategy that the League might adopt:

What course shall Ulysses steer? The best course, surely, is simply to quote the Aird Report; page 12 of the French report, section "c" states, "Que dans chaque province on devrait nommer un directeur provincial de radiodiffusion qui surait un contrôle absolu sur les programmes à radiodiffuser par chaque station ou stations situées dans les limites de la province pour laquelle il est responsable." This is definite enough and might serve the purpose you suggest on the cover of the booklet.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly Spry wrote to Brooke Claxton suggesting that the League would have to go easy "on the actual relation of the provincial control to the federal broadcasting company."<sup>96</sup> He felt that the League should not provide its enemies with any kind of easy target:

The remedy is the Aird report remedy to the same problem, vagueness. The letter to Pélletier shows what the situation is. I have gone rather at length into my own feelings in order that he may be assured of our frankness. Isn't this a typical Canadian situation? No wonder we are a nation of hypocrites, incapable for the most part, of mental honesty.<sup>97</sup>

In his letter to Claxton, Spry stressed that "a draft bill" on what he and Plaunt were opposing "would be fatal" because "it would split the League."<sup>98</sup>

The private broadcasters had their own problems in forming a united front against the Radio League. The economic times did not favour these entrepreneurs who required additional funds to expand their operations. But even if the capital were available to them, the private owners had to live with the spectre of nationalization hanging over them. Inserted in every broadcasting licence issued following the appointment of the Aird Commission was the stipulation that all improvements to existing broadcast equipment were the sole responsibility of the station owner. Moreover the licensees had to agree to another provision whereby they would not receive compensation from the government in the event that the broadcasting system was nationalized.<sup>99</sup> In short, these conditions tended to discourage private initiative. Moreover the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, which had been founded in 1926, was badly disorganized from the beginning and especially following the publication of the Aird Report. By 1931, two of the association's mainstays, the Canadian National Railways and the Toronto Star, which owned station CFCA, had withdrawn from the CAB.<sup>100</sup> The Manitoba Telephone System, which operated station CKY, and the Calgary Herald, owner of station CFAC, also did likewise.<sup>101</sup> The CNR's radio department saw itself as the "national company" recommended by the Aird Report and ceased to be active in affairs of the CAB.<sup>102</sup> As for the Toronto Star, there was clearly an economic motive behind its action. In this regard, the minutes of a special CAB meeting held in the Toronto Star building on February-21, 1930, serve to expose the reasons for the division among the private broadcasters.<sup>103</sup> The "protective impulse" was clearly

evident in the attitudes of some participants at the meeting held to discuss the association's reaction to the Aird Report. During a lengthy discussion, Harry Lincke of station CJGC in London, moved ~~that~~ "this Association express itself as opposed to government ownership of radio broadcasting."<sup>104</sup> However moments later, Joseph Atkinson, owner of the Toronto Star, indicated that he had reservations about maintaining a system of unregulated broadcasting, with unlimited free entry:<sup>105</sup>

If there are to be private stations, I do not want ours taken away from us. I want to stay in this radio business but do I want to stay in the radio business if three other newspapers in Toronto are getting stations as well?"<sup>106</sup>

At this point, G. M. Bell, representing CJCJ in Calgary asked, "you do not want the other fellow in?"<sup>107</sup> To this question, Atkinson offered an emphatic reply:

Certainly not. If I am in it, I have an advantage now, then that advantage some people want to take away from me. Very well, reverse the position. If he has a station and I have not, then I do not want his station. But we are here defending a certain commercial enterprise that we have entered upon. If that can be retained as a monopoly for ourselves, then we are satisfied, but how many of us believe that we can retain it as a monopoly? I do not. How can we expect the government to say that there shall be only one newspaper station in Toronto and that shall be the Star? How can I expect them to say that?"<sup>108</sup>

- Later in the discussion, Atkinson said, "I would like to resign from the Board of Directors. My position is not very clear on this, and as a private member, I would be permitted to exercise my own private opinion."<sup>109</sup> The Toronto Star, which had opened station CFCA in 1922, closed it down in 1931 and thereafter adopted an editorial stance favourable to the Canadian Radio League.<sup>110</sup>



Throughout January and February of 1931, Alan Plaunt wanted to improve the organization of the League's regional committees and was encountering problems with regions outside of central Canada. In a letter to Norman MacKenzie, he noted that, in Halifax, the League had "a small committee" that was failing to get untracked:<sup>111</sup>

This committee is not proceeding along the right lines. Their first move was to hold an open meeting to which came the editor of the Herald-owner of a station and sworn enemy of nationalization. I am sending you some dope on the League and trust you can help jazz up our committee in the east. In the west the thing is going great guns. British Columbia and Manitoba seems "sold". Our most difficult field is Ontario and the Maritimes.<sup>112</sup>

Actually the League's campaign was struggling both east and west. One of its organizers in Saskatoon, J. F. Garrett, wrote to C. A. Bowman complaining about the dismal state of the League in western Canada:

The object of this letter is to find out just what the situation is. Dr. Murray, head of the University here, Prof. McQueen, who seems to have taken over the work of the Radio League in this part of the country, came to me a day or two ago for advice as to what can be done. I found them all at sea on the whole proposition, but offered my services in whatever capacity they would be most useful. That will mean, between you and I, that yours truly will be doing the work here, which is quite O.K.<sup>113</sup>

Garrett also questioned the League's membership and wondered aloud just how useful some of its members were:

Anything I can do will certainly be done. At present I am preparing an address for Dr. Murray which he proposed to give before the Canadian Club, and I am also preparing some addresses to be given to clubs in other parts of the province. Incidentally, I seem to be the only one that has the faintest notion what it is all about. Neither Dr. Murray or Prof. McQueen are familiar with radio and wouldn't recognize a wave-length or kilowatt if one came up and bit them.<sup>114</sup>

Garrett then singled out the shortcomings of the League in the west:

I merely mention this to point out the weakness of the Radio League here. I trust that this condition doesn't exist all over the country. The membership of the league certainly, includes some very impressive names, but what's the use if they can't argue the merits or otherwise of private and government radio ownership.<sup>115</sup>

It would appear, from this evidence, that the membership of the Radio League were not all faithful adherents to the cause and were even confused over the objectives of its campaign.

Conditions were not altogether different on the east coast which Plaunt had recognized as a principal trouble spot. C. H. Mercer, at Dalhousie University in Halifax, wrote to Bowman in January, 1931, informing him that "the cause" was "bigger than the men in it":<sup>116</sup>

I have been asked to give some information to the local branch of the Canadian Radio League. I believe that one or two of them have seen a radio somewhere before, and that some of them even own sets of their own. You gave me a very useful little pamphlet which was just the thing that a bunch of ignoramuses would appreciate - I mean by that that it was written in a style which would appeal to people who had never thought of the question until they were invited to become members of this Canadian Radio League.<sup>117</sup>

Mercer was somewhat cynical about the Radio League's tactics:

I suppose it is wrong of me to be sarcastic. They are all of them excellent fellows I am sure. Although President Stanley Mackenzie and President (Reverend) Mr. Moore do not own radios, there is every likelihood that they will before the year 1931 is over. And after all, what this Canadian Radio League was after was big names, not people who knew anything about the subject.<sup>118</sup>

Although the League boasted that it had the mass organizations supporting it, Graham Spry has recalled that not all the members of these groups were convinced the League was on the right course:

We were most certainly brotherly advisers. Undoubtedly we persuaded people who had a little trouble with some of their members after. Individual members would say well my uncle owns a radio station in Halton county and I don't see why you people should be saying he is only a damned American.<sup>119</sup>

While the League may have lacked solid membership, it certainly was not without a sense of occasion as illustrated in its representations before the Supreme Court and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, in 1931, when the question of radio jurisdiction was decided.

Two important developments took place early in 1931 in which the Radio League had great interest. On January 22, 1931, the Prime Minister, R. B. Bennett, announced that the Government planned to introduce a radio bill at the next session of Parliament.<sup>120</sup> The following month, on February 20, 1931, it was learned that "questions regarding Radio have been submitted to the Supreme Court of Canada for interpretation and decision."<sup>121</sup> The Radio League obtained permission from the Court to be represented during the May hearings and file a factum outlining its position on the radio question. Brooke Claxton, counsel for the League, appeared before the Court on May 6th and seemed to impress the jurists with his astute legal mind.<sup>122</sup>

The Radio League had in Claxton an able advocate of their case and, according to Plaunt, he even upstaged W. M. Tilley, K. C., who represented the Dominion Government, against the provinces of Quebec, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario. "Tilley was infinitely bad with a well prepared brief", wrote Plaunt, "and as for scientific facts, his mind simply isn't receptive to them. Brooke was infinitely better."<sup>123</sup> Claxton appeared before the Court for approximately twenty-five minutes and essentially bolstered the Dominion's case.<sup>124</sup> The factum he presented,

On behalf of the Radio League, emphasized the argument "based on the Dominion power to legislate for the peace, order and good government of Canada."<sup>125</sup> In this regard, Claxton drew the Court's attention to the nature of radio waves:

Whether or not a matter falls under property and civil rights in the province or local matters in the province depends on its nature. The waves sent out by broadcasting may be received everywhere and there is no means of stopping them at a provincial boundary. Broadcasting, by reason of its very nature, is inevitably inter-provincial and not intra-provincial. The instant a sound is broadcast, the waves that issue are perceptible in every province.<sup>126</sup>

Claxton also noted the international aspect to broadcasting which should leave the federal government in control of this new instrument:

Broadcasting is not only inter-provincial but it is international and requires international agreement. Such a matter is not a civil right in a province. Broadcasting is the most powerful instrument ever devised for the development of public opinion and public taste. The possibility of dumping advertising matter and releasing propaganda requires that there be safeguards against it as adequate as the tariff or the defence force. Broadcasting can become "a menace to the national life of Canada" not only justifying but requiring action for the whole country by the Dominion.<sup>127</sup>

The factum also focused the Court's attention on Section 92, (10)(4) of the British North America Act which exempts "Lines of Steam or other Ships, Railways, Canals, Telegraphs" from provincial jurisdiction:

Radio is a work and undertaking of the same class as lines of steam and other ships, railways, canals and telegraphs; it connects the provinces with other provinces and necessarily extends beyond the limits of a province. A sound wave is as appreciable, real and physical as a telegraph wire.<sup>128</sup>

Just a week after Claxton's appearance before the Supreme Court, Spry wrote to him seeking his views on the League being represented before the

Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, if a provincial appeal were launched against a decision favorable to the Dominion. "If necessary", Spry wrote on May 13, "Alan Plaunt and myself will certainly put up some money."<sup>129</sup>

Before turning to the Privy Council question, may I say that Alan Plaunt's father was talking to Judge Smith. His remark was 'Mr. Claxton's intervention was most impressive', and he had other kind things to say. He also said that he was writing the judgment at the request of the bench. The departmental people feel that the judges were most sympathetic, and Manson says that at least four out of five should be completely for the Dominion.<sup>130</sup>

The Supreme Court's judgement on June 30, 1931, related to two major questions: "1. Has the Parliament of Canada jurisdiction to regulate and control radio communication, including the transmission and reception of signs, signals, pictures and sounds of all kinds by means of Hertzian waves, and including the right to determine the character, use and location of apparatus employed? 2. If not, in what particular or particulars or to what extent is the jurisdiction of Parliament limited?"<sup>131</sup> The answers of the Chief Justice, F. A. Anglin, and the other four judges to these questions were as follows:

The Chief Justice: Question No. 1. In view of the present state of radio science as submitted. Yes. Question No. 2. No answer.

Newcombe J.: Question No. 1. Should be answered in the affirmative. Question No. 2. No answer.

Rinfret J.: Question No. 1. Construing it as meaning "jurisdiction in every respect" the answer is in the negative. Question No. 2. The answer should be ascertained from the reasons certified by the learned judge.

Lamont J.: Question No. 1. Not exclusive jurisdiction. Question No. 2. The jurisdiction of Parliament is limited as set out in the learned judge's reasons.

Smith J.: Question No. 1. Should be answered in the affirmative. Question No. 2. No answer.<sup>132</sup>

The majority 3-2 judgment, in favour of the federal government, was based on section 92(10) (a) of the BNA Act which allows Ottawa to control telegraphs and other works and undertakings connecting the provinces.<sup>133</sup>

However it can be seen that even the Chief Justice, who saw radio falling within federal jurisdiction, adopted this position somewhat reluctantly. Significantly, J. Rinfret, who had earlier served as a Judge of the Superior Court of the Province of Quebec, was a major opponent of the decision. Not surprisingly, Quebec soon appealed the decision to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

There were considerable divisions within the Radio League as to whether they should assume the expense involved in sending Claxton to appear before the Privy Council. "We were in a quandary about sending "Brooke", wrote Plaunt, "we had no money and our members thought the issue a money one from the League's point of view."<sup>134</sup> Plaunt remembered that "Graham was determined on it" and "the net result was that he put up the lion's share."<sup>135</sup> Spry contributed about five hundred dollars of the seven hundred needed for Claxton's trip and several other League supporters including Plaunt, J. W. Dafoe, Fred Bronson and Alan Gibbons provided the rest of the money.<sup>136</sup> According to Spry, Plaunt was quite cautious about sending Claxton to England mainly from an economic standpoint. "When I advanced the idea about Brooke going to the Privy Council", he recalled "Alan said we have a lot of expenses coming along and we don't want to get into trouble."<sup>137</sup> Yet it was difficult for a publicity conscious organization, such as the Radio League, to pass up this occasion for a number of reasons outlined by Claxton himself. On May 14, 1931, he wrote

to Spry and placed the radio issue in a broad constitutional context. Claxton saw it as a test case whereby the residual power in the BNA Act might be restored to the federal government.<sup>138</sup> For up until the early 1930s, "history, with some valuable assistance from Oliver Mowat and the British Privy Council" had "pretty well stood the Act on its head, awarding the residuum not to the government plainly named in the Act as having it, that of Canada, but to the provinces."<sup>139</sup> Claxton now saw the possibility of reversing this kind of judicial interpretation:

This might give a grand opportunity for those representing the Canadian Radio League to strike an independent blow not only at the provincial claims in this case but at the whole provincial position as crystallized by Lord Watson and Viscount Haldane. The judgment of the present Lord Chancellor in the Persons case does give one hope that an endeavour to reduce "Property and Civil Rights" to a reasonable scope and to re-instate the Dominion power to make laws "for the Peace, Order and good Government" of the country might be well received by the present Board.<sup>140</sup>

Claxton's legal instincts were later shown to be accurate.

The JCPC heard the appeal in the radio case in December, 1931 and on February 9, 1932 delivered judgement.<sup>141</sup> W. M. Tilley, K. C., again represented the Dominion Government and Claxton helped bolster the federal side. Tilley and Claxton were an effective team before their Lordships especially since Claxton was able to develop more fully some of the arguments he had presented before the Supreme Court. Firstly, he maintained "that the control of radio communication does not fall under section 92 but falls under the general words of section 91 conferring on Parliament power to legislate for the peace, order and good government of Canada."<sup>142</sup> He also claimed that "by reason of its very nature and the use to which it is put, radio communication is not a provincial matter."<sup>143</sup>

Even if radio communication falls under a specific head of section 92, it falls within the power of Parliament under several specific heads of section 91, including particularly (2), The Regulation of Trade and Commerce, and (29), the excepted subjects mentioned in section 92 head 10a, because it is covered by the word "telegraph" and it is moreover "a work and undertaking connecting the provinces" or extending beyond the limits of a province.<sup>144</sup>

His other argument before the Judicial Committee revolved around the federal government's capacity to make treaties under section 132 of the BNA Act. In 1927, Canada along with seventy nine other countries had signed the International Radio Telegraph Convention without any reference to the British Empire. Although the province of Quebec maintained that this convention was not a treaty and therefore did not give the federal government exclusive control over radio, Claxton argued otherwise:

The International Convention of 1927 is a treaty between all the members of the British Empire, including Canada, and almost every country in the world. It is a treaty covered by section 132, and Parliament has power to pass laws necessary to carry out the obligations assumed under the treaty. The nature of radio, makes it essential that if chaos is not to result, radio shall be continuously and completely regulated by each nation exercising exclusive and paramount authority in co-operation with other nations having similar authority. Otherwise, the control would not be effective to fulfill the Dominion's obligations under the Convention.<sup>145</sup>

Claxton's agile mind had also grasped the true nature of the radio spectrum:

The transmission of waves of energy by radio is effected at the speed of light at approximately 300,000,000 metres per second. These waves are of the same nature as light, only differing in frequency, and are as little capable of limitation. It is certainly impossible to restrict their effects to a single province.<sup>146</sup>

The Judicial Committee apparently was impressed with Claxton's presentation as its judgement, in early February, 1932, reflected a great deal



of what he had said.

The judgement of their Lordships was delivered by Viscount Dunedin who accepted Quebec's view that the 1927 Radio Telegraph Convention was not technically a treaty as defined in section 132. Yet the committee saw the convention amounting to something similar to a treaty:

This idea of Canada as a Dominion being bound by a convention equivalent to a treaty with foreign powers was quite unthought of in 1867. It is the outcome of the gradual development of the position of Canada vis-a-vis to the mother country, Great Britain, which is found in these later days expressed in the Statute of Westminster. It is not, therefore, to be expected that such a matter should be dealt with in explicit words in either s. 91 or s. 92.<sup>147</sup>

The judgement then underlined the constitutional shift that Claxton had anticipated in his letter to Spry:

The only class of treaty which would bind Canada was thought of as a treaty by Great Britain, and that was provided for by s. 132. Being, therefore, not mentioned explicitly in either s. 91 or s. 92, such legislation falls within the general words at the opening of s. 91 which assign to the Government of the Dominion the power to make laws "for the peace, order and good government of Canada in relation to all matters not coming within the classes of subjects by this Act assigned exclusively to the Legislatures of the Provinces." In fine, though agreeing that the Convention was not such a treaty as is defined in s. 132, their Lordships think that it comes to the same thing.<sup>148</sup>

Their Lordships were also of the opinion that broadcasting should be included in the excepted matters outlined in Section 92(10). In their view the subject fell "within both the word "telegraphs" and the general words "undertakings connecting the Province with any other or others of the Provinces or extending beyond the limits of the Province."<sup>149</sup>

Moreover they rejected the argument put forth by Quebec that there should be a sharp distinction between the transmitting and the receiving instrument in broadcasting:

Once it is conceded, as it must be, keeping in view the duties under the convention, that the transmitting instrument must be so to speak under the control of the Dominion, it follows in their Lordships' opinion that the receiving instrument must share its fate. Broadcasting as a system cannot exist without both a transmitter and a receiver. The receiver is indeed useless without a transmitter and can be reduced to a nonentity if the transmitter closes. The system cannot be divided into two parts, each independent of the other.<sup>150</sup>

The judgement also held that "although the question has obviously to be decided on the terms of the statute, it is a matter of congratulation that the result arrived at seems consonant with common sense."<sup>151</sup> Their Lordships felt that "a divided control between transmitter and receiver could only lead to confusion and inefficiency."<sup>152</sup> Thus the Committee did not accept the Quebec argument that, because a receiving instrument was property located within a province, broadcasting should be subject to provincial control. This latter view Claxton had also countered by noting that it "would deny to Parliament control over every subject, e.g. banks and inter-provincial railroads, as being necessarily associated with property locally situated in a province."<sup>153</sup> With the Radio League's position now firmly upheld, from a legal standpoint, the organization was buoyant as the first Parliamentary Committee on Radio Broadcasting began hearings in mid-March.

The Radio League virtually dominated the 1932 Committee throughout its twenty-one meetings between March 8th and its final session on April 21st.<sup>154</sup> Plaunt, as usual, was a relentless campaigner. "I stayed home and organized Ontario and Quebec and the Maritimes for a "popular"

demonstration", he recalled, "first I took the papers, explained the extent and character of the interested lobby, requested editorials, news space, local campaigns to stimulate letters, telegrams to the Committee and the Prime Minister."<sup>155</sup> To these newspapers, he "distributed complete lists of our support, resolutions, news stories. The effect was immediately satisfactory. Letters, telegrams, resolutions poured in."<sup>156</sup> Plaunt naturally did not overlook any organizations that were friendly to the League. "I lined up all the organizations friendly to us", he wrote, "the Trades and Labour Congress, the I.O.D.E., churches etc. etc. and asked them to appeal to their local bodies for popular demonstrations of support. I even wrote the Trades and Labour Letter to 51 Councils and was authorized to issue it under the signature of Tom Moore."<sup>157</sup> Plaunt concluded that "our campaign was entirely successful - so much so that, despite the advantages of money and stations, our opponents were not able to cause as one fifth as many genuine representations to go to the committee."<sup>158</sup> He claimed that the secretary of the Radio Committee, E. L. Morris, had informed him that "fully one fifth of the proper submissions favoured nationalization."<sup>159</sup>

On March 21st, 1932, Plaunt wrote to Claxton urging him to "get our people" working and "to write letters to the Chairman of the Committee and to Messrs. Gagnon and Cardin, strongly supporting our programme."<sup>160</sup> He suggested also that Claxton might "get a number of your own friends in high places to do likewise."<sup>161</sup> At the end of the month, when the League had arranged for Gladstone Murray of the BBC to appear before the Committee, Claxton suggested to Plaunt that Murray "not make speeches or give interviews until he has given evidence."<sup>162</sup> This letter also provided an indication of Plaunt's ready access to influential individuals in Ottawa:

May I suggest that on his arrival in Ottawa you arrange for him to meet Mr. Bennett; Mr. Duranleau and the other powers that be before he gives evidence and do anything else possible to ensure a sympathetic reception. After he gives evidence, he should also meet Mr. Mackenzie King.<sup>163</sup>

The day before the Committee's first formal gathering, Spry informed Claxton that the League had the upper hand:

The Chairman of the committee assured me that I could intervene in any way that was reasonable and had no objection to my examining Commander Edwards. I gave Edwards the list of questions that I would ask telling him, I would probably think of others. His evidence will substantiate all we have been saying about conditions and the papers are standing by to eat it up.<sup>164</sup>

Spry presented the Radio League's case favouring a form of nationalization in appearances before the Committee on March 15th and April 18th. While his testimony has been summarized, in other studies, it is worth noting that the League was often vague in outlining its position on the reorganization of broadcasting in Canada.<sup>165</sup> For example, in his March 15th testimony, Spry told the Committee that one of the objectives of the Radio League was "Government regulation and control of broadcasting."<sup>166</sup> However this statement should be placed alongside his testimony, on April 18th, when he said "the Canadian Radio League advocates the public ownership of radio broadcasting stations."<sup>167</sup> Similarly, in this appearance before the Committee, he stated that radio broadcasting "is so majestic in its potentialities, so capable of both good and ill that the Canadian Radio League believes that no other agency than the State should ultimately be responsible for its operation and control."<sup>168</sup> Yet Spry also envisaged low powered stations of fifty watts or so owned by private entrepreneurs providing community service.<sup>169</sup> This latter position was at variance with

the Aird Report which wanted private stations eventually closed down, and yet the League had repeatedly argued that it was fundamentally in agreement with the Royal Commission's recommendations. Unlike Spry's call for 'operation and control' by the state, the Commission had rejected state or government control specifically, in favour of a national company. However Spry still equated the League's objectives with the Aird Commission's goals for educational broadcasting:

It hardly needs to be pointed out that under a national system such as is proposed by the Aird Commission and the Canadian Radio League, education is necessarily regarded as a provincial matter and educational broadcasts would necessarily come under provincial supervision. 170

Later there was a slightly different variation of the League's position:

The question before this committee is whether Canada is to establish a chain that is owned and operated and controlled by Canadians, or whether it is to be owned and operated by commercial organizations, associated or controlled by American interests? The question is the State or the United States? That is the question: the State or the United States? 171

Since the League repeatedly raised the possibility of Canadian radio falling under American control, it is important to consider the true extent of this alarm. Certainly the Committee learned from R. W. Ashcroft, a private broadcaster, that it was not justified:

I do not understand why anyone in these times should recommend that the Dominion Government should spend several million dollars to acquire, as it were, what it already actually possesses, that is, complete control over Canadian broadcasting. The Government will have this control five years from now, or any number of years from now, and can modify it or amplify it as occasion requires. Speaking for station CKGW, it is absolutely under the control of the Department of Marine. If to-day the Minister of Marine gave me instructions that I was not to broadcast "Amos 'n' Andy" to-night because that form of American "culture" was not suitable for Canada,

or for any other reason, I would not broadcast "Amos 'n' Andy". If he had told me last month that I must not broadcast a description of the Grand National Steeplechase from Aintree, England, I would not have done so.<sup>172</sup>

Ashcroft then asked, "what more complete control over Canadian broadcasting stations could the Dominion Government have, even if they owned them lock, stock and barrel?"<sup>173</sup> He saw himself as "practically an employee of the Department of Marine when it comes to broadcasting."<sup>174</sup> Perhaps overall, the Radio League's case was most ambiguously explained by Spry when he had told the Royal Commission on Railways and Transportation earlier in 1932 that the organization sought reform in broadcasting rather than "any particular method of reform."<sup>175</sup> On more than one occasion was the League seemingly able to cut the cloth to fit the suit.

The Radio Committee was somewhat confused by the testimony of some of the social organizations that backed the League's position. Humphrey Mitchell, a representative of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, read a brief which was supposedly based on the Aird Report. He said that "duplication of stations should be avoided as far as possible in order to ensure the clearest reception by those who own receiving sets and unless the Government owns the entire system it is difficult to accomplish this object."<sup>176</sup> Committee member R. K. Smith noted correctly that the Aird Report "does not go that far."<sup>177</sup> Subsequent testimony by Mitchell revealed that the Congress had financially supported the Canadian Radio League.<sup>178</sup>

Another Radio League advocate was the National Council of Women whose representative, Mrs. J. A. Wilson, saw public broadcasting as providing cultural uplift. While maintaining that her "small boy objected very strongly" to her appearance before the Committee because "he wanted to

hear Amos 'an' Andy", she asked, "why should we let this new art get into the hands of other people whose tastes, culture and national inspirations are not ours?"<sup>179</sup> Similarly the Canadian Legion saw public broadcasting as limiting what was termed "foreign propaganda."<sup>180</sup> When asked to explain the latter, J. C. G. Herwig replied, "well it depends upon what you term propaganda. I am not referring to propaganda as necessarily offensive, although there has been some offensive propaganda, you might say, rather of exaggerated ego, on the part of Americans during the war period."<sup>181</sup> Another witness, Arthur Perkins, who represented the Institute of Radio Service Men, told the committee:

The American system of chain manufacture and the operation of radio, telephone and telegraph, also talking pictures, does not recognize the individual radio or electrical engineer, as it has its own system of standardization and interchange of parts under the R.C.A. licensing agreements. If the Canadian government establishes a national system with broadcasting equipment, this equipment should be of Canadian manufacture, by Canadian Labour and under Canadian standards, and, where possible, under Canadian patents.<sup>182</sup>

For this reason, the witness considered "nationalization of radio in Canada, as recommended by the Aird Report and the Canadian Radio League, of vital importance to Canadian interests."<sup>183</sup>

It can be seen that these various groups sought to equate their own self-interests, both socially and economically, with the national interest. These self-interests thus coincided with the movement for public broadcasting as advocated by the Canadian Radio League, whose program often meant different things to different people but managed to comfort all sides. On May 9, 1932, the committee presented its report to the House of Commons and recommended one broadcasting system for the country

a compromise based on co-operation between publicly-owned and privately-owned stations. The committee called for a salaried three-man Commission to be established "to regulate and control all broadcasting in Canada including programs and advertising."<sup>184</sup> This recommendation was a clear departure from the larger national company which the Aird Report and the Radio League, at one time, had proposed. The proposed commission was to be both a broadcasting operator and a regulator. In other words, the Commission could "own, build and operate transmitting or receiving stations in Canada" and, at the same time, "determine the number, location and power of all broadcasting stations required in Canada."<sup>185</sup> It could also "enter into operating agreements with privately-owned stations" and "prohibit the establishment of privately-owned chains of stations in Canada."<sup>186</sup> The committee also recommended that "a nationally-owned system of Radio Broadcasting be instituted and that all stations required for its proper organization be eventually acquired."<sup>187</sup> All stations under 100 watts, "not required for the national system" would be allowed to "remain under private ownership."<sup>188</sup> Unlike the Aird Report, which had envisaged ultimately a publicly-owned system, with no private stations, the committee saw private operators playing a role in the broadcasting system under the supervision of the Commission. A Radio Bill incorporating the committee's recommendations was introduced in the Commons on May 16th and received Royal Assent on May 26th, 1932.<sup>189</sup>

The principle of public ownership of radio was thus established in Canada. It was not all that the Canadian Radio League had hoped for, but it was a pragmatic approach to the problem of restructuring the broadcasting system which included in part, the interests of the private stations. The Canadian Radio League had proved to be the catalyst for the times.



Plaunt, Spry and Claxton were extremely effective, because the society in which they operated was quite susceptible to a pressure group such as the League. Plaunt handled the early financing of the organization and was the central communicator with groups and individuals across the country. He skillfully seized upon their social and economic concerns and succeeded in blending their somewhat selfish motives with the League's campaign. Spry was able to enunciate the Radio League's position with a charming ambiguity, before the 1932 Commons Committee, and Claxton's grasp of the legal technicalities of broadcasting seemed to have impressed the jurists who ruled on the important issue of radio jurisdiction and its implications for federal-provincial relations in Canada. Certainly the League grew in stature after it had helped the federal side before the Supreme Court and the JCPC. In the midst of the Depression, when economic concerns were the order of the day, the League had managed to convince the Bennett government that broadcasting was a vital national issue that had to be addressed. The Radio Commission established in 1932 was a departure from the British model in that the British Broadcasting Corporation was a public body and not merely an extension of a governmental department which is what the Commission was virtually to become. Nevertheless public broadcasting in Canada was underway. When the Radio Bill passed third reading, Alan Plaunt wrote, "this implies the creation of a Canadian National Broadcasting System and may well prove one of the important incidents in our national life since Confederation."<sup>190</sup>

## CHAPTER V

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Hugh L. Keenleyside, Hammer the Golden Day: Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside (Toronto, 1981), Vol. I, 455.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> Margaret Prang, N. W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist (Toronto, 1975),  
454.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, Malcolm MacDonald, Toronto, September 6, 1980.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Prang, N. W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist (Toronto, 1975),  
456.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, Malcolm MacDonald, Toronto, September 6, 1980.

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Prang, N. W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist (Toronto, 1975),  
456.

<sup>10</sup> T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 72-73.

<sup>11</sup> The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, PAC, Interview, Ernie Bushnell, Ottawa, October 7, 1976.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, Malcolm MacDonald, Toronto, September 6, 1980.

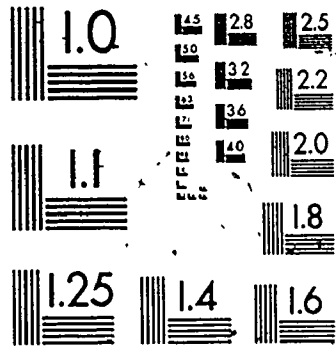
<sup>13</sup> Interview, Graham Spry, August 31, 1979.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 69-72.

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<sup>33</sup> Michiel Horn ed., The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression (Toronto, 1972), 175.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 385-388.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 525-534.

<sup>36</sup> Margaret Prang, "The Origins of Public Broadcasting in Canada", CHR (March, 1965), 2.

<sup>37</sup> Reverend John E. O'Brien, "A History of the Canadian Radio League 1930-1936" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1964), 74.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, Graham Spry, Ottawa, August 31, 1979. See also House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting; Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 2, March 15, 1932, 48. Spry initially said the date was October 6, 1931 but under questioning by committee member W. D. Euler agreed that he meant to say 1930 instead.

<sup>40</sup> J. M. S. Careless, Canada: A Story of Challenge (Toronto, 1963), 358.

<sup>41</sup> T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 69.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Interview; Graham Spry, Ottawa, August 31, 1979.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Alan B. Plaunt Papers, UBC, Notebook of Alan Plaunt, 7-8. Since the Notebook is not paginated, a page number was assigned to each page. All references to the notebook follow this system of pagination. The first page of the Notebook is dated May 24, 1932.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

- 50 Ibid., 37.
- 51 Ibid., 38.
- 52 Ibid., 39.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Graham Spry to Brooke Claxton, October 6, 1930.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid., Plaunt to George M. Wrong, November 4, 1930.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid., Plaunt to A. E. Grauer, November 13, 1930.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 64.
- 62 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to E. Nichols, November 15, 1930.
- 63 Ibid. Plaunt informed Nichols the League was getting "the services of Terry Mitchell, a very brilliant Rhodes Scholar in Halifax".
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid., Plaunt to Louis St. Laurent, November 13, 1930.
- 66 Ibid., Plaunt to Alexandre Vachon, November 25, 1930.
- 67 Brooke Claxton Papers, PAC, Plaunt to Claxton, January 17, 1931.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid., Claxton to Plaunt, January 20, 1931.

- 50 Ibid., 37.
- 51 Ibid., 38.
- 52 Ibid., 39.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Graham Spry to Brooke Claxton, October 6, 1930.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid., Plaunt to George M. Wrong, November 4, 1930.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid., Plaunt to A. E. Grauer, November 13, 1930.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 64.
- 62 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to E. Nichols, November 15, 1930.
- 63 Ibid. Plaunt informed Nichols the League was getting "the services of Terry Mitchell, a very brilliant Rhodes Scholar in Halifax".
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid., Plaunt to Louis St. Laurent, November 13, 1930.
- 66 Ibid., Plaunt to Alexandre Vachon, November 25, 1930.
- 67 Brooke Claxton Papers, PAC, Plaunt to Claxton, January 17, 1931.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid., Claxton to Plaunt, January 20, 1931.

- 70 Ibid., Plaunt to Claxton, June 25, 1931.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Mrs. H. O. Warren, November 24, 1930.
- 73 R. B. Bennett Papers, PAC (microfilm), "The Canadian Radio League: Objects, Information, National Support", December 1930, 389122, M-1314.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Reverend John E. O'Brien, "A History of the Canadian Radio League 1930-1936" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southern California, 1964), 201.
- 76 Brooke Claxton Papers, Canadian Radio League, "Facts respecting Radio Broadcasting under Private Ownership" issued by Canadian Association of Broadcasters.
- 77 R. B. Bennett Papers, "The Canadian Radio League: Objects, Information, National Support", December, 1930, 389123.
- 78 Brooke Claxton Papers, "Facts respecting Radio Broadcasting under Private Ownership", II.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 R. B. Bennett Papers, "The Canadian Radio League: Objects, Information, National Support", December, 1930, 389123.
- 82 Brooke Claxton Papers, "Facts respecting Radio Broadcasting under Private Ownership", 12.
- 83 R. B. Bennett Papers, "The Canadian Radio League: Objects, Information, National Support," December, 1930, 389123.
- 84 Brooke Claxton Papers, "Facts respecting Radio Broadcasting under Private Ownership", 12.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 R. B. Bennett Papers, "The Canadian Radio League: Objects, Information, National Support", December, 1930, 389124.

87 Brooke Claxton Papers, "Facts respecting Radio Broadcasting under Private Ownership", 12.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid., 13.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

92 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 66. Professor Peers has noted that the League "emphasized national program control more clearly than the Aird Report had done." Also the League suggested that short range local stations might be privately owned. The Aird Report had made no provision for the latter.

93 Brooke Claxton Papers, "Facts respecting Radio Broadcasting under Private Ownership", 15-16.

94 Brooke Claxton Papers, Graham Spry to Georges Pelletier, January 21, 1931.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid., Spry to Claxton, January 21, 1931.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 5, March 31, 1932, 129.

100 T. J. Allard Papers, Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Unpublished portions of book on broadcasting, "Re: Page 36 of Typescript Submitted to Date: First Amendment Thereto", 1.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid., and E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 97.



103 T. J. Allard Papers, CRTC, Unpublished portions of book on broadcasting, "re: Page 36 of Typescript Submitted to Date: First Amendment Thereto", 1.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid., 2.

107 Ibid.

108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

110 Ibid., and T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 38.

111 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Norman Mackenzie, February 9, 1931.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid., J. F. Garrett to C. A. Bowman, January 26, 1931.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., C. H. Mercer to Bowman, January 29, 1931.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Interview, Graham Spry, Ottawa, January 29, 1980.

120 Reverend John E. O'Brien, "A History of the Canadian Radio League 1930-1936" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Southern California, 1964), 185.

121 Ibid., 196.

122 Ibid., 220.

- 123 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Notebook of Alan Plaunt, 48.
- 124 Brooke Claxton Papers, Graham Spry to Claxton, May 13, 1931.
- 125 Brooke Claxton Papers, Radio Broadcasting Case, "In the matter of a reference as to the jurisdiction of Parliament to regulate and control radio communication: Factum on behalf of the Canadian Radio League".
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Ibid.
- 128 Ibid.
- 129 Brooke Claxton Papers, Graham Spry to Claxton, May 13, 1931.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Peter H. Russell, ed., Leading Constitutional Decisions (Toronto, 1973), 145.
- 132 Ibid.
- 133 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969) 71 and Elmer A. Driedger, Consolidation of the British North America Acts 1867-1975 (Ottawa, 1978), 27.
- 134 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Notebook of Alan Plaunt, 50.
- 135 Ibid., 51.
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 Interview, Graham Spry, Ottawa, January 28, 1980.
- 138 Brooke Claxton Papers, Claxton to Spry, May 14, 1931.
- 139 Arthur R.M. Lower, Colony to Nation, 5th ed. Rev. (Toronto, 1977), 335.
- 140 Brooke Claxton Papers, Claxton to Spry, May 14, 1931.
- 141 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 71.

142 Brooke Claxton Papers, Radio Broadcasting Case, "On Appeal from the Supreme Court of Canada: Case of the Canadian Radio League", 1931, 1-2.

143 Ibid., 2.

144 Ibid.

145 Ibid., 9.

146 Ibid., 2.

147 Peter H. Russell, ed., Leading Constitutional Decisions (Toronto, 1973), 147.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid., 149.

150 Ibid.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.

153 Brooke Claxton Papers, "On Appeal from the Supreme Court of Canada: Case of the Canadian Radio League", 1931, 3.

154 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting: Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1932), No. 1, March 8, 1932, and No. 16, April 21, 1932. The first evidence was presented to the committee on March 11th at its second meeting.

155 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Notebook of Alan Plaunt, 68-69.

156 Ibid., 70.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid., 73-74.

159 Ibid., 74.

160 Brooke Claxton Papers, Plaunt to Claxton, March 21, 1932.

- 161 Ibid.
- 162 Ibid., Claxton to Plaunt, March 21, 1932.
- 163 Ibid.
- 164 Ibid., Graham Spry to Claxton, March 10, 1932.
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## CHAPTER VI

### The New Canada Movement

The decade of the 1930s was a dissident and querulous time for many Canadians but, for Alan Plaunt, it was an era he turned to advantage. Because of his independent financial means, he was able to capitalize on the strange economic currents created by the Depression which saw the emergence of new social movements, third political parties and publicly-owned radio as a vehicle for inter-regional communication. As a member of the League for Social Reconstruction which he joined in 1933, Plaunt came to the financial aid of the League's chief organ, The Canadian Forum, which floundered badly in the midst of the Depression.<sup>1</sup> He funded the national office of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation when it was lacking funds, because the CCF's vision of a new Canada was closely aligned with his own, especially in the areas of public broadcasting, social security and social welfare.<sup>2</sup> As Michiel Horn has written "the Depression brought into existence the first organization of left-wing intellectuals in Canadian history."<sup>3</sup> These included such noted scholars as Frank Underhill, Eugene Forsey and left-wing advocates, such as David Lewis, with whom Plaunt was intimately acquainted.<sup>4</sup> At the suggestion of J. S. Woodsworth, these members helped the CCF draft its manifesto and program.<sup>5</sup> Despite his range of interests during this somewhat frantic period, Plaunt never lost sight of public broadcasting as his cultural centrepiece for Canada and followed, with keen interest, the progress of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission. In 1936, Plaunt almost single handedly prompted the Mackenzie King government to establish the Canadian

Broadcasting Corporation, his lasting monument to the country. Indeed the 1930s saw radio become not only a successful campaign weapon for politicians, at both the federal and provincial levels, but also the medium proved a potent social force in farmers' education culminating in the CBC broadcasts of the National Farm Radio Forum toward the end of the decade.<sup>6</sup> Other social groups, such as religious and labour organizations, also watched the evolution of radio closely and hoped to play a role in shaping the broadcasting system. The former saw the medium as an effective propaganda instrument, especially in view of William Aberhart's considerable success, and the latter was more concerned with the ideological question surrounding the ownership of radio.<sup>7</sup> Established churches saw a nationalized broadcasting system providing for the supervision of religious broadcasts which created widespread controversy and had led to the establishment of the Aird Commission.<sup>8</sup> Both the All Canadian Congress of Labour and the Trades and Labour Congress favoured public broadcasting and lamented that the private stations had not been closed down as the Aird Report had envisaged.<sup>9</sup> Still it was the farm broadcasts that provided some of the more innovative programming during the decade. The individuals, who organized these programs, had come together in the New Canada Movement, which Plaunt had founded in the autumn of 1933. It was an attempt "to band together 100,000 young farmers to discover and support the measures necessary to bring about a New Deal for Canada."<sup>10</sup>

The Depression had spawned youth movements throughout the western world often inspired by radical forces on both the left and right of the political spectrum. In Germany, Adolf Hitler's chilling words, in Mein Kampf, stressed the importance of conditioning and regimentation in order

to "raise the individual youth above the narrow horizon of his little countryside and place him in the German nation. He must learn to respect, not the boundaries of his birthplace, but the boundaries of his Fatherland; for it is these which he too must some day defend."<sup>11</sup> The Hitler Youth eventually graduated into the ranks of the Storm Troops or S.A. which, according to Alan Bullock, became the expression of the Nazi Party's "revolutionary purpose."<sup>12</sup> On the other side of the spectrum, the Communist Party made considerable headway among the alienated youth through organizations such as the Young Communist League (YCL) which claimed thousands of members in the United States and Canada.<sup>13</sup> The Co-operative Commonwealth Youth Movement (CCYM) also contained many young activists who gave tireless support to union workers in the 1937 strike at General Motors in Oshawa.<sup>14</sup> Although the New Canada Movement was quite different from the 'revolutionary' organizations, it too sought to educate Canadian young people in the "need for new methods, new ideas, new men to face and deal with the crisis."<sup>15</sup>

Like youth movements everywhere it is based on a recognition of the fact that we are living in a world utterly changed by the machine, and that the methods and ideas of our grandfather's or even our father's time will not work. Like the Youth Movement of the United States particularly, the New Canada Movement is based on the feeling of Canadian youth that the time has come to examine the facts of the depression and to devise solutions based on the facts.<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after the 1932 Broadcasting Act was passed in late May, Plaunt and Graham Spry began negotiations to purchase The Weekly Sun newspaper which eventually became the voice of the NCM.<sup>17</sup> Spry had been urged to take over the paper by W. C. Good, a respected agrarian leader and driving force behind the Canadian Co-operative Movement.<sup>18</sup> However, it was Plaunt who made the heaviest financial contribution and provided



ten thousand dollars to buy the newspaper which had been published up to 1910 by Goldwin Smith.<sup>19</sup> In 1919, the United Farmers of Ontario had taken over the Sun and it served as the chief organ of the farmers movement. After the defeat of the UFO in 1923, the newspaper's circulation dropped steadily from fifty thousand paid subscribers to about six thousand.<sup>20</sup> Spry had planned to have the Sun serve as a communications vehicle for a new political party which he saw emerging that would attract both labourers and farmers.<sup>21</sup> However Plaunt disagreed with him on this matter claiming that the newspaper should not bear any party label. After Spry had attended the Regina Convention of the CCF on July 16, 1933 he, Plaunt and Hume Blake, a lawyer and grandson of Edward Blake, met in Toronto to discuss the future direction of The Weekly Sun.<sup>22</sup>

Spry recalled that Plaunt took him to dinner at the Mississauga golf club in Toronto and later the pair, along with Blake, presented their respective views on the matter over a bottle of white wine.<sup>23</sup> Plaunt and Blake both felt that the Sun had to succeed financially through higher circulation. In their view, this objective could not be attained if the paper endorsed the CCF's political philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Spry felt that he had gone too far with the CCF to abandon the movement especially after committing himself to the new Regina Manifesto. He, therefore, left the paper after the Toronto meeting and had nothing more to do with it.<sup>25</sup> However, Plaunt continued to operate the Sun making it the organ of the New Canada Movement between 1933 and 1935. According to Spry, there was no political motive "in the New Canada Movement," although it was political "in the sense that it was concerned with public issues", and Plaunt was concerned that "farm people should be better informed and have more faith in Canada."<sup>26</sup>

The movement's non-partisan nature is also shown in the correspondence between Plaunt and its members. For example, on July 17, 1935, Plaunt wrote to Ralph Staples of Cavan, Ontario explaining to him that New Canada members were to stay free of party alliances.<sup>27</sup> It was in this same month that H. H. Stevens had bolted the Conservative Party after a dispute with R. B. Bennett and formed the Reconstruction Party with himself as leader. Stevens had some appealing arguments for Canada's idealistic youth. Among them was his call for a dismantling of powerful organizations such as the large chain stores which, he claimed, were abusing their purchasing power by forcing manufacturers to sell at greatly reduced prices.<sup>28</sup> But Plaunt did not want the NCM endorsing Stevens. Thus he wrote to Staples:

Incidentally, in so far as the New Canada Movement is concerned, no member of the Movement has the right to say the Movement is supporting Stevens or any other party at the present time, whatever the individuals may do on their own account.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover Plaunt was not at all impressed with Stevens's reform thrust. "It is superficial to talk of "reform" at this stage", he wrote "and a few more years of the doldrums will convince the average man that he hasn't much to hope for, from a "recovery."<sup>30</sup> Yet individual members of the movement did campaign for Reconstruction Party candidates. Orville Shugg, a young southwestern Ontario farmer who became a close, personal friend of Plaunt through the NCM, informed him that he was working for Bert Fansher, a Stevens candidate in the 1935 federal election:

I am campaign manager (no less) for my friend Fansher who is the Stevens candidate for Kent-Lambton. "And if you don't believe that I'm not getting a lot of good experience and being paid for it you're crazy."<sup>31</sup>

Throughout his career, Plaunt always seemingly chose to avoid the formal party structure regardless of what social cause he pursued at any given

time. His refusal to allow the NCM to become closely aligned with the Reconstruction Party, or any other political party, was in keeping with this practice.

When Spry left The Weekly Sun to become more actively involved in Canadian politics, Plaunt failed to follow his Radio League colleague's path that led to the CCF. While Plaunt agreed with certain aspects of the new party, he also remained close to such people as Norman Lambert, the Secretary of the National Liberal Federation.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the 1930s, Plaunt straddled both political factions especially in his lobbying for a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. That new regulatory structure, which provided for the public supervision of all broadcasting in Canada while maintaining private stations, could appeal to both these political segments. According to Spry, Plaunt refused to join the CCF, because he realized that its electoral chances were slim and thus, in his lifetime, could hardly be seen as a vehicle for social change.<sup>33</sup> This outlook suggested that Plaunt was both a pragmatist and a man of compromise, although he did consider, at one time, running as the CCF candidate in Renfrew, Ontario.<sup>34</sup> Still, according to Spry, Plaunt and his wife "gave money to the CCF all their lives, but from the point of view of getting results, it would have been foolish for him to seek to have his convictions introduced by joining a party that was not likely to ever get into power in our lifetime. Alan was always sympathetic though he remained closer to the Liberals."<sup>35</sup>

In many ways the New Canada Movement can be regarded as a kind of rural equivalent to the more urban League for Social Reconstruction which had attracted university scholars, professors, writers and other intellectuals. In this context, the movement should not be hastily dismissed as

a group of backward farmers concerned solely with their own survival in the midst of the Depression. Rather, Plaunt seemed to have courted public minded rural spokesmen even though he was from a different social background. As Orville Shugg, who helped promote the National Farm Radio Forum, has explained, "Plaunt with his talk of publicly owned broadcasting sparked my intellectual processes and there may have been a mutual interest in an urban intellectual talking to a rural intellectual though I never thought of myself as an intellectual."<sup>36</sup> This member of the NCM was also of the opinion that "intellectuals from every milieu or whatever level must recognize one another for what they are."<sup>37</sup> Certainly the marriage of agrarian progressives and urban intellectuals was characteristic of the 1930s when such organizations as the Canadian Radio League, the Canadian Association for Adult Education, the Canadian Youth Congress and the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order were prominent. Michiel Horn has explained that "although none of these groups was narrowly partisan, almost all of them had political overtones and interests. They brought about constant contact between members of the LSR and others and encouraged the joint examination and sharing of ideas."<sup>38</sup> The NCM was also representative of this form of social current.

The Weekly Sun also showed this urban-rural linkage when it was under Plaunt's management:

At a New Canada Movement meeting last week an elder statesman among the crowd remarked that our cities are just now beginning to learn that they are dependent upon the farm. From there he went on to make statements similar to the above "prosperity must first return to the farm" and that when the farmer prospers - everybody prospers.<sup>39</sup>

The newspaper then raised some thought provoking questions:

How can the farmer be prosperous before the rest of the country is prosperous enough to buy his produce? Here, some bright boy is bound to burst forth with the claim that the farmer sells on the export market and therefore may be prosperous before nearby cities and towns. But what do we sell abroad today? First, we sell wheat, millions of bushels but sell it at below cost prices, prices which are not likely to rise greatly in the near future. Wheat money will hardly make Canadian farmers prosperous within the next year or two. We sell a few cattle abroad, less than one percent of our total number of cattle.<sup>40</sup>

This same article challenged the farmers to recognize Canada's urban-rural interdependence:

Our friend who ~~was~~ so happy to feel that at least these extravagant city loafers were beginning to learn that they are dependent on the farmer, forgot that we farmers are almost, if not entirely, as dependent upon them as they are upon us. Neither one of us can be happy while the other person is unhappy. We farmers have a bad habit of shutting our eyes to the fact that we are part of the Canadian economic machine. We can't get out of that machine without smashing the whole works. We have sold our birthright of independence for a mess of pottage of interdependence. To throw away the mess of pottage will not bring back our birthright.<sup>41</sup>

The Weekly Sun, throughout the winter of 1933-34, provided two pages weekly through which "the scattered units of the Movement" were co-ordinated and "the Movement's Training Course material" made available.<sup>42</sup>

The qualification course consisted of an examination of "the facts of the leading farmer commodity-problems-hogs, beef, milk, and wheat, together with parallel discussion of farmer purchasing power."<sup>43</sup> The object of the course conducted through the pages of the Sun was "to qualify pledgees for permanent membership in the Movement and to act as the basis on which the Movement's Examination of wider Canadian problems can be laid."<sup>44</sup>

Every pledged unit member who desired to qualify for full membership in

the movement was required "to fill in and send a reply to at least one question per week."<sup>45</sup> The examination board, which assessed the written answers to the questionnaires consisted of W. M. Drummond, Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto, H. C. Grant, Professor of Rural Economics at the University of Manitoba, and W. C. Good, President of the Co-operative Union of Canada.<sup>46</sup> However the NCM claimed to be something more than simply a forum for the discussion of farm problems. While "Save Agriculture-Save Canada" was its slogan, the movement boasted that its final objective was a changed social order:<sup>47</sup>

But the New Canada Movement is far more than a way to insure that Canadian policies shall be based on the interests of her main industry, agriculture. The New Canada Movement, like youth movements everywhere, offers a whole new Way of Life, a changed attitude toward one's neighbours. It is already far more than a collection of individuals intent on insuring their economic future. It is the spontaneous coming together of the young people of every community in Canada. It represents a new spirit in youth, and out of it is already springing, as has sprung in Denmark and elsewhere, a new social life.<sup>48</sup>

As its method for gaining support, the New Canada Movement used the 'Big Team' approach similar to the strategy adopted by the Oxford Group Movement of the 1920s in England. The Canadian 'Big Team' consisted of a dozen or so prominent young farmers who had "surrendered themselves to the cause of the New Deal."<sup>49</sup> These youths toured the counties of Ontario and tried to spark interest in the movement's objectives. The provisional launching committee of the movement, which included besides Plaunt three young farmers, Jim Gibson of Caledonia, Alex Sim of Mount Forest, and Donald McLean of Muirkirk, claimed that the appeal of the Big Team would "be irresistible."<sup>50</sup> The movement's language combined a commitment to education, a sense of destiny and a religious fervour not unlike that of

moral rearmament:

Its appeal is the appeal of a religion for its demands are absolute "surrender" to the cause of The New Canada. Like a war or a crusade it calls to the desire and the craving for adventure that is so much a part of youth.<sup>51</sup>

Ralph Staples, one of the movement's crusaders, told a symposium at the University of Toronto, in late 1934, that "the population can and should be entrusted with both their political and economic destiny."<sup>52</sup>

The crying need in Canada today is for proper education. Our great educational institutions, our great religious organizations have failed us utterly. Historians will probably attribute the difficulties humanity experienced in the early part of the twentieth century to the inadequacy of these two. They probably will write that had there been proper education taught and dynamic religion preached from say 1850 on, three generations would have been saved from a life of futility.<sup>53</sup>

In outlining "A Five-Year Plan for Awakened Youth", Staples stressed the need for knowledge:

Bluffing is all very well for 'politicians.' For the pioneers of 1935 it is worse than useless, a thousand times worse, because it is based on the assumption, now out of date, that the population can only understand hooey and blah. You must be tactful. You must learn when to open your mouth and when to keep it shut. Preach in season only. To preach out of season is to plough in January. You must be courageous. Having made up your mind as to what you should do, steel yourself to do it.<sup>54</sup>

He urged the "awakened youth" to adopt missionary-like qualities:

There are old men who have preached the New Day for a whole life time. After a year you will detect very little progress, but progress is there. One convinced is a missionary. The wheels grind slowly, but they grind small. Avoid quackery. Don't be lead astray by side-issues. Check every proposal with the human values test. Apply to it real christianity and you cannot go far astray.<sup>55</sup>

Then later, in his speech, came the appeal to the movement's sense of destiny:

You must prepare to withstand hardship that the pioneers of a century ago never knew. Hardships peculiar to our own particular pioneering job. Criticism, ridicule must roll off your back. You must learn to pity rather than to heed those who say "if he'd stay at home and work he'd be better off"; or "he can't even run his own business" etc. Remember always that you are following in the footsteps of those who have made the world what it is; that only by the works of the small minority is progress made; that this work you do is the only work you can do the results of which are eternal.<sup>56</sup>

At this same symposium, Jim Gibson, another member of the movement, delivered a more strident message underlining the pitfalls of the capitalist system:

Six years ago, the floods of the depression broke upon us. Some of us learned to swim some of us went under and the rest of us have kept afloat by clinging to bits of the wreckage. But the dam has not yet been repaired and the flood checked. Millions of men and millions of money have been poured into the old dam, but her rotten foundations have thwarted all efforts toward repair. Mankind needs a new dam.<sup>57</sup>

While the NCM professed to be non-partisan, Gibson's address revealed a definite leaning toward the policies of the CCF:

But what of Canada and Canadians? Canada, like every other nation except Russia, is engaged in a frantic effort to reform the capitalist system. Mr. Bennett's new measures are reform measures and nothing else. Mr. King's whole program is one of reform, and as little of that as possible. The CCF alone calls for fundamental changes. Thus with our two major political parties still wholeheartedly behind the capitalist way of doing business, we young Canadians are likely to find it necessary to continue to make our way under the profit motive. However it is evident that the conflict is deepening.<sup>58</sup>

Gibson saw Canadians eventually having to choose between capitalism and socialism:



The war between those who accept the present system and those who hate it has become more intense and more bitter. It is beginning to involve us all. Either you are for capitalism or against it. There is no half-way house.<sup>59</sup>

This member of the movement seemed to embody the agrarian spirit in Ontario which was more in the tradition of J. J. Morrison than E. C. Drury:

Those of us who hate and despise the capitalist regime with all its failures and cruelties, are in the position today of finding it necessary to keep ourselves afloat in the capitalist flood while at the same time preparing ourselves and our friends for the coming struggle for power, which has become inevitable. We are waiting for the rest of you to make up your minds, hoping that you have minds of your own to make up.<sup>60</sup>

Certainly the NCM, which Plaunt symbolized, seemed to have had a profound effect on its young participants. Orville Shugg remembered that it gave him a new lease on life a short time after the full force of the Depression was felt:

Alan Plaunt was very important to me in the 1930s. He probably influenced my life more than any other single individual at a point in my life which was really the only low point I ever experienced. Everything was at a dead level in eastern Canada particularly on the farm.<sup>61</sup>

Shugg has also written that Plaunt and the New Canada Movement helped to launch him on a new career:

It was directly because of my decision to join the New Canada Movement that, unknown to me, the whole shape of my life was to be moulded and changed. Three things happened that consolidated my direction: I met Alan Butterworth Plaunt, started an association with other young farmers who were to become my colleagues some years later in the founding of the National Farm Radio Forum, and finally, became convinced that I had found a role to play in Canadian affairs, though the exact shape of it I was not yet able to perceive. It was to be four or five years before I would step on the national stage and play my role in Canada's broadcasting story.<sup>62</sup>

The New Canada Movement was Ontario based but it stimulated a discussion of farm problems nation wide. Radio was given high priority as a communications vehicle for the NCM, once Plaunt had convinced young farmers, such as Shugg, of its potential to reach the rural population: "it is difficult to look back and really grasp the tremendous isolation that each farmer in Canada found himself in during the 1930s, the isolation from rapid information ... [with] no rapid information that he could depend upon."<sup>63</sup> As Shugg has recalled, the circumstances created by the Depression were an impetus for radio as it sought to address the needs of the farmer:

Farmers almost universally were interested in becoming better informed and were pulling themselves up by the bootstraps. In other words, they were ready for a new kind of information flow not only in the local community but as between communities and between regions. That is why the farm broadcasts and the National Farm Radio Forum which dealt with social and economic problems related to agriculture were instantly successful. They were in fact the right broadcasts at the right time and in the right forum for people to assimilate.<sup>64</sup>

These farm broadcasts, which began in 1939, resulted largely from a proposal which Shugg had submitted to Plaunt in October, 1936 shortly after the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation came into existence. Shugg's five page document entitled "Rural Canada and National Radio" is an interesting commentary on how the farming community viewed this relatively new medium.<sup>65</sup> Among his suggestions were programs and radio formats whereby publicly-owned radio could serve to uplift rural Canada economically and culturally. Many of these ideas on broadcasting had been nurtured in the NCM.

In his assessment of radio, Shugg stressed the medium's social impact noting that the farmer "while neither a sophisticated nor learned fellow is not unintelligent."<sup>66</sup> In western Ontario, he saw radio having a positive

effect and, for Canada as a whole, it was an important cultural vehicle:

May the writer make a more personal comment regarding future influences of Canadian radio, based on observations in a farm home where a receiving set has been in constant operation since 1921. If one factor more than another has hampered distinctive cultural development in Canada, it has been the ingrained narrowness of rural Canada from whence much of any lasting national culture must spring.<sup>67</sup>

He told Plaunt that he saw radio freeing the farming community from these kinds of social strictures:

Radio has been the key of release in this particular home and instead of an older generation gradually decaying in narrow prejudice, one sees an active interest in keeping abreast of the times. In short, it is a home better informed, more contented and its members more useful to the community at large than could have been possible without the enrichment of radio.<sup>68</sup>

Shugg urged Plaunt to ensure that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation tailored its programming to not only "the listener" but the "potential listener" in the rural districts:<sup>69</sup>

Special press and radio publicity promoting reception of Canadian broadcasts and selling the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation should reach both classes. Care should be taken to stress its disassociation from partisan politics; its efforts to create a broadcasting service essentially Canadian in tone and treatment without forgetting the international aspect; the place of such a broadcasting system in the development of a Canadian culture etc., etc.<sup>70</sup>

Above all, Shugg saw the farmer needing more detailed information on farm market and new trends in farming:

The Canadian farmer never has had adequate farming information to aid him in the profitable disposal of his produce. This factor alone has been largely responsible for his more or less unhappy financial position in recent years. The Dominion Department of Agriculture is doing good work in building up a system for the collection of marketing

information. However, the problem of passing this information on to the farmer in a timely manner has never been adequately solved. With enlightened national radio in the offing, the most obvious way to gain rural confidence and render a service greater than may be realized at first is to make available accurate, timely, inclusive marketing information, daily, over a national network.<sup>71</sup>

By the mid 1930s, politics too had clearly felt radio's impact. Shugg noted that the radio was altering the political process and, in some instances, supplanting the traditional print medium as the prime conveyor of information. Politicians and newspaper owners were obviously aware of this development which is why these interests sought to control the medium. In Shugg's view, there was "a distinct hunger in the rural mind for simple unbiased explanations of what the government does and how it will affect them as citizens and individuals."<sup>72</sup>

The Canadian public, rural and otherwise is growing more disillusioned as to the ability of the Canadian press, generally, to interpret government policy in an intelligent, non-partisan manner. That the influence of clap-trap oratory and journalism is on the wane in Canada was signaled during the Dominion election campaign last year. Compared with previous election campaigns political meetings, particularly in rural districts, fell off 50 to 75 percent, not because the people were disinterested but because they could stay home and listen to the party leaders discuss their policies over the air.<sup>73</sup>

Plaunt learned that the farming community was also quite critical of the announcers heard on radio. According to Shugg, "general criticisms that have been heard regularly are that Canadian radio stations carry too many recorded features and announcers, as a rule, do not articulate well."<sup>74</sup> He suggested to Plaunt that programs dealing with "a discussion of health practice in the modern home" and with the pre-natal care of mothers,

"which is one of the most important and far-reaching factors contributing to the success and happiness of the average home" would have wide appeal.<sup>75</sup> While "old time and religious music" was still enjoyed by farm people, Shugg felt that "the standard of musical appreciation" could be raised by discarding "the nasal effects" of both vocalists and instrumentalists on the air.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps most important of all, in his view, was the support of the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada for the CBC's efforts. This "important body of organized opinion" had rendered a "fine social service to the country" and the CBC, from a promotional standpoint, could not discount this women's group.<sup>77</sup>

This virile, growing organization of nearly 100,000 members offers many possibilities not only as a listening audience but as a medium of publicity. Women's Institute members are substantially the most intelligent and progressive women in the rural community and for that reason are most liable to be regular radio listeners.<sup>78</sup>

If this kind of approach were taken to radio, Shugg saw it some day providing "a distinctive national personality that is bona fide."<sup>79</sup>

Alan Plaunt's experience with the NCM served him well when he became a member of the board of governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Although they were a completely different social class from what he had been accustomed to, he developed a strong attachment for the many farmers that he met through the NCM.<sup>80</sup> He also saw, in the farming community, a potential radio audience that public broadcasting had to take into consideration. In a letter to Gladstone Murray about a year before the establishment of the CBC, Plaunt saw that the farmer needed more current information:

What the Movement showed, and this is the point I am trying to make now, is that there is a positive craving for information and education

in the rural parts of Canada, particularly for education on the wider implications of agriculture - marketing, monetary questions, for example.<sup>81</sup>

He also explained to Murray the nature of the Agricola Study Clubs which were an offshoot of the New Canada Movement:

The object of the Agricola Clubs is to stimulate an interest in the wider questions of Agriculture, and to provide, via classes, groups, and the radio, material to satisfy that interest in such a way that genuine training results. I promised the secretary of the Agricola committee that I would write to ask you any information the BBC has which would assist us in this work, either by providing actual information, or by supplying us with statistics to show the success of such work in Britain, or by information regarding the technique found successful in your experiments, or in all of those ways.<sup>82</sup>

Plaunt showed, in this letter, that he had grasped radio's impact on the lonely countryside of Canada just as politicians, such as William Aberhart, had at roughly the same time:

I personally am very hopeful of this experiment. Radio, which is a mere sporific to the average townsman, can be of the utmost importance in stimulating thought in the rural parts and developing more of a corporate sense in this haven of the rugged individualist, rural Canada.<sup>83</sup>

Clearly Plaunt saw that public broadcasting had the capacity to provide rural Canada with a new social outlook. The medium could be a vehicle for cultural uplift which was a similar reason the League for Social Reconstruction urged the adoption of public ownership of the communications industry. In other words, basic social and economic change might be achieved and a more collectivist spirit created among farmers through the use of radio as an educational instrument.

Although the NCM was short-lived, it did attract considerable attention from leading Canadian newspapers and prominent individuals. For example, in December, 1933, Orville Shugg had become interested in the growth of the movement after reading a news story in the London Free Press.<sup>84</sup> This report described the NCM as "a sign of the times" since there were "youth movements in most of the European countries."<sup>85</sup> The movement's objectives were also noted, at this time, by the Ottawa Citizen which saw it as a hopeful sign for farmers:

The New Canada Movement is seeking to band together 100,000 young Canadian farmers to explore paths toward a better Canada. The young farmers are naturally stressing the necessity of saving agriculture. They are working along promising lines, too, by seeking to awaken youth to the need for action rather than by trying to organize another political party.<sup>86</sup>

The Hamilton Herald also praised the efforts of the movement:

All honor to the young farm people of the province for their desire to find out what the present economic trouble is all about and do their best to help, by first concentrating efforts on that most important field of activity which they understand best - agriculture.<sup>87</sup>

The Canadian Countryman was more forthright as it saw the NCM dealing with the tariff question:

The New Canada Movement in Ontario can render a very useful service to the farmers of this province. If the New Canada Movement does nothing else than expose the folly of high tariffs, it will have accomplished something decidedly worth while.<sup>88</sup>

Such individuals as E. C. Druy, the former UFO Premier of Ontario, strongly endorsed the New Canada Movement, "aiming as it does to create an enlightened economic opinion among rural young people."<sup>89</sup> Another agricultural leader, H. H. Hannam, Secretary of the UFO, felt the movement.

"should go far" because it was "an excellent way in which every young farmer who is willing to serve agriculture can do so to the extent he or she is capable."<sup>90</sup> Religious leaders such as George T. Webb, General Superintendent of the Baptist board of religious education, was also greatly interested in the work of the movement:

As I understand it, you are seeking to get in touch with the youth of our country who are related to agricultural life and to inspire them to develop the basic industry in harmony with the new spirit of the new day into which we are coming. I sincerely hope you will have the greatest success.<sup>91</sup>

However the NCM had to cease activity when Plaunt was unable to continue to operate The Weekly Sun because of financial problems. In the summer of 1934, Plaunt sought the financial advice of E. Austin Weir who had extensive experience with the farm press.<sup>92</sup> In Weir's view, the paper's prospects were not promising and he told Plaunt that it would require a large sum of money to keep it in existence:

I reported that unless he was prepared to spend a substantial sum, running into at least six figures, he should either dispose of the paper or close it down. An idealist, ready to spend money freely on worthy causes, he was far from a dreamer when it came to business matters. Indeed, he was credited with an unusual degree of shrewdness in affairs of finance.<sup>93</sup>

The suspension of The Weekly Sun thus removed the NCM's medium of communication. Plaunt saw the failure of the paper as the collapse of the movement and as a major setback in the attempt to uplift rural youth:

In the first six months of its operations, the Movement made amazing progress, "planting" some 800 cells in all parts of rural Ontario, and by means of "Training Courses" evolving the first step toward a national programme. Unfortunately, however, the Movement was forced to suspend these activities when the Sun was unable to carry on, since the Sun was its chief medium of propaganda and "Training."<sup>94</sup>



Yet the true impact of the NCM should probably be measured by the subsequent careers and contributions of the leading group of individuals associated with it. The movement managed to win the devotion of a number of progressive young Canadians whose later public activity reflected the training and attitudes that the movement had fostered. In retrospect, Orville Shugg observed, "someone has said that no movement which has sound objectives is completely lost when it dies."<sup>95</sup> The NCM undoubtedly had a lofty purpose although, in a sense, it was a victim of the economic conditions it had sought to improve. E. A. Corbett, a one time director of the Canadian Association for Adult Education who had been closely associated with the formation of National Farm Radio Forum, later wrote that Alan Plaunt's social outlook greatly impressed the members of the movement, many of whom became "outstanding" spokesmen of farm interests in Ontario.<sup>96</sup> These included "Orville Shugg, the organizer of the Farm Broadcast Department of the CBC and now Publicity Director of the Dairy Farmers of Canada; Leonard Harman, Secretary of the United Farmers Co-operative of Ontario; Ralph Staples, Director of the Co-operative Union of Canada and Ralph Burton, who became one of the most prominent leaders in the farm movement."<sup>97</sup> Plaunt also helped to mould the attitudes and skills of many educators and social planners who were to achieve prominence in Ontario during the next two decades. As Corbett wrote to Brooke Claxton several years after the NCM had ended, "all of the men that Alan chose as the leaders" of the movement "are active in various parts of Canada, all motivated by the same kind of spirit that characterised Alan all his life."<sup>98</sup> For Plaunt, the NCM had given him a clearer insight into the need for a more extensive radio service in rural Canada that only a publicly-owned system could provide. Fortunately, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was in the offing and Plaunt's dream soon to be realized.

## CHAPTER VI

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, 1980), 31, 132.
- <sup>2</sup> David Lewis, The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958 (Toronto, 1980), 132.
- <sup>3</sup> Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, 1980), 17.
- <sup>4</sup> Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.
- <sup>5</sup> Michiel Horn, "Frank Underhill's Early Drafts of the Regina Manifesto 1933", CHR, LIV (December, 1973), 393-394.
- <sup>6</sup> Unpublished portion of manuscript of Shugg family history given to the author by Orville Shugg, September 18, 1981, "A Folk Movement", 13, and PAC, Sound Section, Interview between Orville Shugg and Elspeth Chisholm, August 4, 1981.
- <sup>7</sup> T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 37.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 74.
- <sup>9</sup> Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 75, 142.
- <sup>10</sup> Alan B. Plaunt Papers, UBC, New Canada Movement Files, "The New Canada Movement" and "Why the Movement sprang up", 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Cited in Winston Churchill, The Second World War: The Gathering Storm, vol. 1 (Boston, 1948), 143.
- <sup>12</sup> Alan Bullock, Hitler: A Study in Tyranny (London, 1952), 167.
- <sup>13</sup> Theodore H. White, In Search of History: A Personal Adventure (New York, 1978), 36-37.
- <sup>14</sup> David Lewis, The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958 (Toronto, 1981), 153.

15 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, "The New Canada Movement" and "Why the Movement Sprang Up", 1.

16 Ibid.

17 Interview, Graham Spry, August 31, 1979.

18 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 221.

19 Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, 1980), 26.

20 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 221.

21 Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, 1980), 37.

22 Interview, Graham Spry, January, 29, 1980.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Ralph Staples, July 17, 1935.

28 Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1970), 216, and for a discussion of the tensions between Stevens and R. B. Bennett see J. R. H. Wilbur, "H. H. Stevens and R. B. Bennett, 1930-1934" in Bruce Hodgins and Robert Page, Canadian History Since Confederation: Essays and Interpretations (Georgetown, 1979), 482-496.

29 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Staples, July 17, 1935.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., Orville Shugg to Plaunt, undated.

32 Interview, Edward Pickering, Toronto, July 16, 1979.

- 33 Interview, Graham Spry, January 28, 1980.
- 34 Ottawa Journal, September 15, 1941.
- 35 Interview, Graham Spry, January 28, 1980.
- 36 PAC, Interview between Orville Shugg and Elspeth Chisholm, August 5, 1981.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, 1980), 15.
- 39 The Weekly Sun, February 15, 1934.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, "The New Canada Movement" and "Why the Movement Sprang Up", 4.
- 43 Ibid., 2.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 The Weekly Sun, February 9, 1934.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, "The New Canada Movement" and "Why the Movement Sprang Up", 1.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, NCM Files, "Memorandum for Prospective Members of the Big Team: The New Canada Movement", 1.
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- 51 Ibid.

52 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, NCM Files, "Summary of Lectures given at the Farm School of Economics, University of Toronto, Nov. 26 - Dec. 8, 1934: A Five-Year Plan for Awakened Youth by Ralph Staples", 2.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

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57 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, "Summary of Lectures given at the Farm School of Economics, University of Toronto, Nov. 26 - Dec. 8, 1934: Where Do We Go From Here" by Jim Gibson, 3.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 PAC, Interview between Orville Shugg and Elspeth Chisholm, August 5, 1971.

62 Unpublished portion of manuscript of Shugg family history given to the author by Orville Shugg, September 19, 1981, "A Folk Movement", 13.

63 PAC, Interview between Orville Shugg and Elspeth Chisholm, August 6, 1981.

64 Ibid.

65 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Memorandum on "Rural Canada and National Radio", Shugg to Plaunt, October 20, 1936.

66 Ibid., 1.

67 Ibid., 4-5.

68 Ibid., 5.

69 Ibid., 2.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., 3.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., 4.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., 5.

80 Interview, Alan Gibbons, August 23, 1981.

81 Alan Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, November 27, 1935.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Unpublished portion of manuscript of Shugg family history given to the author by Orville Shugg, September 19, 1981, "Depression of Spirit", 12.

85 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, NCM Files "What the Newspapers of Ontario and Canada are saying about the Movement," 4.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, NCM Files "What prominent citizens and Ontario farmers think of the Movement", 1.

- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 223.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, November 27, 1935.
- 95 Ibid., Orville Shugg to Dorothy Plaunt, June 13, 1942.
- 96 E. A. Corbett, We Have With Us Tonight (Toronto, 1957), 58.
- 97 Ibid., and Brooke Claxton Papers, E. A. Corbett to Claxton, October 3, 1941.
- 98 Brooke Claxton Papers, Corbett to Claxton, October 3, 1941.

## Chapter VII

### A National Institution

The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, which began operations in November, 1932, had a somewhat turbulent four year history before being succeeded by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in June, 1936.<sup>1</sup> During this same period when Alan Plaunt had established the New Canada Movement, the Canadian Radio League had, for the most part, been dormant. However, early in 1935, Plaunt revived the Radio League and lobbied successfully behind the scenes to have the Commission abolished and replaced by a corporation which would be free of political influence. Indeed the CRBC was forced to function essentially as a department of government under the 1932 Broadcasting Act. The Commission could make recommendations to the Minister of Marine, on the important question of issuing broadcasting licences, but the purchase and construction of stations required the approval of Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Moreover the Commission faced two other problems which were related to its lack of independence from the government. For its finances, it had to rely on a parliamentary appropriation which had to form part of the government estimates. As well, personnel hired by the Commission were subject to the Civil Service Act which prevented flexibility in salary schedules to attract those broadcasting experts who were required to build a national system.<sup>3</sup> In the words of René Landry, Secretary of the CRBC, "the Commission had its hands and feet tied."<sup>4</sup> While it no doubt suffered from these legislative strictures, the three individuals who served on this first regulatory agency, which ushered



in publicly owned radio, were among R. B. Bennett's more questionable appointees. By November, 1932, the Commission had set up its headquarters in the National Research Council building on Sussex Street in Ottawa. The chairman was Hector Charlesworth, editor of Saturday Night magazine. Thomas Maher, a forestry engineer from Quebec City, served as vice-chairman and Lieutenant Colonel W. Arthur Steel, who had previously worked with the Department of National Defence, was the third member.<sup>5</sup> Steel was the only one of the three commissioners who had any understanding of the technical aspects of radio: "To pick three individuals", E. Austin Weir has written, "with more contrasting characters less likely to mesh in a smooth functioning organization would be impossible."<sup>6</sup> R. B. Bennett was soon to find his new broadcasting structure plagued with internal difficulties, because this unlikely trio were seemingly forever at odds with one another. From a legal standpoint, the Commission did not really come into existence until January, 1933 when Lt. Col. Steel was sworn in after he returned from the International Radio Conference in Madrid.<sup>7</sup> But even before this official beginning, the Commission's personnel problems were apparent.

The depth of the division within the Commission was disclosed in a letter from Gladstone Murray, at Broadcasting House in London, to Brooke Claxton written on December 28, 1932. Murray had seen Prime Minister Bennett in England and claimed to have had "several characteristically fantastic interviews with R. B."<sup>8</sup> It was during these talks that Murray learned of Bennett's dissatisfaction with the commissioners he had appointed. According to Murray, Bennett was prepared to admit that he had made a major error:

Steel had been to see me in a state of great depression because Maher and not he had been made Vice-Chairman. He pointed out that under the Act the Vice-Chairman would have two votes as against his one, adding that as Charlesworth was ill a good deal of the time Maher would be in charge and would be able to disregard him (Steel). He said he felt so strongly about the matter that he might resign. The first time I met R. B. I told him what Steel had said, whereupon he expressed some alarm and asked me to arrange for a three-cornered meeting.<sup>9</sup>

Shortly afterward, Murray arranged a meeting "between R. B., Steel and myself."<sup>10</sup>

R. B. admitted that the appointment of Maher was a bad one for the purpose; he said it had been made against his own better judgement but for important political reasons. He attached no importance to the voting priority, adding that he himself would see to it that Maher's well-known propensity for political wire-pulling and the like would be stultified. In other words, he looked upon Maher as a cipher and advised Steel to ignore him. Steel expressed gratitude afterwards that there had been a witness to the interview; which may be taken as the measure of his confidence in the great man.<sup>11</sup>

At the same meeting, Bennett "implored" Murray to come to Canada and "put the Commission on its feet."<sup>12</sup> Murray was agreeable to the suggestion as long as certain conditions were laid down. While informing Claxton that there had been "stirring appeals to my patriotism and imperialism", Murray explained that he had told Bennett of the need for fresh legislation to develop a national system properly:<sup>13</sup>

I would also want an equally cast iron assurance that my visit would not be used solely or mainly for party political purposes. The latter point I made because R. B. let it drop, I believe accidentally, that he wanted to be able to announce in the House of Commons on January 30th that I was going out and that the Commission was going ahead with its work. To these requests for fundamental assurances he retorted with his customary formula "Tell me, trust me and I shall see everything right."<sup>14</sup>

He maintained that "R. B. was obviously in a muddle" and that, even with the provisos that he had outlined to the Prime Minister, he was uncertain of what could be accomplished in Canada:<sup>15</sup>

If I were to come out for three months they would expect me to prepare a Report, and if it suited Bennett no doubt this would be produced as a Parliamentary Paper. I can hardly imagine making a report which would suit the Government. If there were any prospect of a change of administration it might be better in the long run to decline the invitation and let the Commission continue its shadowy existence until public opinion became alive to the farcical situation.<sup>16</sup>

Murray wrote to Vincent Massey "in a similar vein" and sent copies of "this letter to Alan Plaunt and Graham Spry."<sup>17</sup> Obviously public broadcasting in Canada had begun on a dubious note.

Gladstone Murray spent the spring of 1933 in Canada studying the radio question from April to June. He wrote three reports for the government and the final one, a twenty-seven page document, was submitted on July 25th. This latter report, which was never acted upon, has been glossed over, in other studies, perhaps because it received little public attention in the middle of summer when Parliament was in recess. Entitled "National Radio in Canada", this assessment of the radio situation is important, since it serves to highlight some of the basic differences in outlook between Murray and Alan Plaunt which were to surface later when Murray served as General Manager of the CBC and Plaunt was a member of the board of governors.<sup>18</sup> Murray explained, in his report, that "broadcasting, although a natural public utility, is fundamentally different in its character and functions from a normal Department of Government."<sup>19</sup> In his view, it was "primarily a business and its successful administration depends on the recognition of this fact."<sup>20</sup> If it was to be successful,

Canadian broadcasting "must embody the reconciliation of remote State control with independent business management."<sup>21</sup> The CRBC, according to Murray, had suffered because it tended to be seen as "an instrument of Government policy."<sup>22</sup> Bill Number 99 which had amended the 1932 Act, a change which flowed from Murray's earlier Interim Report, gave the Commission more autonomy. For example, it could appoint its own officers, while relying on the Civil Service Commission only for clerical staff, and details of its work were not to be discussed in Parliament.<sup>23</sup> In other words, Murray saw this step moving the Commission closer to the way in which the BBC operated. Murray noted that, in England, "the remote control of the state exists through Parliament," and that "the Executive functions are carried out on normal business lines."<sup>24</sup>

Details of the work of broadcasting are not discussed in Parliament, which of course retains the right of reviewing broad matters of policy which may be raised from time to time in connection with broadcasting. Staff appointments to the BBC are made in the normal way of business and have nothing to do with the Civil Service. Thus, while the interests of the State are duly safeguarded by various expedients, broadcasting is given the latitude it requires not only for efficient working, but also for keeping it clear of party political influence.<sup>25</sup>

Plaunt also endorsed this kind of broadcasting structure, but he disagreed with Murray over the role of the private broadcaster. In Plaunt's opinion, the public sector had to be dominant in broadcasting with private stations regulated by a national authority and playing a strictly secondary role in the system.<sup>26</sup> Murray, on the other hand, saw public broadcasting in Canada evolving more as a partnership between both the private and public sectors. Thus he wrote in his final report:

Programs which private Stations could originate more economically than the Commission and which are eligible for chain relay should be sponsored

by the Commission. Special care should be taken to make sure that Dominion-wide broadcasts are of real general interest.<sup>27</sup>

Murray also recommended that "private stations" should be encouraged "to develop auxiliary program services, financed by advertisers."<sup>28</sup> In his report, he was quite sensitive toward the private broadcasters recognizing that, at least in the short term, the Commission was highly dependent on them to build a national system:

During the past four years private stations have suffered a good deal from a sense of insecurity and uncertainty about their future. It is important for the Commission to give every encouragement and help to those private stations whose continued operation is approved.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover Murray saw the private broadcaster lending valuable assistance:

If the private stations are consulted in the manner already suggested, their control and regulation should not involve friction and their goodwill should be a valuable asset. Now that the Commission has five outlets of its own, and a prospective sixth, further acquisition should not be made without a careful survey of the actual and potential auxiliary services which approved private stations can provide, at least until more money is available for capital expenditure.<sup>30</sup>

Murray appeared to have assessed the needs of the Commission realistically and, in his survey, saw that those stations already established in the private sector were vital, if public broadcasting was to be established in Canada. Throughout its life, the CRBC not only had to rely heavily on private stations but the latter, because of their numbers, provided more extensive coverage of the Commission's programming than did the CRBC's own stations.<sup>31</sup>

The Commission suffered greatly because it chose to deny itself access to commercial network revenue under an agreement it had made with the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific telegraph companies on April 1,

1933.<sup>32</sup> According to this contract, the CRBC was to provide commercial free programming between 6 p.m. and midnight and thus would not compete with the railways in commercial broadcasting. For use of the landlines belonging to both telegraph companies, the Commission was forced to pay annually, \$275,000, a considerable sum in the midst of the Depression.<sup>33</sup> But in his report prepared for R. B. Bennett, Murray had suggested more flexibility in the area of commercial advertising:

The policy, of course, is to limit the amount of permitted advertising to the financial requirements of the Commission and of the private stations. In order however, to provide a sufficient number of advertisers to bring in the necessary auxiliary revenue, some latitude should be allowed in the building of sponsored programmes, it being understood of course that undue or offensive advertisements are always excluded.<sup>34</sup>

Toward the end of 1933, the Commission began to give serious thought to allowing commercials on its network service but it was not until the autumn of 1935 that advertising was allowed.<sup>35</sup> Above all, Murray had urged the Commission to provide a balance of both serious and light musical programming to capture the widest possible audience. He called for "a steady development of public taste."<sup>36</sup>

So far the Commission has rightly concerned itself mainly with symphony music, but, as the organization develops, orchestral and dance music of all types should likewise be encouraged under the auspices of the Commission. Otherwise the Commission will become unpopular with those who do not care for symphony music.<sup>37</sup>

Just because a certain form of programming was provided by American broadcasters, Murray saw no need for the Canadian system to refrain from giving the listener a similar service:

A suggestion has been made that the Commission should omit dance music on the grounds that an adequate service of this is provided from the

United States. With this I disagree. There are in Canada several excellent dance bands which deserve to be broadcast under the auspices of the Commission.<sup>38</sup>

Other than Bill No. 99, which had amended the 1932 Broadcasting Act, no further government action was taken on any of Murray's three reports to the government.

By early 1934, there was considerable dissatisfaction with the programming provided by the CRBC which had operated under several handicaps since its inception. In particular, the French programming provided on the network was not at all well received in western Canada where the Commission's extensive shuffling of radio frequencies had caused inconvenience to listeners. Moreover R. B. Bennett continued to have great doubts about the broadcasting structure created by the 1932 Act. Historians have frequently cited that legislation as evidence of Bennett's complete conversion to the notion of public ownership in broadcasting, and have emphasized his statement during the debate on second reading of the bill to create the Radio Commission:

No other scheme than that of public ownership can ensure to the people of this country, without regard to class or place, equal enjoyment of the benefits and pleasures of radio broadcasting.<sup>39</sup>

However privately Bennett expressed many reservations about the operation of the Commission. After a visit to western Canada in 1934, he informed Alfred Duranleau, the Minister of Marine, that there was widespread disenchantment with programs offered by the CRBC:

Since my conversation with you I have been in touch with certain gentlemen in Regina who are interested in the radio situation and I made frequent enquiries during my visit to Regina. In spite of all the Radio Commission says, the fact is that Southern Saskatchewan was never so poorly served since radio began as it is now.<sup>40</sup>

Clearly the Commission's decision to shuffle broadcasting frequencies, for reasons that it never appeared to explain, had caused reception problems for listeners in southern Saskatchewan. The Commission tried to argue that the problems arose from the old fashioned receiving sets in the homes of that province but Bennett refused to accept this argument as the sole reason. As he explained to Duranleau, "the story by Colonel Steel, that interference is only reflected in out of date receiving sets, is also, I am afraid, not founded in fact, although it is possible that the most up to date set might, at certain hours, tune out the interference."<sup>41</sup> In particular, Bennett singled out the difficulties the Commission had imposed upon station CHWC at Pilot Butte, ten miles outside of Regina, and CKCK, which was situated within the city itself:

The wave length of these two latter stations was changed by the Commission, with the result that they can be well heard in the far Northern parts of the Province but there are areas within fifty miles of the station to the South and East where they cannot be heard at all.<sup>42</sup>

Bennett also mentioned the problem of programming in the French language which irritated westerners:

I hope that you will not feel offended or think that I have any hostility to the French language when I tell you that there is very wide-spread dissatisfaction in Western Canada. There is also very bitter complaint about notices being sent to radio owners printed in the two languages. I know the attitude of the French speaking Canadian is that Canada is bilingual and that every document issued by the Department should be printed bilingually. That doctrine is not accepted in Saskatchewan and every bilingual form that goes there is looked upon as an attempt by French Canadians to force their view upon the rest of the country and is correspondingly resented. It is no use to argue about whether the people are right or wrong - whether they are tolerant or intolerant. We are faced with a condition, not a theory.<sup>43</sup>



Moreover Bennett was extremely worried about the political implications of the Radio Commission's activity with another federal election fast approaching:

The Government is losing hundreds of votes through the insistence of the French Canadians on bilingualism, particularly at the moment in connection with radio. The collectors report to me that many are refusing to pay their licenses, as a protest not against the French language but against the French language being forced upon them. Some go as far as to say that this is the greatest difficulty the Bennett Government will have in Saskatchewan in the next election.<sup>44</sup>

Bennett's solution to the radio problem came straight out of his entrepreneurial past:

As to the financial end of the situation, if I could get a reasonable assurance from you that a wave length would be available and a license issued under conditions insuring reasonable permanency of the license, or else recompense to the owners if the license were withdrawn as a result of the Government policy, a station friendly to us of 5,000 watts capacity, modern and up to date could be established by private capital, which would be of better service to the people of Saskatchewan than the four stations above named put together. The fear of what the Radio Commission may do prevents people with money from making any investment. Is there any way in which you can assure me some degree of security to the man who invests his capital?<sup>45</sup>

Obviously Bennett had the interests of the private entrepreneur at heart even though the Government he headed had introduced a form of public broadcasting to Canada.

Given the problems faced by the CRBC, it is hardly surprising that the government had turned the radio question over to the second House of Commons Committee on Broadcasting which began hearings on March 9, 1934.<sup>46</sup>

Unlike the 1932 Broadcasting Committee, which the Radio League had

dominated, this committee saw the League's leaders preoccupied elsewhere. Alan Plaunt, Graham Spry and Brooke Claxton had formed the nucleus of the public broadcasting campaign prior to 1932 and, during the committee's hearings, had never relented in their attempts to convince spokesmen from all political parties of the merits of the Radio League's scheme. However, after the 1932 Broadcasting Act had introduced public broadcasting to Canada, this trio pursued a variety of other interests. Plaunt decided to form the New Canada Movement while Spry became actively involved with the CCF party. Claxton, who had offered valuable legal advice to the Radio League, concentrated again on his Montreal law practice. Alan Plaunt, as secretary of the League, did however submit a statement which was included in the minutes of the 1934 Broadcasting Committee. The object of Plaunt's memorandum to the committee was to outline "the proposals of the Canadian Radio League for the establishment of a national broadcasting organization with the powers of a private corporation and the functions of a public utility."<sup>47</sup> He sought to counter the view that, when public broadcasting was introduced in 1932, "the actual set up with its unfortunate results, was based on the League's proposals."<sup>48</sup> Plaunt said that "on the contrary, we believe that the League's proposals offer a practicable method of re-establishing national operation of radio broadcasting in the confidence and favour of the Canadian people."<sup>49</sup>

It is important to remember that the Radio League had tried unsuccessfully to have the national company proposed by the Aird Commission established in 1932. Instead of this structure, which would have represented the public through the appointment of prominent citizens to the board of the company, the three-man Commission was established. Moreover there had been no General Manager to assist the Commission even though such a position had

been provided for in a 1930 draft bill which was never introduced because the Liberal Government was faced with an election campaign.<sup>50</sup> Plaunt felt that it was time to rectify these omissions and outlined clearly the form of organization which laid the foundation for the present day Canadian Broadcasting Corporation established in June, 1936. In his submission to the 1934 Committee, Plaunt called for "an independent public corporation somewhat similar to the BBC" which would "be established by royal charter, or by Act of Parliament."<sup>51</sup> In the words of Plaunt's brief to the committee, "this corporation or company (the League preferred to use the word company or corporation to commission) be directed by the most competent broadcasting executive available in the capacity of general manager or director general."<sup>52</sup> He noted that "the policies of this organization" should be formed "by a board of directors or governors, widely representative of the citizens of Canada" and that "this board be unsalaried except for the statutory travelling allowance."<sup>53</sup> The board would be "fully charged with responsibility for the efficient and non-partisan management of the broadcasting corporation."<sup>54</sup>

Plaunt drew special attention to the proposal that the General Manager of the Corporation would be free of political influence. He recommended that "the general manager of the corporation be appointed and be responsible, not directly to Parliament, but to the board of directors" and that "the board of directors be responsible to Parliament for the operation of the corporation."<sup>55</sup> The board of governors of the proposed corporation would "be related to Parliament through a special committee of the Privy Council, including three ministers, the chairman of which would be the spokesman for the board on the floor of the House."<sup>56</sup> Plaunt drew the committee's attention to the fact that "this resembles the way in which

the National Research Council is related to Parliament."<sup>57</sup> As well, "the ministerial spokesman of the board" would be required "only to reply to questions of major policy and that details of administration" would not be "subject to Parliamentary question, this being the responsibility of the Board, as is the case in Great Britain."<sup>58</sup> Here then was "the reconciliation of remote State control with independent business management" which Gladstone Murray had seen, in 1933, as a necessary criterion for Canadian broadcasting if it were to be successful.<sup>59</sup> "The central, essential necessity for a public organization of this kind", said Plaunt, "is the buffer between the operating corporation and the government of the day, and between the operating corporation and community pressure which an unpaid Board broadly representative of the public would constitute."<sup>60</sup> Plaunt saw the structure of the CRBC as endangering the principle of public ownership for basically two reasons:

The Broadcasting Administration has obviously not been sufficiently removed from the political arena to develop public confidence in its independence. Another fundamental defect is that the Commission has been charged with the double function of direction and operation involving both formulation and execution of policy - a situation fatal to the success of any enterprise which requires direction in the widest interest of the public together with efficient, unified management.<sup>61</sup>

Plaunt claimed that the principle of public broadcasting had been "progressively imperilled for almost two years through a faulty constitution" and it was time for a re-organization of broadcasting along the lines he had proposed.<sup>62</sup> His statement to the 1934 Broadcasting Committee was perhaps the clearest enunciation to date of the principles of public broadcasting, as its proponents saw it, with the notion of the board as a "buffer" serving as the central recommendation.

In May, 1934, Plaunt also made his radio views known in The Canadian Forum where he underlined the difficulties of the Commission:

The Prime Minister with great courage and in the face of a not too sympathetic party accepted the need for nationalization but neglected the carefully worked out proposals for establishing a national radio organization. He accepted the principle but not the method. In place of the proposed corporation governed by an unsalaried board of representative citizens the Prime Minister established a paid commission directly responsible to the government. The Commission, by a curious confusion of thought, was asked both to direct and to manage.<sup>63</sup>

He concluded that "the results" of the first experiment with public broadcasting in Canada had "been almost tragic."<sup>64</sup>

Almost universal support has been turned into almost universal indifference or opposition, for the public mind generally has grown sceptical both of political interference and mismanagement.<sup>65</sup>

Plaunt may have exaggerated R. B. Bennett's enthusiasm for public broadcasting, somewhat, especially in light of the Prime Minister's reticence toward the Radio Commission described earlier. However there is little doubt that "political interference and mismanagement" were perceived as the Commission's main problems.<sup>66</sup>

The hearings of the 1934 Committee revealed that there had been virtually no let up in the dissension among the three commissioners. These divisions also surfaced during the proceedings of the 1936 Commons Broadcasting Committee; there are, however, different interpretations of what occurred. For example, E. Austin Weir has written that "two members of the Commission, Charlesworth and Steel; had made certain majority recommendations to the government early in May, 1934 regarding further amendments to the Act."<sup>67</sup>

The most interesting of these was the suggestion that the regulatory and operational functions of the Commission should be separated and that a Corporation should be formed, owned by the Commission, which would be responsible for the preparation and distribution of its programs throughout the country. More than twenty years later the Fowler Commission would make a very similar recommendation. But the proposal was not unanimous. Thomas Maher did not agree and submitted a statement of his own directly to the Prime Minister.<sup>68</sup>

Professor Peers, who also based his assessment of what happened among the commissioners on the hearings of the 1936 Committee, offered a slightly different version:

Although Charlesworth's evidence on this point is not clear, Maher seems to have proposed a new operating body, a broadcasting corporation to be owned jointly by the Radio Commission and large interests outside government. Such a corporation, he thought, would be able to provide commercial and non-commercial programs, without running into government interference or red tape.<sup>69</sup>

According to Peers, "in place of Maher's plan, Charlesworth and Steel agreed to recommend amendments to the act, and placed their recommendation in a minute of the commission dated May 1, 1934."<sup>70</sup> While the government received a copy of this recommendation, it failed to act. Nor did it take any action on the other recommendation, "that of Maher."<sup>71</sup> There is some truth in the interpretations of both Weir and Peers. However the minutes of the Commission's May 1st meeting show clearly the positions of the three commissioners.

It was Thomas Maher who had suggested separating the regulatory and operating functions of the Commission and establishing a corporation which "would be the property of the Commission."<sup>72</sup> However the minutes of the May 1st meeting contain no mention of "large interests outside government."<sup>73</sup> Maher had worked closely with Gladstone Murray, when he toured

Canada in the spring of 1933, and in his final report to the government, Murray suggested the possibility of setting up "an operating company under the licence and general control of the Commission, but enjoying an adequate degree of independence."<sup>74</sup> Murray saw this separation of responsibilities as a way of relieving the Commission "of the executive responsibility which should not be its concern" and enabling it "to act more effectively as trustee for the public interest."<sup>75</sup> Maher seems to have been impressed with this proposal made by Murray. In any event, he informed the Commission's May 1st meeting of the following:

I wish to advise that I cannot agree with a proposal to be put before the Parliamentary Radio Committee suggesting either the status quo or further power be given to the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission as I firmly believe that the principle underlying the structure is wrong.<sup>76</sup>

In his remarks, Maher foreshadowed the views of private broadcasters who would later accuse the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation of being both their judge and jury - a situation which was not rectified until the 1958 Broadcasting Act when the operating and regulatory responsibilities of the CBC were separated:<sup>77</sup>

The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission as stated by witnesses heard before the Committee, is actually a body enacting the rules governing the operation of private stations and radio in general in Canada; it is the tribunal of these interests; it is the body that sanctions their operations and at the same time it is their competitor in both commercial and sustaining broadcasting. As pointed out to the Committee our own stations are offenders of the Commission's Regulations and are at times as bad as any private station in Canada in this respect.<sup>78</sup>

Maher also expressed concern about the Commission's lack of autonomy:

According to the Radio Broadcasting Act the Commission is supposed to censor speeches over the air, to decide the allocations of

time to each party in election campaigns. The Commission is a Government Department or at least a branch of a Government Department and should not be asked to settle these perplexing problems as it is sure of being accused of favoring either one or the other party.<sup>79</sup>

He then made his major recommendation:

The fact of more power being given the Commission will certainly not cure these evils but will most likely add to them. I, therefore, kindly request that the Canadian Radio Commission do not use my name as a party to any suggestions of this kind before the Parliamentary Committee as I am convinced that there is only one sound solution to the problem and that is that the right should be given to the Canadian Radio Commission to create a corporation which would be the property of the Commission. This corporation should be created with a very strong board of directors and an executive board to take care of broadcasting only.<sup>80</sup>

Maher saw the role of the Radio Commission, in his proposed reorganization, as a strictly regulatory one:

The Canadian Radio Commission should limit its activities to settling international difficulties, to building new stations and passing them over to the corporation, to the allotment of wave lengths and to ascertaining that the said corporation as well as the private stations observe the regulations. It should also prohibit matters detrimental to the public interest from being broadcast; it should be used as a tribunal for settling difficulties pertaining to radio broadcasting in Canada, and lastly it should look after matters pertaining to interference.<sup>81</sup>

At this same meeting on May 1st, 1934, Charlesworth and Steel agreed that "the system should be continued", but both proposed "fundamental changes in the legislation" to give the Commission more flexibility in its operation such as purchasing stations without the consent of cabinet.<sup>82</sup> Both



conceded that "the Commission is actively in the field in competition with private commercial stations in so far as the use of stations and time is concerned."<sup>83</sup> They also saw the Commission as being "in competition with private commercial stations, to a very moderate extent, in connection with commercial programmes over its own stations."<sup>84</sup>

Curiously enough, on June 29, 1934, the day the 1934 Broadcasting Committee presented its report, Charlesworth issued a press release advocating the separation of the operating and regulatory roles of the Commission.<sup>85</sup> Charlesworth's proposal would have seen the Commission act as regulator and a Commission-owned corporation provide programs throughout the country.<sup>86</sup> However the minutes of the May 1st meeting of the Commission show no evidence of Charlesworth offering this kind of proposal "with reference to the recommendations to be made to the Parliamentary Committee."<sup>87</sup>

The principal recommendation of the 1934 Committee was that "the Government should, during the recess, consider the advisability of amending the Act, with a view to securing better broadcasting facilities throughout the Dominion."<sup>88</sup> It was the committee's view that "radio broadcasting could best be conducted by a general manager."<sup>89</sup> A number of other recommendations dealt with the private sector, among them, that "pending nationalization of all stations, greater co-operation should be established between privately-owned stations and the Commission."<sup>90</sup> It was also recommended that "the provision of the Act dealing with advertising should be more liberally interpreted."<sup>91</sup> The House of Commons prorogued shortly after the report was presented and most of its recommendations were never acted upon.<sup>92</sup> But it was clear that the Commission, which had just over a year of its existence remaining, would come in for even closer scrutiny

from critics, such as Alan Plaunt, in the days ahead.

In January, 1935, Merrill Denison, a Canadian author and dramatist then a resident of New York, assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the Radio Commission after nearly three years of public broadcasting in Canada. He made some astute observations as to the origins of radio under public ownership:

While the arguments used to further government control were many, its accomplishment was due to a direct appeal to national pride and patriotic sentiment; but even at the height of the controversy, public interest in the matter was largely academic. For this reason, many members of Parliament, although they voted for government control, have never regarded the venture as other than a tentative experiment which has yet to prove its value. Whether in agreement with the principle or not, one must admit that government control has not yet had any proper opportunity to prove itself.<sup>93</sup>

However Denison saw that "nothing has happened to weaken any of the arguments used by the defenders of private ownership."<sup>94</sup> In this regard, public broadcasting in Canada amounted to a defeat for Canadian nationalism:

It is, however, in its nationalistic phases that the Canadian radio situation presents the most interesting implications and ones which must cause considerable embarrassment to those who favored government control on the grounds that only through such control could the corrupting American influences of programs emanating from across the border be combated. These influences seem to have turned out to be less vicious than was supposed, for much of the approval won by the Commission has been through programming available, on a coast-to-coast Canadian network, programs of the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System which previously had gone on the air only through outlets in Toronto and Montreal.<sup>95</sup>

Denison noted that it was "slightly disconcerting to hear adherents of the principle of government control, sometimes members of the Commission,

itself, point with pride to these American programs, paid for by American private capital, to prove the superiority of Canadian public ownership."<sup>96</sup> He also wondered if "the present system will be continued in its present form particularly should there be a change of Government in Canada following the next election."<sup>97</sup> By 1935, a change in the broadcasting system was being considered by many others. The Radio Commissioners' lot had not been a happy one and, at the beginning of 1935, Alan Plaunt began to revive the Radio League hoping to replace the Commission with the scheme he had outlined to the 1934 Broadcasting Committee. In this regard, he was greatly aided by political events which saw the politicians, on both sides of the Commons, gearing up for an election campaign and a use of radio by the Conservatives which helped to topple the CRBC.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless Plaunt's timing was skillful as he sought to rally prominent Liberals to the cause of broadcasting reorganization whereby a national company of noted Canadians would assume virtually all aspects of broadcasting thereby bringing an end to the Radio Commission.

In many ways, "the Parliamentary session of 1935 was really the beginning of the election campaign;" according to H. Blair Neatby, "the members knew that Parliament was in its fifth year, with a mandatory election to follow and, in this session, partisan considerations were accentuated because the Conservative party faced probable defeat."<sup>99</sup> Canadians were now accustomed to hearing politicians campaign on radio but the pronouncements which R. B. Bennett made, beginning in January, 1935, represented a bold, new use of the medium. The so called New Deal broadcasts by Bennett comprised a series of five radio addresses which were collectively entitled "The Premier speaks to the People."<sup>100</sup> These broadcasts occurred over a ten day period from January second, when the

First one was aired, to January eleventh, the date of Bennett's fifth radio address. They originated in the Ottawa studio of station CRCO, which was owned by the Radio Commission, and were carried on thirty-eight other stations, the vast majority of them privately-owned.<sup>101</sup> As Ernest Watkins has noted, "by the time the fifth talk was delivered, it was estimated that some 8,000,000 Canadians were listening."<sup>102</sup> Bennett personally paid about ten-thousand dollars to buy time on the stations; he also spent one thousand dollars advertising the talks in newspapers across the country.<sup>103</sup> In his radio addresses, Bennett proposed a list of economic reforms which, in the words of A. R. M. Lower, were "a forcefully pronounced burial service for the capitalist system" and made the Prime Minister appear to many, in his own party, to be a "Tory Trotsky."<sup>104</sup> The Prime Minister was obviously influenced by the success which some American politicians, notably Franklin Delano Roosevelt, were now having in their radio conversations with the electorate. In his "fireside chats", Roosevelt would begin with the warm introduction "My friends;" what followed would be a superb radio performance by a master politician.<sup>105</sup> Roosevelt used radio as radio and his technique presaged the decline of platform oratory in American politics.

The year 1935 also saw significant regional uses of radio by politicians, notably William Aberhart, who led the Social Credit party to power on August 22nd.<sup>106</sup> Radio had been his principal weapon in building the political movement between 1932 and 1935. On a program entitled "the Prophetic Bible Conference", Aberhart a radio evangelist would often mix religious and political messages in his radio lectures.<sup>107</sup> He had a distinctive on air style and, at times, seemed to nearly croon his speeches - a technique that caused him to be described as "the Rudy Vallee of

politics."<sup>108</sup> Unlike most politicians of his day, Aberhart recognized the importance of brief broadcasts. Thus he purchased five and ten minute segments, on stations CJCA in Edmonton and CFCN in Calgary, to capture audiences through frequent but shorter announcements as opposed to the half hour political broadcasts normally heard. In the words of John A. Irving, "the most effective medium of propaganda" for Aberhart was his "use of the radio."<sup>109</sup>

Bennett was not as fortunate partly because his program of reform came so late in his term of office and partly because he alienated the hierarchy of his party by appealing directly to the people. Still the broadcasts had made an enormous impact on the Canadian public. The subsequent election demonstrated another way in which radio could affect the political process. The campaign which followed in the fall of 1935 introduced political soap opera to Canadian radio in the form of "Mr. Sage."<sup>110</sup> The argumentative Mr. Sage, who was portrayed by actors, had admiration for the Tories but a sharp distaste for the Grits. The first of these political dramas originated in a studio of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission at 805 Davenport Road in Toronto and the national radio hookup, which carried the broadcast, included five other stations owned by the CRBC.<sup>111</sup> Mackenzie King had been deeply upset at this use of radio, by his Conservative opponents, and is alleged to have stated that, if returned to office, he would put an end to this form of political dramatization.<sup>112</sup>

The Liberals and all other parties in 1935 did not have access to any free time broadcasts. Instead all political broadcasting was on a commercial basis and Cockfield, Brown Advertising of Montreal arranged whatever national or regional broadcasts the Liberals provided in their

campaign. If a party wished to have its leader heard over a chain of stations, it made such a request to the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission which could provide its own stations for political broadcasts. Time could be bought by the parties, on both CRBC and private stations, depending where each party wished to relay its message.<sup>113</sup> R. B. Bennett kicked off his formal campaign with a national radio address from Ottawa on September 6th and nine days later spoke to a national audience, in a radio speech from Toronto, before taking his campaign to western Canada. In these talks, Bennett reiterated the Conservative party's traditional belief in the policy of tariff protection.<sup>114</sup> In a national radio address, Mackenzie King replied to Bennett on September 17th noting that, "instead of aiming at the expansion of trade", Bennett was actually proposing "further restrictions on trade."<sup>115</sup> Because of the cost factor involved, the two old line parties seemed to have made the most use of radio in 1935 especially on a national basis. Coast to coast broadcasts, at this time, cost approximately two thousand dollars an hour or thirty-three dollars a minute which meant that the CCF and the Reconstruction party, led by H. H. Stevens, were placed at a disadvantage.<sup>116</sup> Their party coffers were not as plentiful, but they did attempt to capitalize on local radio coverage of rallies. On October 8th, CFPL radio in London broadcast a Reconstruction party meeting attended by Stevens who had staged an intensive campaign in western Ontario.<sup>117</sup> Stevens' party had its equivalent in the United States.<sup>118</sup> There Reverend Charles Coughlin, who was known as the "radio priest", provided dramatic illustration of how a stirring radio performance could shatter the status quo in politics, much like Aberhart had done in Canada.<sup>119</sup> His radio addresses, which attacked the established Democratic and Republican parties, underlined for politicians

such as Mackenzie King the impact of the medium on the political process.<sup>120</sup> Alan Plaunt would soon capitalize on King's concern about the effective use of radio by leaders of protest movements and how the medium had injured him personally in 1935. Yet the Reconstruction party in Canada never managed a high level of communication with the electorate through radio - nor at the polls. As J. M. Beck has explained, "the Reconstruction party turned out to be an eastern party."<sup>121</sup> The CCF fared only slightly better in the 1935 campaign and was no more effective on radio. Although a solid performer in the House of Commons which suited his speaking style, J. S. Woodsworth, the CCF leader, did not always adjust well to radio's time constraints. During one recording session in a Vancouver station, Woodsworth angrily tossed his prepared text in the air and lamented that he "couldn't do any more of this."<sup>122</sup> An extemporaneous speaker, Woodsworth was just one of a number of politicians who found the transition from platform oratory to the more intimate style of radio to be exceedingly difficult.

When the Liberals were back in office on October 14, 1935, Mackenzie King was determined to bring about change in the form of political broadcasts aired during election campaigns. The 1936 Commons Committee on broadcasting was intended to examine the state of radio in the country and the question of political broadcasting.<sup>123</sup> From Alan Plaunt's standpoint, these circumstances were highly favourable because the "Mr. Sage" affair hastened the end of the Commission.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, King took a new interest in the subject of radio and was open to suggestions on how the present broadcasting system could be organized. Plaunt was not one to let this kind of occasion elude him. In fact, early in 1935, he had already begun to step up his activity in the corridors of Parliament among

both Liberals and Conservatives. Significantly, at this time, Graham Spry, the Radio League's co-founder, had shown little interest in any kind of revival of the League, a situation which Plaunt related to their mutual friend Brooke Claxton:

You will notice that I have objected to the idea of reviving the League until after the election. I rather think however, that it might be worth the while of some of us who are most interested in the project to co-operate privately with the Liberals, but I do not wish to proceed until I get your opinion. I have discussed the matter in a cursory way with Graham, but he is no longer very interested.<sup>125</sup>

Plaunt also wrote to Claxton on February 1st noting that Vincent Massey, the President of the National Liberal Federation, had discussed his proposals for broadcasting reorganization with Mackenzie King and W. D. Euler, a highly respected Ontario member of the Liberal caucus:

Massey's idea is that I should see Euler, discuss the matter thoroughly with him, and leave with him confidential memoranda criticizing the set-up and the results that have followed, and outlining in some detail the principles and methods that should be adopted. I am proceeding with this and will also prepare an outline of the history of the agitation leading up to the Act of 1932 so that our part will be made sufficiently clear. Later on it will be necessary to draft detailed proposals including the actual individuals who might be secured for a voluntary Board, and help draft a new Act for them, should they see fit to do anything after the election.<sup>126</sup>

Early in 1935 Plaunt had also explained to C. A. Bowman why he felt the House of Commons and not the Radio League was the only way to further his objectives. In a letter to Bowman, on January 24, Plaunt showed the importance he attached to newspaper support in his radio campaign:

Apart from its use as a partisan weapon, the present radio set-up cannot be made a popular issue at the present time. Between now and



the election other issues will have a prior command on the attention of the public and the newspapers. The newspapers themselves, though not entirely in sympathy with the Commission, nevertheless recognize that it has curbed radio advertising, and I feel that nothing short of a threat of abolishing the Commission will arouse them to a vigorous support of reorganization. Furthermore, the listeners are almost universally disgruntled.<sup>127</sup>

Plaunt was uneasy about the lack of support from some newspapers, if the League's proposals were pushed too hard with an election in the offing. But after the campaign the circumstances would be quite different, opening the way for newspapers, aligned with both major parties, to back his reorganization campaign.

In other words, the issue would inevitably become a partisan one, whereas the Radio League depends for its strength on being non partisan. For example, a newspaper, such as the "Mail and Empire", could not before the election, support proposals for reorganization of the broadcasting system which would necessarily be tied up with the Opposition's attack on the present Government. After the election the situation would, however, be completely different. Actual proposals for reorganization could then be considered on their own merit and I have no doubt that the newspapers would support them especially (as will undoubtedly be the case) if an agitation is launched to bring about the abolition of the Commission. This applies to the Radio League also. After the election, proposals for reform could be supported on their merits and I see no reason why the League could not be reorganized at that time should the need arise.<sup>128</sup>

Plaunt frequently seemed to be a step or two ahead of both the politicians and opinion leaders, on the radio question, as his letter to Bowman indicated.

In the months prior to the 1935 election campaign, Plaunt began trying to win over Mackenzie King to his concept of public broadcasting and, in

this regard, Vincent Massey was an important ally. As he explained to Gladstone Murray in a letter written on April 24th:

It all depends, as I mentioned in my letter, on getting King committed in advance, before the election, and the person most likely to accomplish that improbable aim is V.M.<sup>129</sup>

Plaunt also showed that he had a healthy skepticism toward politicians especially when they were seeking the public's endorsement. He informed Murray that he was uncertain about the extent of the overtures made to Massey to bring King on side:

Some attempt has been made in that direction. I know, but how great or how persistent I do not know. The tenor of Massey's reply to you might give me an inkling. These politicians get awfully cagey around election time, you know. It might be worth your while to remember that V. M. is a politician also. I say this in the friendliest spirit. We are all politicians in a way, I suppose.<sup>130</sup>

In this letter, Plaunt brought Murray up to date on his Commons activity and, as always, had an eye on the future:

I am sending under separate cover copy of Hansard of April 16, containing some of Mr. Euler and Co's debating points, based, entre nous, on information I supplied him. For your very confidential information, I have been working one, on supplying V. M. and Co with material of attack, and two, in supplying them with material on which to base a policy more in accordance with your, and our original recs. With a decent machine, and you to run it, much could even yet be done.<sup>131</sup>

On May 16, Plaunt was able to tell Murray the names of the Liberals who would spearhead the drive for radio reorganization:

The people who will handle the reorganization will be King, Euler, Massey, Lapointe, possibly Ilsley, and I think they have all been reasonably sold on the lines to be followed. Further their criticism in the House commits them to something non-partisan.<sup>132</sup>

Plaunt also agreed with Murray that the Liberals should be convinced of the political advantages of a revamped broadcasting structure:

I think your tactics are good, to stress the political value of such a step. I have taken every occasion that offered to do the same thing, viz. that it would be a tremendous feather in the cap of a new administration, and that, under your direction and adequate finance, much could rapidly be done to efface the impression created by the present outfit.<sup>133</sup>

The 1935 election on October 14 saw the return of the Liberals with a majority government; their 171 seats were, however, obtained with only 45 percent of the popular vote.<sup>134</sup> Yet the King government did, in its first year, convey "the impression of effective leadership."<sup>135</sup> Vincent Massey received his reward after the election and was sent to England as Canadian High Commissioner, a position he held between 1935 and 1946.<sup>136</sup> Massey's support of Plaunt's efforts, and his determination to have radio in Canada reorganized, did not diminish after his arrival in London. In December, 1935, Gladstone Murray wrote to Plaunt telling him of new developments on the radio issue:

V. M. rang me up on Sunday saying he must see me Monday so I adjusted arrangements to lunch with him. He opened up at once about Canadian radio, recounting in minute detail a good deal of what you have already told me. I listened to it all as though hearing it for the first time. He thinks that you and I are rather distant acquaintances so I let the idea stick.<sup>137</sup>

Although Murray had already been informed by Plaunt of much that he was told, he probed Massey for additional information:

What he led up to was the question was I prepared to go to Canada, was my attitude the same now as it was last March? I thought it wise to join in the game of fencing because he was offering nothing. So I asked what was going to happen. He said Parliamentary Committee two or three months enquiry and probe - decision probably in April.<sup>138</sup>

While Plaunt was aware of most of these future developments, he learned from Murray that Massey was making overtures to C. D. Howe, the new Minister of Marine and a newcomer to the Commons, having been elected for the constituency of Port Arthur in 1935.<sup>139</sup> Also Murray wanted the government's policy to coincide with what Plaunt had suggested in his earlier proposals for a new radio scheme:

He seems anxious to get something arranged and is communicating with Howe. Of course I do not intend to be unreasonable in trying to exact pledges or anything of that sort. If he will get authority to define government policy with some precision, and if this is based upon your representations, I shall be content to wait on "spec".<sup>140</sup>

Murray also informed Plaunt that Massey was dead against the involvement of Spry and Bowman in the organizing of support for new broadcasting legislation but that he, Plaunt, was looked upon with great favour:

Incidentally he has an irrational prejudice against both Graham Spry and C. A. Bowman - heritage of the Election, presumably. He has changed a lot in the last three years. But he will be helpful. You stand very high. Better keep this to yourself for the most part.<sup>141</sup>

Before the year 1935 had ended, Plaunt held two sessions with C. D. Howe, on December 27 and 29; and, during these meetings with the Minister of Marine, discussed a twenty-four page memorandum he had prepared on radio reorganization. Plaunt proposed a public corporation "which combines the greatest possible degree of flexibility and independence parliament will concede with Parliamentary control of major policy."<sup>142</sup> As he had done in his submission to the 1934 Broadcasting Committee, Plaunt informed the minister that there should be a board as a "buffer" to protect the executive of the corporation from partisan influences and also "a single chief executive" was required for the operation of the Corporation.<sup>143</sup>

As Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn have written:

Plaunt left with the minister enthusiastically asking him to outline draft legislation for a strong radio authority and to suggest possible personnel for its government body.<sup>144</sup>

These same authors have noted that Howe, a new minister at the time, was almost groping for policy and this probably made Plaunt's task of winning him over that much easier:

Howe had no considered views or principles on the matter, and was an easy mark for a crisply presented brief from someone whom he judged competent. Besides, he knew that Norman Lambert and Vincent Massey, as well as a couple of his cabinet colleagues, were Radio League members; and that the Prime Minister was already committed to public control of broadcasting.<sup>145</sup>

As the year 1936 began, Plaunt again had built up an impressive network of contacts to bolster his plans for reorganization. Although removed physically from the day to day workings of Parliament, Vincent Massey, who was now in England, was still very much a Plaunt ally. Massey continued to take an active interest in the radio question and had conferred frequently with Gladstone Murray who, as noted earlier, kept Plaunt informed on the content and tone of their conversations. Moreover Massey was often in contact with cabinet ministers, among them, C. D. Howe who had urged the Canadian High Commissioner to discuss with Murray the possibility of him becoming General Manager of the public corporation which Plaunt had proposed.<sup>146</sup> Thus Massey, who had recommended C. A. Bowman and Sir John Aird to serve on the first federal enquiry into broadcasting, never lost his enthusiasm for public broadcasting and continued to exert influence on the government even from a distance.

A less remote ally of Plaunt was his friend Edward Pickering, Mackenzie King's assistant private secretary, who had been with King in Opposition

and now was serving in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).<sup>147</sup> Access to the Prime Minister would be important as the Government prepared fresh legislation on the subject of radio and so Pickering, who shared Plaunt's radio views, was certainly a valuable asset. Both young men wanted "an independent national, public broadcasting agency" because they felt that "independence from the Americans was something of vital concern to Canada."<sup>148</sup> According to Pickering, King was "generally interested in the problem of what was to happen to broadcasting in Canada", especially after the "Mr. Sage" affair, and he saw that "what Alan Plaunt was trying to do was consistent with the philosophy of the Liberal party."<sup>149</sup> The subject of broadcasting "formed an important item of business in the first session after the election of 1935" which lasted from the beginning of February to late June.<sup>150</sup> Perhaps most important of all from Plaunt's standpoint was Pickering's first hand knowledge of the workings of the PMO and the Prime Minister's daily political habits. Recalling the early mandarins, Pickering underlined the important roles played by such noted individuals as O. D. Skelton, the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs; Clifford Clark, the Deputy Minister of Finance; and Dana Wilgress, who became the Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce.<sup>151</sup> Thus Pickering served as an important channel of communication for Plaunt and both were to combine to influence the proceedings of the 1936 Commons Broadcasting Committee prior to the establishment of the CBC.

It is interesting that Plaunt, who was only thirty-two years of age at the time, could have become such an influential figure. Pickering attributes some of Plaunt's success, in this regard, to the social environment in Ottawa at the time. "Ottawa was a small place then and the Plaunt family was well known in Ottawa and Mackenzie King would know

that."<sup>152</sup> At the time he was urging King to opt for a publicly-owned broadcasting system, Plaunt saw King about half a dozen times, but "he never went to the well too often."<sup>153</sup> Plaunt seemed to have sensed King's reluctance to receive delegations in his office which was generally devoid of technical organizational efficiency. King was not only a difficult Prime Minister to work for, but also over worked his small personal staff.<sup>154</sup> After the 1935 federal election, King was on the lookout for a talented Principal Secretary - a position later filled by Arnold Heenev - and at one time offered a secretarial post to Plaunt.<sup>155</sup> His reaction to this 'dubious honour' was expressed in a letter to Gladstone Murray on February 25, 1936:

I am going to tell you something which I must ask you to regard as a confidence in the strictest sense. I was recently invited by WLMK personally to become his private sec. During the course of an eminently amiable interview I told him that while I was extremely flattered by the offer, I felt it was "my duty and obligation" to see that the public point of view was adequately represented at the forthcoming parliamentary committee. I explained to him that attempts would undoubtedly be made by private interests to discredit the principle by attacking the record of the present commission, and that much of the work of co-ordinating and focussing the public opinion represented by the League had fallen to me.<sup>156</sup>

According to Plaunt, he had received an honest hearing from King just a few months before new broadcasting legislation was introduced:

He was most interested and sympathetic - surprisingly so, I thought. If nothing else, it was a marvellous opportunity to get the radio issue before him. I don't believe he has really thought about it since 1932. Subsequently he wrote me a very nice, and flattering letter.<sup>157</sup>

This correspondence with Murray also showed that Plaunt was a young man

not without considerable ego and ambition:

What I did not tell him, of course, was that what I really wanted to do, assuming a decent re-organization with you at its head, was to join in the great venture in an active way, but I am certain now that if you want to take me on - and I hope you will, not in any way feel obligated to do so, he will prove no obstacle.<sup>158</sup>

Plaunt felt it important that he should not appear to be actively seeking a position with any new broadcasting agency that might be established:

Obviously, it would be folly for me to have it that I was job-seeking; and I would hate such a suggestion. The important thing is to get a long-term job of work completed. That in itself should provide food for the ego. As I think I mentioned before; however, I should certainly look forward to serving as public relations as that corresponds most closely to my assorted experience, and will be the post most obviously vacant when the new regime takes over. Friend Buchanan has arranged all that.<sup>159</sup>

Donald Buchanan, the son of Senator W. A. Buchanan, publisher of The Lethbridge Herald, was later to join the CBC as Director of Talks and Public Affairs Broadcasts.<sup>160</sup>

In February, 1936, Plaunt also explained to Murray that C. D. Howe was showing more enthusiasm for the reorganization scheme whereby the proposed Corporation would not only be able to operate its own network but also regulate the private stations. Earlier in the year, Howe had shown signs of backing away from this proposal Plaunt had put forth and which was contained in a draft bill, for the Minister, prepared by himself and Brooke Claxton. Howe had objected because he began to see the Plaunt-Claxton plan as giving "the public company a virtual monopoly."<sup>161</sup> However just prior to the establishment of the 1936 Commons Broadcasting Committee, Plaunt took some credit for altering the minister's thinking.



He explained the results of an interview with Howe, toward the end of February, in the following way:

I found his attitude to the question of giving the Corporation adequate powers over the private stations much more amenable to change than it had been some time ago. For this I attribute my memorandum pointing out the implications of the proposal to place regulation and control in the department, a visit from John W. Dafoe, and a growing suspicion that CPE is not altogether to be trusted.<sup>162</sup>

The letters "CPE", in Plaunt's letter, referred to Commander C. P. Edwards, the Director of Radio in the Department of Marine, and ally of the owners of private stations. Edwards felt that the regulation of stations should rest with the Minister, but Plaunt objected strongly to the division of "the control of Canadian broadcasting between the national broadcasting authority and a government department."<sup>163</sup> Now Plaunt could report to Murray that he had made progress:

He authorized Claxton and I to revise the departmental draft, which is to be used as a sort of unofficial-official basis of discussion, so as to endow the proposed corporation with the powers we consider absolutely essential to its success. If agreed, our revised draft will be the basis of the committee's discussion.<sup>164</sup>

Plaunt also told Murray that "the committee has not yet been named, but will be any day now."<sup>165</sup> He was sure that "Howe will not be chairman, but will sit in at the chairman's elbow, and hopes to guide the discussion to his own satisfaction."<sup>166</sup> As to strategy before the Commons Committee, he explained to Murray:

If Howe and Co. take the approved line, we will be of great assistance in putting their scheme across; but if they persist in the heresy re regulation and control, we will be obliged, politely but firmly, to show them the error of their ways.<sup>167</sup>

By mid-March, Mackenzie King was of the opinion that the radio question was vital to the future of the country. Apparently Plaunt's visits to King's office had had some impact. King's diary, on March 14, shows him giving considerable thought to the makeup of the 1936 Broadcasting Committee:

At Council by 11:15. We had a fairly good discussion on Radio Committee. I stressed importance of it in getting abler men on the committee, added Mackenzie, Cardin along with Howe. It had been "a job lot" - "left-overs", "N.O.P's" as some one said. Also modified resolution to cut out the paragraphs re "the sage" etc., done evidently to meet what was thought to be my wish. I pointed out the radio problem likely to be our most important one for years to come and real need for able men. Question of Gov't or private ownership and control to be considered, question of federal fees and provincial jurisdiction, enter in part and international problems - administrative and political considerations - educational-cultural features, elections; etc., etc. Got revision in names and in references.<sup>168</sup>

The 1936 Committee appointed five days later, on March 19th was to examine the operations of the CRBC and the administration of the 1932 Broadcasting Act. It was also to look at the question of political broadcasting and to determine if "any abuse of broadcasting privileges, either for political or advertising purposes" had occurred.<sup>169</sup> Not surprisingly, the "Mr. Sage" broadcasts, which had offended King greatly, received a thorough examination by the Committee.<sup>170</sup> Although the Liberals were firmly back in power and King had seen to it that the proper members were on the Committee, its proceedings did not always go according to plan. In fact, King's secretary, Edward Pickering, with the help of Plaunt, was actually prevailed upon by the Prime Minister to rescue the Committee.<sup>171</sup>

From the start of its proceedings, Plaunt had been an influential

backstage presence forwarding questions to Committee members, among them, Paul Martin, the newly elected Liberal Member for Essex East. Martin, who was sympathetic to the Radio League's proposals for broadcasting reorganization, was one of the leading questioners for his party. In early April, Plaunt informed Martin that representatives of the Canadian Press would be appearing before the Committee and suggested a particular line of questioning to favour the League's position:

The great majority of the newspapers know that the question of news or advertising control cannot be considered apart from the general question of public ownership and control. But since there is some division of opinion, a Canadian Press delegation must necessarily confine its brief to non-controversial questions. Because of this it occurred to me that you should ask Mr. Livesay, the General Manager, Mr. Preston, the President, or Mr. Bowman questions designed to elicit the necessary connection. For example, the newspapers are quite satisfied with the Commission's treatment of them in the matter of regulations, and would be opposed to placing the regulatory power in a government department.<sup>172</sup>

Plaunt naturally followed the day to day workings of the Committee closely and a few weeks prior to his own appearance, on May 7th, was involved with Pickering in directing the proceedings along the lines Mackenzie King preferred.

Pickering had returned to Canada in mid-April after a trip to the West Indies. A day or so later, King called him into the office to explain that the Broadcasting Committee, which was now well into its proceedings, was not taking the right course.<sup>173</sup> "He told me that it had gotten off the rails", Pickering remembered, "and that it would be bringing in a report that was much more what the private interests wanted rather than something along the basic lines of the Aird Report."<sup>174</sup> Naturally this displeased King who favoured the scheme that Plaunt had proposed whereby a public,

corporation would be in charge of all broadcasting. According to Pickering, King thought that the committee was reflecting largely the thinking of Howe, the Minister of Marine, and that the time had come to rectify the situation.<sup>175</sup> King gave Pickering "the rather unenviable job of working behind the scenes" with the chairman of the committee, A. L. Beaubien, the Liberal Member for Provencher, "to get the committee back in the sense of a commitment to a public concept."<sup>176</sup> King had made it quite clear to Pickering that he did not want to intervene with the Minister directly. In Pickering's words, "this was a favourite technique of Mackenzie King's."<sup>177</sup> Pickering's first move, after receiving his instructions from King, was to contact Plaunt and "to get him to fill me in on what had happened in the Committee."<sup>178</sup> He was aware that Plaunt had been attending all the Committee's hearings. "When I got the story as Alan saw it", said Pickering, "I then had a session with Mr. Beaubien and my recollection is that Beaubien shared Mr. King's misgivings."<sup>179</sup> Pickering's interpretation of the divisions among the members of the 1936 Committee appears to be accurate in light of the correspondence, between him and King, prior to the Committee submitting its report. On May 18th, Pickering informed King of the following:

In a confidential memorandum, prepared by Mr. Howe and Mr. Beaubien, I saw one major discrepancy with the Radio League representations: The League attached great importance to the new corporation having control of wave lengths, power, and allocation of stations, regulations, etc. Mr. Beaubien's memorandum proposes giving this power to the Minister. In conversation, Mr. Beaubien agreed that this might prove a serious obstacle in the way of realizing a national system of radio as envisaged by the Aird Report.<sup>180</sup>

This "one major discrepancy", of course referred to the "divided authority"

which Plaunt had steadfastly sought to avoid in his radio proposals.<sup>181</sup>

Pickering also informed King that there was by no means unanimous support among committee members for the League's proposals:

I saw Mr. Martin this morning. He is in favour of the Radio League recommendations in every particular. From private conversations he feels that certain of the leading Members of the Committee are pretty much opposed to some features of the Radio League recommendations.<sup>182</sup>

Pickering recalled that Beaubien had begun "with some assistance from me to try to put this thing back" on the rails, "and this process took a number of weeks and during that course of time I talked with Alan quite a bit."<sup>183</sup> Pickering attributed to Plaunt two motives which help to explain the reasons for his deep interest in what happened to Canadian broadcasting:

I'm basing this on what Alan and I talked about and not necessarily on what he wrote in letters to Mackenzie King but he was interested in a separate Canadian identity. He was a nationalist and wanted minimum ties with Britain and minimum ties with the United States. He thought this type of a broadcasting authority could help Canada achieve its own identity, its own independence as a nation. He was just as afraid of becoming dependent on American radio as he was concerned about political involvement with the U.K. in foreign policy and so on. That, I think, was perhaps his number one motive.<sup>184</sup>

The second motive, according to Pickering, had more to do with the kind of cultural identity he hoped that Canada would one day possess:

He was very interested in painting and other aspects of art particularly Canadian art and he wanted to see the cultural resources of this country developed. He felt that a properly led broadcasting corporation could encourage and nurture Canadian culture, which we call it today. I don't think we talked about culture in those days.<sup>185</sup>

Plaunt led a delegation representing the Canadian Radio League before the 1936 Committee on May 7th. Brooke Claxton and Father Henri St. Denis, a professor of philosophy at the University of Ottawa, also appeared with him. Plaunt was grilled by committee members as to the exact number of supporters the Radio League could claim and, at one stage, facetiously remarked that "it was estimated at one time as 40,000,000."<sup>186</sup> To this statement, committee member C. R. McIntosh remarked, "our population must have gone up since the new government came into power."<sup>187</sup> It fell to Claxton to expose the true makeup of the Radio League once and for all. "If you mean in the sense of paid-up annual membership, it has none," he told the committee, "it never has had any." It was brought into existence in 1930 for the purpose of developing interest in national broadcasting, and it has been kept alive or been continued in existence since just for that purpose."<sup>188</sup> While the League's credibility may have been somewhat tarnished by this admission, Plaunt still sought to impress upon committee members the importance of a publicly owned broadcasting system "with a Board of representative citizens commanding the confidence and respect of all parties and all sections of the community."<sup>189</sup> He made a high-minded appeal to the committee stressing the importance of broadcasting as a national unifier:

From a long-term point of view the advantages are so obvious as scarcely to require repetition. With a national chain and national control, Canada's destiny is in her own hands, the integrity of her twin cultures can be preserved and sustained, and whatever she has of distinctive value contributed to the world. Without it, our dream of a united nation "from the sea even unto the sea", is meaningless and cannot be realized. A national broadcasting system is as important to the continued existence of Canada as an independent nation in the twentieth century as transcontinental railways were to its inception in the nineteenth.<sup>190</sup>

The Broadcasting Committee presented its report to the House of Commons on May 26th. The unanimous report recommended that a new corporation be established and "directed as to policy by a non-partisan board of nine directors or governors, chosen to give representation to all parts of Canada."<sup>191</sup> The committee also made a number of recommendations which clamped tight restrictions on political broadcasts, which was hardly surprising, because the spectre of "Mr. Sage" had hung over the committee from the start.<sup>192</sup> Together with the proposal to establish the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which was invested with regulatory powers as well, these were embodied in a bill introduced on June 15th. It received second and third reading on June 19th with Mackenzie King noting in his diary that the CBC bill "went through almost without discussion."<sup>193</sup> Although Professor Neatby has noted that King exaggerated the importance of the session, which ended on June 23, the Prime Minister was obviously pleased with the new broadcasting legislation.<sup>194</sup> "The session just concluded has been, I believe the finest in the history of Canada - the most important and significant", he wrote, "the Canada Bank Act revised to give Govt. control, Railway directorate with Govt. authority increased" and the "Radio Commission improved."<sup>195</sup> Alan Plaunt too was delighted with the results of what had been achieved. In June, he wrote the following to Gladstone Murray:

All in all the situation, even for a super cautious like me, looks really very hopeful. The legislation is more than my fondest hopes could have pictured five, even two months ago. The papers are taking you up as, probably, the one broadcasting executive in the English speaking world who could put the new venture across; and most of the people who count in the government are sold on the same proposition.<sup>196</sup>

Plaunt described the hearings of the Broadcasting Committee as "an extraordinary experience of intrigue, bamboozling, publicizing, (and worse), but it has been successful and very much worth the effort."<sup>197</sup> In anticipation of future developments, he saw himself joining the board of governors of the CBC, but was characteristically hesitant about publicizing his ambitions:

A word with regard to myself. Please do not make any mention that you would like to have me with you on the staff, not now in any event. I am more than likely to be invited to take a place on the Board, and this I can quite properly accept, but I do not wish to be thought to be seeking office. Due to some references I made in my submission with regard to the Commission's public relations, certain persons on the staff think I was trying to undermine their jobs. This is of course ridiculous, the submission obviously had to be objective, but I detest the mere mention that I have worked on this project in order to get a job out of it.<sup>198</sup>

Plaunt may have wanted to appear restrained publicly, but privately there is little doubt that he hoped to be part of the empire building that lay ahead. Although the Broadcasting Act of 1936 was not proclaimed law until November 2nd, the date the new Department of Transport came into existence, the second stage of public broadcasting in Canada had already begun.<sup>199</sup>



## CHAPTER VII

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 156-163, 187.

<sup>2</sup> Reverend John E. O'Brien, "A History of the Canadian Radio League 1930-1936" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southern California, 1964), 314.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Archives (CBCA), Ottawa, CRBC Files, Description of the origin of "The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission", 12.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, René Landry, Ottawa, January 25, 1980. Bennett wanted a French-speaking commissioner and a radio engineer on the CRBC.

<sup>5</sup> CBCA, CRBC Files, "The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission", 11.

<sup>6</sup> E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 138.

<sup>7</sup> Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 109.

<sup>8</sup> Brooke Claxton Papers, PAC, Gladstone Murray to Brooke Claxton, December 28, 1932.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

18 CBCA, Gladstone Murray's Report on "National Radio in Canada,"  
Murray to René Landry, July 25, 1933.

19 Ibid., 2.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 5.

22 Ibid., 6.

23 Ibid., 5.

24 Ibid., 4.

25 Ibid.

26 E. A. Corbett, We Have With Us Tonight (Toronto, 1957), 59.

27 CBCA, Gladstone Murray's Report on "National Radio in Canada", 9.

28 Ibid., 10.

29 Ibid., 11.

30 Ibid.

31 CBCA, CRBC Files, "The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission,"  
13. By 1936 the Commission's national network consisted of seven CRBC  
stations and 50 private stations.

32 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-  
1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 95.

33 Ibid.

34 CBCA, Gladstone Murray's Report on "National Radio in Canada",  
12-13.

35 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951  
(Toronto, 1969), 135.

36 CBCA, Gladstone Murray's Report on "National Radio in Canada",  
15.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 16.

39 House of Commons, Debates, May 18, 1932, 3035-6.

40 R. B. Bennett Papers, PAC (Microfilm), Bennett to Alfred Duranleau, April 13, 1934, 365695, M-1293.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 92-100. - Allard has noted that "the 1934 Broadcasting Committee received an astonishing number of complaints from listeners concerning interference." Many of them "complained about interference newly created by Canadian stations to the reception of their favourite U.S. signals."

47 Brooke Claxton Papers, Canadian Radio League, "Memorandum Submitted by the Canadian Radio League to the Special Committee on the operations of the Commission Under the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, 1932", May 2, 1934.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 61.

51 Brooke Claxton Papers, "Memorandum Submitted by the Canadian Radio League to the Special Committee on the operations of the Commission Under the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, 1932", May 2, 1934.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 CBCA, Gladstone Murray's Report on "National Radio in Canada",  
5.

60 Brooke Claxton Papers, "Memorandum Submitted by the Canadian Radio League to the Special Committee on the operations of the Commission Under the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, 1932", May 2, 1934.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Alan B. Plaunt, "Radio Broadcasting", The Canadian Forum (May, 1934), 323.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

67 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada, Toronto, 1965), 159.

68 Ibid.

69 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto 1969), 149.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 PAC, Minutes of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, May 1, 1934, 175.

73 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 149.

74 CBCA, Gladstone Murray's Report on "National Radio in Canada", 25.

75 Ibid.

76 PAC, Minutes of the CRBC, May 1, 1934, 175.

77 K. Z. Paltiel and L. G. Kjoska, "The Structure and Dimensions of Election Broadcasting in Canada" in Jahrbuch Des Offentlichen Rechts Der Gegenwart (Tubingen, 1970), vol. 1, 358.

78 PAC, Minutes of the CRBC, May 1, 1934, 175.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., 176.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 148.

86 Ibid.

87 PAC, Minutes of the CRBC, May 1, 1934, 175. This meeting was the 64th held by the Commission and includes five pages of minutes, 174-178.

88 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 146.

89 Ibid., 147.

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Merrill Denison, "Radio in Canada", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CLXXVII (January, 1935), 51.
- 94 Ibid., 53.
- 95 Ibid., 54.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television", (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1976), 28.
- 99 H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King: The Prism of Unity 1932-1939, vol. III (Toronto and Buffalo, 1976), 90.
- 100 Ernest Watkins, R. B. Bennett: A Biography (Toronto, 1963), 215.
- 101 Ibid., 220.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television", (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1976), 26.
- 104 A. R. M. Lower, Colony to Nation, 5th ed. rev. (Toronto, 1977), 519. For an analysis of Bennett's broadcasts see Donald Forster and Colin Read, "The Politics of Opportunism: The New Deal Broadcasts," Canadian Historical Review, LX (September, 1979), 324-349.
- 105 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1976), 26.
- 106 John A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto, 1959), 3.
- 107 Ibid., 27.
- 108 Interview, T. J. Allard, July 21, 1975.

- 109 John A. Irving, The Social Credit Movement in Alberta (Toronto, 1959), 342.
- 110 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario), 26.
- 111 Mackenzie King Papers, PAC (microfilm), Edward Pickering to Mackenzie King, January 22, 1936, C140963-C140964, C-4278.
- 112 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 201-202.
- 113 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 165.
- 114 London Free Press, September 7, 1935 and September 16, 1935.
- 115 Ibid., September 18, 1935.
- 116 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario), 14.
- 117 London Free Press, September 18, 1935. This article noted that the broadcast would be aired between 7:30 and 9 p.m. and that all regional Reconstruction candidates would be in attendance.
- 118 Globe and Mail, October 29, 1979.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Ibid.
- 121 J. M. Beck, Pendulum of Power: Canada's Federal Elections (Scarborough, 1968), 215-216.
- 122 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, PAC, Interview Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.
- 123 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario), 29.
- 124 Ibid., 28.

- 125 Brooke Claxton Papers, Alan Plaunt to Claxton, January 24, 1935.
- 126 Ibid., February 1, 1935.
- 127 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, UBC, Plaunt to C. A. Bowman, January 24, 1935.
- 128 Ibid.
- 129 Ibid., Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, April 24, 1935.
- 130 Ibid.
- 131 Ibid.
- 132 Ibid., May 16, 1936.
- 133 Ibid.
- 134 Donald Creighton, Canada's First Century 1867-1967 (Toronto, 1970), 210 and Murray Beck, Pendulum of Power: Canada's Federal Elections (Scarborough, 1968), 220.
- 135 H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King: the Prism of Unity 1932-1939 vol. III, (Toronto and Buffalo, 1976), 126.
- 136 Ibid., 121.
- 137 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Gladstone Murray to Plaunt, December 24, 1935.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourne, C. D. Howe: a biography (Toronto, 1979), 62.
- 140 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Murray to Plaunt, December 24, 1935.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1979), 168-169.
- 143 Ibid.



144 Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, C. D. Howe: a biography (Toronto, 1979), 101.

145 Ibid.

146 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 170.

147 Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid.

150 Ibid.

151 Ibid., and for further details of the careers of the mandarins during this period, see J. L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins 1935-1957 (Toronto, 1982), 1-18.

152 Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King: The Prism of Unity 1932-1939, vol. III (Toronto and Buffalo), 263. Professor Neatby has noted that the position of Principal Secretary "was to be a non-political post, modelled on the position of Sir Maurice Hankey, the Secretary of the cabinet in England."

156 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Murray, February 25, 1936.

157 Ibid.

158 Ibid.

159 Ibid.

160 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 315.

161 Ibid., 170.

- 162 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Murray, February 25, 1936.
- 163 Alan B. Plaunt, "Canadian Radio", Saturday Night (April 4, 1936), 11. In this article, Plaunt strongly opposed the "divided authority" which the department's draft Act envisaged.
- 164 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Murray, February 25, 1936.
- 165 Ibid.
- 166 Ibid.
- 167 Ibid.
- 168 Mackenzie King Diary, PAC, March 14, 1936.
- 169 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 175.
- 170 House of Commons, Special Committee on the Canadian Radio Commission, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 15, April 24, 1936, 128-129.
- 171 Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.
- 172 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Paul Martin, April 4, 1936.
- 173 Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.
- 174 Ibid.
- 175 Ibid.
- 176 Ibid.
- 177 Ibid.
- 178 Ibid.
- 179 Ibid.
- 180 Mackenzie King Papers, Edward Pickering to King, May 18, 1936, C141002, C-4278.

- 181 Alan B. Plaunt, "Canadian Radio", Saturday Night (April 4, 1936),  
11.
- 182 Mackenzie King Papers, Pickering to King, May 18, 1936, C141003.
- 183 Interview Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.
- 184 Ibid.
- 185 Ibid.
- 186 House of Commons, Special Committee on the Canadian Radio Commission, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 11, May 7, 1936, 355.
- 187 Ibid., 356.
- 188 Ibid., 357.
- 189 Ibid., 355.
- 190 Ibid.
- 191 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario), 30.
- 192 Ibid.
- 193 Mackenzie King Diary, June 19, 1936.
- 194 H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King: The Prism of Unity 1932-1939 vol. III (Toronto and Buffalo), 16.
- 195 Mackenzie King Diary, June 28, 1936.
- 196 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Murray, June 10, 1936.
- 197 Ibid.
- 198 Ibid.
- 199 Michael Nolan, "The Evolution of National Policy in Canada with respect to the Party Political Uses of Radio and Television" (M.A. thesis, University of Western Ontario), 30.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Public System Extended

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was now established with the private broadcasters under its regulatory wing. Alan Plaunt had won a major victory, but he was fully aware that the struggle between both broadcasting sectors was about to be renewed. Although they had been regulated by the Corporation's predecessor, the CRBC, the private owners had been granted power increases to improve radio coverage in Canada. The earlier Commission had been forced to rely on the private sector, because its limited funds never permitted the operation of more than seven of its own stations.<sup>1</sup> In light of these developments, it was hardly surprising that the 1936 Broadcasting Committee had recommended that "the Corporation immediately consider ways and means of extending national coverage."<sup>2</sup> Thus the 1936 Act provided that the Corporation should receive the proceeds of a receiving set licence fee of \$2.50 per radio set to cover its operating costs. As well, it was to seek an unspecified amount of advertising revenue and capital funds were to be provided from interest-bearing loans made by the Government.<sup>3</sup> Given the growing strength of the private broadcasters, Plaunt felt that the CBC board should be composed of those individuals who would be able to grasp the implications of public broadcasting and, in particular, the rôle of General Manager had to fall to someone capable of executing properly the board's policy. As noted earlier, Gladstone Murray was Plaunt's first choice for this all important position. These internal appointments were important for the future of public

broadcasting in Canada and they also came at a critical time for the Corporation.

Legislation passed in the 1930s had intended to make dominant the public broadcasting sector. But in numbers, at least, the private stations still had a decided edge. By November, 1936, when the CBC was officially established, there were seventy-four stations in Canada. Of these, the Corporation owned only three and leased time on four others.<sup>4</sup> The structure of the industry had changed after the government had intervened more directly in broadcasting. But the balance of power in the system still rested with private interests. Unlike the early 1930s, when the private stations were a disorganized group, now they were a more cohesive unit. In 1936, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters consisted of forty-four privately owned stations from Halifax to Vancouver.<sup>5</sup> Many of these stations are still in existence today including CFRB, Toronto; CHML, Hamilton; CFPL, London; and CFCN, Calgary.<sup>6</sup> The CAB was now led by Harry Sedgwick, its vigorous new President, who had been elected the year before the CBC came into existence. Sedgwick, who has been described as "the father of the modern CAB", maintained that the organization had to become truly national, through its membership, if it were to be an effective pressure group.<sup>7</sup> In line with this much broader perspective, Sedgwick claimed that the stations belonging to the CAB were responsible "for possibly 90 percent, at least, of the broadcast entertainment that is provided in Canada to Canadian listeners."<sup>8</sup> Their numerical strength thus gave the private stations great advantage in reaching the widest cross section of listeners.

The newspaper industry had been watching this growing strength of the private stations with considerable concern. Many owners of this long

established medium wanted to be able to restrain their influence especially in the area of news gathering with advertising dollars at stake. However the print owners should not be conveniently grouped together as all favouring public broadcasting or the spirited Radio League campaign that Alan Plaunt had led. Rather there were three categories of owners whose motives were not all the same. Newspapers such as the London Free Press, which was owned by Arthur Blackburn, were in favour of government regulation but preferred individual stations to be privately owned.<sup>9</sup> Blackburn did not perceive radio advertising to be an outright threat to newspapers, because it was essentially a different form of communication. Rather he visualized the newspaper and radio complementing one another in serving the public. Blackburn's pioneering spirit and commitment to Canadian programming were inherited by his son, Walter, who took over the management of the Free Press after his father's death in 1935.<sup>10</sup> Walter Blackburn subsequently pioneered the development of Frequency Modulation broadcasting in 1948, and five years later introduced television to western Ontario. Just as Arthur Blackburn had seen radio providing a service separate from that of newspapers, his son perceived FM radio and television to be additional alternative services.<sup>11</sup>

The second group of newspaper owners included such individuals as Joseph Atkinson, owner of the Toronto Star, who supported public broadcasting because it was a way of limiting free entry into the private sector. Atkinson was satisfied as long as a monopoly could be retained, and provided that the Toronto Star could own the only radio station in that market. But he eventually was led to back the Radio League's campaign as a defensive measure against losing his preferred position in Toronto to other private interests. Atkinson showed a willingness to turn

to the state rather than to let "the other fellow in."<sup>12</sup>

The third category of newspaper owners were those who did not own radio stations themselves but who saw private stations cutting into their advertising revenue. The Southam family was in the forefront of this group and papers such as the Ottawa Citizen and Winnipeg Tribune, which belonged to the Southam chain, consistently supported the campaign for public broadcasting.<sup>13</sup> The financial interests of these owners naturally coincided with the Radio League's campaign and Alan Plaunt had capitalized to the fullest on their economic concerns. In 1936, it was estimated that the seventy members of the Association of Canadian Advertisers were prepared to spend in excess of twenty-million dollars to promote their products on all forms of media.<sup>14</sup> Moreover radio had become, in the words of Harry Sedgwick, "an accepted medium of advertising."<sup>15</sup> Therefore Plaunt was playing to realistic concerns on the part of newspaper owners who did not wish to see radio absorb too large a portion of this lucrative advertising market. Sedgwick had tried to underscore the responsible role private stations were trying to assume as the Depression slowly began to fade in the midst of economic recovery. He told the 1936 Commons Broadcasting Committee that it was "our duty and to our interests" to encourage "the expenditure of advertising money along broader lines" in the hope that such expenditure would be "a factor in the return of prosperity."<sup>16</sup> But few newspaper owners, who did not own radio stations themselves, had accepted this kind of outlook. Twenty-seven newspapers had endorsed the notion of a public broadcasting system in Canada and, of these, only four were station owners as well.<sup>17</sup>

Until the mid-1930s, radio had been viewed largely as an entertainment medium bringing Canadians their favourite programs especially popular

American shows. However with the growth of radio, in particular the larger number of private stations in the country, broadcasters inevitably saw themselves serving their communities with news and public affairs programming.<sup>18</sup> The inter-war period was a time when news developments, on the world stage especially, could change rapidly. Speed in news gathering thus became an important consideration and radio's immediacy in reporting events was seen by newspaper opponents as possibly supplanting the traditional print medium. In both Canada and the United States, the tension between the two media increased greatly during the 1930s.<sup>19</sup> To understand the extent of the rivalry between the print and broadcast industries over the reporting of news, it is worth considering briefly the origins of the competition.

Prior to the 1920s, large press associations and syndicates in the United States and Canada conveyed a great deal of the national and international news to newspaper readers.<sup>20</sup> Even large dailies with extensive staffs of their own correspondents, relied on these wire services which provided news material in abundance beyond the local and area coverage of the city desk. The Associated Press, which was founded in 1848 by six New York publishers, was originally formed to help its member newspapers report developments in England and France. Each newspaper, that obtained the services of the Associated Press, became a member of the co-operative which enabled it to determine news gathering and financial policies.<sup>21</sup> The other major wire service in the United States eventually became known as United Press International. In 1907, the United Press was founded by E. W. Scripps, the owner of a group of newspapers that did not receive the AP service. Two years later, William Randolph Hearst established the International News Service and it was not until 1958 that the two



were combined to form United Press International. Unlike AP, UPI is a privately owned company dealing on a contract basis with its clients.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to the advent of radio, the Canadian Press in Canada dominated the news system even more than it does today. Newspapers were looked upon as reliable and respectable especially by federal politicians who initially used radio reluctantly to communicate with a mass electorate.<sup>23</sup> The year 1907 in Canada saw the formation of the Western Associated Press to serve regional interests and the Maritime Publishers in 1909 had established the Eastern Press Association to service the Atlantic region. Two years later the various regions of Canada were able to exchange news reports on a limited basis even though there were a number of gaps in the system including one between Toronto and Winnipeg.<sup>24</sup> Canadian politicians were naturally watching with interest and saw this kind of news co-operative as a force for moulding a national consensus. The government of Sir Robert Borden offered fifty-thousand dollars to improve the system, and his overture to the newspapers was immediately greeted with approval.<sup>25</sup> In 1917, the regional news bodies amalgamated into the national agency now known as the Canadian Press.<sup>26</sup> This cozy arrangement between the government and newspaper publishers lasted until 1924 when Canadian Press executives decided that never again would the news agency accept financial assistance from any government.<sup>27</sup> However newspaper owners still exerted considerable influence on governments, and such regulatory bodies as the CBC, to preserve their somewhat privileged position. This campaign was stepped up after 1927 when the growth of radio networks and their success in winning advertising revenue posed a major threat to newspapers. By the year 1933, the Associated Press, United Press International and Reuters, the third international agency, stopped selling news to radio

stations which now had to have their own reporters.<sup>28</sup> The Columbia Broadcasting System and the National Broadcasting Company promptly developed their own news departments until a compromise, the Press-Radio Bureau, was worked out.<sup>29</sup> If broadcasting networks stopped gathering news, the wire services agreed to supply them with two five-minute newscasts daily from material supplied by the press associations. However stations wanted additional news and so independent news agencies, which later invaded Canada, were created to fill the void.<sup>30</sup>

In 1927, the year of Canada's Diamond Jubilee, private stations interested in building their news operations had combined to broadcast nationally the celebrations from Parliament Hill on July 1st.<sup>31</sup> Then in the fall of that same year, a network of private stations had broadcast the proceedings of the first political convention ever heard on radio in Canada. When the Conservative party gathered in Winnipeg on October 10, radio listeners heard of developments at the convention up to and including the choice of R. B. Bennett as party leader.<sup>32</sup> In 1930, both Mackenzie King and Robert Manion had addressed national radio audiences, during the election campaign, with more than a million people hearing their radio speeches.<sup>33</sup> Five years later, King and Bennett did likewise, the latter kicking off his formal campaign with a radio address.<sup>34</sup> Clearly private broadcasters had recognized the importance of their medium as an instant conveyer of news, a decided advantage they held over their print opponents. At just about the time that the CBC came into existence, the private stations had served notice that they were no longer content to defer to the print medium and saw, in sponsored radio newscasts especially, a new source of revenue.

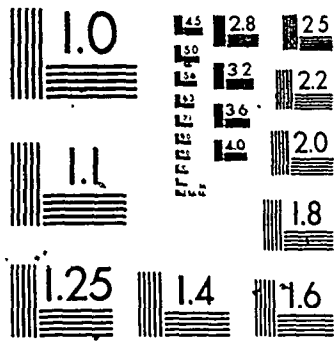
The CBC thus had come into being amidst a changing media environment.

which meant that the Corporation itself had to tread softly in the realm of commercial programming. The 1936 Act provided for advertising revenue as one way of helping to finance a national broadcasting system. But Alan Plaunt, who had rallied newspaper owners to his side, realized that if the Corporation proceeded too far, in this direction, it ran the risk of losing badly-needed newspaper support in the vital early days of its existence.<sup>35</sup> If it were to extend the national broadcasting system, the Corporation now needed the newspaper industry perhaps more than ever. At the same time, as the regulator of the private broadcasters, the CBC was under pressure from prominent newspaper owners to stymie these entrepreneurs who were seen as electronic upstarts.<sup>36</sup> Radio news failed to follow the newspaper format in either style or content. It was presented in condensed form and in a conversational manner. The electronic presentation of news was thus viewed with some measure of disdain by such individuals as J. F. B. Livesay, General Manager of the Canadian Press, and influential publishers including Victor and Clifford Sifton, the owners of the Winnipeg Free Press, and whose influential editor, J. W. Dafoe, had backed the Radio League's campaign for public broadcasting.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the newspapers now not only faced external challenges to the monopoly they had held on news gathering but also there were pronounced changes, within the print industry itself, that extended beyond the journalistic field to government. Newspaper editors and politicians had maintained a close relationship in the post Confederation era and for the first quarter of the twentieth century. Publishers such as Hugh Graham, later Lord Atholstan, of the Montreal Star, Clifford Sifton of the Manitoba Free Press, Frank Oliver of the Edmonton Bulletin and Joseph Atkinson of the Toronto Star were individuals of considerable political influence.<sup>38</sup> But this age

of the party press was greatly altered by the introduction of the mass circulation newspaper accompanied by the publisher-capitalist who replaced the "personal" editor of the nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup> In fact, the refusal of the Globe newspaper, in the 1925 federal election, to endorse the Liberal party after seventy-five years of support had seemed to foreshadow this new age of journalism.<sup>40</sup> Another noted figure, George McCullagh, who purchased the Globe in 1936, seemed to be the embodiment of this new mass circulation era.<sup>41</sup> Now great metropolitan dailies generally looked to politically neutral wire services and strove to trade on "impartiality" in return for more advertising revenue and expanded readership.<sup>42</sup> These developments did not go unnoticed by politicians such as Mackenzie King who had been accustomed to having certain newspaper owners and editors on his side.<sup>43</sup> With the newspaper industry doing some careful soul-searching, the private broadcasters vigorously asserting themselves, and public broadcasting starting its second phase after a dubious start, the first CBC board of governors appointed on September 10, 1936, faced heavy responsibilities.<sup>44</sup> Between June and the fall of 1936 following the passage of the new Broadcasting Act, the first major task for the government and the advocates of public broadcasting was to complete the board's administrative structure. The next step would be to expand the public system and develop a favourable working relationship between board members and government officials. It was still to be determined if this "hopeful experiment" and "new type of public organization", which Plaunt had envisaged earlier, could function smoothly on a day to day basis and remain free from political influence.<sup>45</sup>

As early as July, 1936, Plaunt had informed Gladstone Murray that the chances of the latter being appointed General Manager of the

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Corporation were quite good.<sup>46</sup> The private broadcasters had lobbied to have their man, Reginald Brophy, a former manager of CFGF in Montreal, named to the post of General Manager, but Plaunt felt this move had been defeated.<sup>47</sup> His letter to Murray, prior to the CBC appointments being made, is illustrative of Plaunt's close association with leading cabinet members and also of his political acumen generally. Mackenzie King, according to Plaunt, was viewing Murray's candidacy with great favour:

The situation here has taken a distinctly satisfactory turn. My present information, which is absolutely accurate, is that WLMK is sold on you, and realizes to the full the sinister character and implications of the Brophy effort. I had a long letter from Dafoe yesterday. He cites this fact as pretty satisfactory proof of your prospects. He says that when faced with a clear cut situation like this, his nibs is capable of insisting on his own view, even when certain members of his cabinet entertain differing views.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to his lobbying efforts with King, Plaunt sought the support of W. D. Euler, Ernest Lapointe and C. D. Howe. In particular, Plaunt felt it important that Euler, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, be supportive of Murray:

It would be unfortunate if Euler's opinion is not on record when the decisions are made. I thought perhaps Vincent could get him to write to WLMK personally on the matter. Euler's disinterested voice is always influential in cabinet circles, and would more than counteract some of the less disinterested voices.<sup>49</sup>

Plaunt also mentioned, in his letter to Murray, the importance of Lapointe, in cabinet circles, and how the Justice Minister might see Brophy's possible appointment as being detrimental to French Canada:

I hope you will see Lapointe. He is a key person in the cabinet. If he felt the long term interests of French Canada would be

betrayed by Brophy's appointment, as I believe they would, or alternatively that you really understood the dual language question, he too would be a powerful voice.<sup>50</sup>

One problem in approaching Lapointe was to allay any fears that "there is anything Imperial" about Murray's policies.<sup>51</sup>

At the present juncture, when French Canada is scared stiff at the possibility of being dragged, or cajoled into another "British" war, any suggestion that you are part of the "plot" would be dangerous. That suggestion has not been made, because our opponents are too stupid, but you have no idea of the strength of isolationist sentiment in French Canada at the present time. This sentiment Mr. Lapointe, and Mr. King very largely share.<sup>52</sup>

Plaunt had succeeded in gaining the support of Howe, the Minister of Marine, prior to the passage of the 1936 Act. However, Howe always seemed to embrace the notion of a public system somewhat grudgingly. As noted earlier, he did not appear to have any clear or well defined ideas on the subject of broadcasting.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps what persuaded him ultimately to favour Plaunt's scheme was the fact that he knew Mackenzie King and other noted figures within Liberal ranks, such as Norman Lambert and Vincent Massey, wanted some measure of public control over broadcasting. But less than a year after the CBC had come into existence, Howe showed signs of being a reluctant backer of this new public organization. "While public ownership is an ideal to be achieved ultimately", he informed the board, "private ownership and operation under Government control and regulation is also a sound policy. I trust that your Corporation can make use of the latter, while moving in the direction of the former as rapidly as improvement in operating revenues will permit."<sup>54</sup> According to Edward Pickering, Howe "had championed Brophy" for the position of General Manager.<sup>55</sup> "With all his greatness and his contribution in the war," said Pickering, "I don't think he

ever really grasped what the public concept of broadcasting was."<sup>56</sup>

Murray eventually won the much coveted position and Brophy later became Deputy Minister of Defence Production in the department which Howe headed.<sup>57</sup>

Alan Plaunt knew that he would be invited to become a member of the first board of governors and, early in September, his colleague, Pickering, had stressed the importance of this appointment to Mackenzie King. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Pickering outlined his reasons for recommending Plaunt which had as much to do with the growth of the public service as they did with the subject of radio:

May I take the liberty of suggesting that consideration be given to the name of Alan Plaunt for an appointment to the Radio Board. I have seen a good deal of Plaunt since last winter, and believe, not only that his views on radio and its place in the national life accord entirely with your own, but that he possesses judgment and discretion to a marked degree.<sup>58</sup>

Pickering reminded King of the time and money Plaunt had contributed to the cause of public broadcasting:

He has given of his time and means to the educational work of the League, for years past, and would be in a position to do so in large measure for the work of the Board. As far as I know he has never put his own name forward or allowed it to be put forward by anyone on his behalf. Apart from the fact that his appointment would be welcomed by the supporters of public ownership as an earnest of the good faith of the government in selecting the Board, the appointment would have the added feature of bringing a young and community minded person into the public service.<sup>59</sup>

These were reasonably persuasive arguments at a time when the Liberal party was attempting to rejuvenate itself, after returning to power, and was on the verge of a major overhaul of the party machinery. The Liberals had also set out to streamline the civil service:



The party adopted a new organizational structure in 1935 which it has held until the present day. A highly decentralized group of provincial organizations began to operate under the direction of regional leaders chosen from the federal caucus.<sup>60</sup> The provincial groups were co-ordinated by a national campaign committee which oversaw such important considerations as party fund-raising. Following the party's success in ousting R. B. Bennett and the Tories, Norman Lambert, President of the Liberal Federation and a close friend of Alan Plaunt, became in the words of Reginald Whitaker, "the new Andrew Haydon" and "the organizing link between the cabinet ministers and the external party, especially the financial backers."<sup>61</sup> The patronage politics of the Laurier era was being replaced by "the newer, bureaucratic, policy-oriented politics of the era of depressions and world wars."<sup>62</sup> Moreover Mackenzie King's "dogged determination to read and reply personally to the staggering volume of letters he received constituted a sort of one-man publicity effort for the party."<sup>63</sup> The Liberal party had become more public relations oriented, and Lambert stressed upon King the importance of radio broadcasts whereby ministers could explain to the electorate the work being done in the various departments.<sup>64</sup>

This period also saw the rise, in the words of J. L. Granatstein, of an "exceptional group of civil servants who provided the ideas and advice that turned Canada into a modern nation."<sup>65</sup> These influential figures prided themselves on their expert advice, which was offered to government leaders, and recognized the importance of assuming a non-partisan role during "the heyday of the mandarins."<sup>66</sup> Such individuals as Norman Robertson, Lester Pearson and Clifford Clark "collectively brought to a civil service, which had previously been noted only for devotion to

patronage, a discriminating and progressive understanding of economics, a strong Canadian nationalism, and a desire to have Canada assume its fit place in the world."<sup>67</sup> It was also the beginning of the independent crown corporation whereby an enterprise, such as the CBC, could be publicly-owned but not directly part of the civil service. Plaunt's appointment to this new broadcasting authority was undoubtedly a reflection of the new mood the Liberal party had sought to create in federal politics - a change whereby patronage appointments gave way to expert management. Plaunt's youth was a definite advantage at a time when old ideas were being discarded and new solutions proposed in economics and foreign policy.<sup>68</sup>

Mackenzie King appears to have been quite concerned in appointing high quality people to these boards. He sought to balance regional interests, ethnic groups and social class, in these appointments, while also trying to provide some form of female representation. On August 27, 1936, King noted in his diary that in their discussions of the makeup of the Wheat Board, his ministers were "divided between a centralized committee executive" and "some regional recognition."<sup>69</sup> King felt that "a political difficulty would arise were the latter not given."<sup>70</sup> At this same cabinet meeting, King noticed that "the Quebec colleagues have become very insistent on increasing the French representation on Boards."<sup>71</sup> He had also "put forth the necessity of recognizing some member of the Jewish community on some boards."<sup>72</sup> As for the National Railway Board, "we had much discussion over my strong insistence of having Montréal employees of C.N.R. - as the labour investors in the railroad appoint by election their own director - rather than have government make the appointment."<sup>73</sup> On September 8, King recorded, in his diary, that the members of the Railway Board "were pretty well straightened away with a

farmer, Robert Moffatt, on for the West" and "Labour to elect its own representatives."<sup>74</sup> The Prime Minister wanted the CBC to have wide representation including at least one woman:

I stressed anew the importance of representation of farmers and labour on these boards. The radio was glad to get agreement pretty general on Gladstone Murray for Mahager. He gives up a \$20,000 salary for 15,000 - the board otherwise pretty well complete - no woman elected as yet. I stressed the need of a woman on the Board.<sup>75</sup>

When the board of governors were appointed on September 10, King expressed satisfaction at having a female member as well as Plaunt, on the board, and Leonard Brockington as chairman:

Cabinet met at eleven, and we continued in session until nearly one. Settled personnel of Board of Directors of the National Railways, and also of Board of Governors of Radio Broadcasting. Was successful in securing appointment of Nellie McClung as woman member of latter Board. Also, have been responsible for securing Gladstone Murray as Manager, in preference to Brophy, who represents private interests. Murray has had association and training in Great Britain, and is government appointed man. Was glad to have Brockington appointed as Chairman of Board, and was glad, too, to get young Plaunt as representative of the younger radio element on the Board.<sup>76</sup>

Plaunt's close association with Edward Pickering would appear to have paid off in light of the information the latter had provided to the Prime Minister. Since this first board of governors faced a heavy task, it is worth considering briefly the backgrounds of those who helped to lay the basis for the present day Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The nine member board had as its chairman Leonard Brockington who had arrived in Canada in 1912 and later studied law in Calgary with the firm of Lougheed, Bennett and Company. After Brockington had left this law practice, he became city solicitor for Calgary between 1922 and 1935.

When he was appointed to the CBC board, he was general counsel for the Northwest Grain Dealers in Winnipeg.<sup>77</sup> The other nine members of the board also had impressive credentials: René Morin, the vice-chairman, a graduate of St. Hyacinthe College, McGill and Laval universities; General Victor Odlum, a noted educationalist; J. Wilfrid Godfrey, a Rhodes Scholar from Prince Edward Island; Reverend Alexandre Vachon, director of the Superior School of Chemistry at Laval University; N. L. Nathanson, President of the Famous Players Canadian Corporation; Colonel Wilfrid Godfrey, a former principal of McGill University; Nellie McClung, a woman's rights advocate and Alan Plaunt.<sup>78</sup> The assistant general manager of the Corporation was Doctor Augustin Frigon, a former member of the Aird Commission, and Donald Manson, who had been the influential secretary to the first Royal Commission enquiry into radio, was now appointed secretary to the CBC board of governors.<sup>79</sup> Clearly Plaunt and the Radio League had seen to it that "all the right people" were "in the right places."<sup>80</sup> Also of the nine members, Alan Plaunt was easily the most qualified because of his intense interest in the radio question and the length of time he had devoted to the subject. Throughout his four year connection with the Corporation, it is probably no exaggeration to say that he completely dominated the board and often seemed to be several steps ahead of Gladstone Murray, the General Manager, whose job entailed the execution of the board's policy.<sup>81</sup>

In assessing Plaunt's contribution to the activities of the first board of governors, Graham Spry has underlined the educational rôle he played. As he explained, Plaunt educated "the board of governors of the CBC about publicly owned radio."<sup>82</sup> Although the structure of the broadcasting system "had already been set up by the government in 1932," it

was now "a matter of converting it to a non-state operation on the British model as distinct from three men appointed by the government and manageable by the government."<sup>83</sup> Plaunt, according to Spry, "gave his life to full time work" for the CBC and "it wasn't just going to board meetings."<sup>84</sup> Plaunt greatly influenced such members as Leonard Brockington, the chairman of the board, because he "knew what the Act was" since the thrust of the 1936 legislation was contained "in the first brief he presented" to the government.<sup>85</sup> Clearly Plaunt had been able to exert his influence with such ministers as C. D. Howe and the Prime Minister himself. But Mackenzie King had his own personal reasons for favouring a publicly-owned broadcasting system, which were somewhat removed from Plaunt's notion of a corporation that would be free of government interference.

With the administrative personnel of the board now appointed, the second issue of concern for the Corporation was its working relationship with the government and how it could maintain freedom from partisan influence. In this regard, King's motives are worth examination, because they were anything but high-minded and had little to do with radio as an instrument of national unity or as a medium to provide cultural uplift. Rather King saw radio, under a government appointed board, able to counter the newspaper industry where notable changes had occurred.<sup>86</sup> In 1936, the same year the CBC was established, George McCullagh purchased initially the Globe and then the Mail and Empire, two highly influential newspapers. The two papers were immediately merged to become The Globe and Mail.<sup>87</sup> McCullagh had received financial assistance from William Henry Wright, a millionaire mine-owner, and now the newly created newspaper began, in the words of W. H. Kesterton, "a long-lasting support of the Conservative party."<sup>88</sup> Moreover McCullagh, who had been born in London, Ontario in

1905, was on close terms with Ontario's Premier Mitchell Hepburn whom he had helped win the 1934 provincial election.<sup>89</sup> Indeed Hepburn, as Neil McKenty has explained, "had utilized his big-business and political friendships to win the premiership of Ontario" and, shortly afterward, King had expressed concern about attempts in Ontario "to create a Liberal machine."<sup>90</sup> King feared that the growing feud between the provincial and federal Liberal organizations over finances could do great harm to the party. He also realized that Hepburn was now in a position to withhold funds from the federal wing of the Liberal party in future election campaigns.<sup>91</sup> But it was McCullagh's newspaper that would cause King the greatest anxiety on a day to day basis just as it would his successors, Louis St. Laurent, Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau. The Globe and Mail's editorial page was to be frequently critical of Liberal policy positions and, by mid-twentieth century, "it was a forthright Conservative news organ."<sup>92</sup>

Given these developments at the start of the Liberal hegemony in Canadian federal politics, Mackenzie King had tried to buttress his position by structuring the radio industry to meet the challenge to his administration, from a new newspaper age, ushered in by the mass circulation daily. On November 19, 1936, while reading the Ottawa Citizen in bed, after wakening at eight o'clock in the morning, King noted McCullagh's move in buying the two papers and combining them into an influential journal:

I fear, however, it may become in time a big interest, Fascist organ, at a time when the real Liberal publication would be of great service from a national point of view. There is great danger of an attempted Government by the press, papers, e.g., "Winnipeg Free Press", "The Globe", "Montreal Gazette", etc.,

all imperialistic and seeking to dictate to Governments of the day rather than interpret their policies.<sup>93</sup>

But King saw a way out of this attempt by newspapers to control public opinion:

There remains, however, the radio as a corrective to this tendency, so long as the radio is kept under Government control. This becomes more necessary with private control of great newspapers. I feel more satisfied than ever we took the right step in securing Gladstone-Murray in assisting on the Government control side of the radio.<sup>94</sup>

The notion of "remote state control", which Murray and Plaunt had seen as an integral part of a publicly-owned system, does not appear to have greatly impressed King who appeared to prefer a higher degree of government involvement in this form of broadcasting system.<sup>95</sup> Later on the same day, King recorded similar thoughts after discussing McCullagh's action with party officials:

I expressed the fear that however well intentioned the whole move might be, that later on we would come to have a few great papers seeking to control Governments with the danger of their association with big interests and possible development along Fascist lines. I thought it inadvisable to send any expression of opinion to the newspaper, lest it might be embarrassing on the one hand to the management, or to our party on the other.<sup>96</sup>

The Prime Minister's outlook seemed to suggest that the private broadcasters were not going to receive a great deal of consideration as the CBC board of governors was in the advantageous position of being able to regulate their competitors. At the same time, Plaunt was determined to keep King informed as to the board's progress in building a national system. He suggested to the secretary of the board of governors, Donald Manson, that newspaper material showing reaction to the CBC appointments and to the Corporation's

work, generally, be compiled carefully for the Prime Minister:

I would suggest that the editorials be mounted full length as it is advisable to give an impression of bulk as well as content. When the material has been mounted we can then determine whether or not it should be arranged on a coast-to-coast basis or what will be the most effective method of presentation. I suggest that all the material be bound in a way that Mr. King, e.g., can glance through it very readily and observe the bulk and importance of the editorial notices even though he does not read them.<sup>97</sup>

The third important consideration for the Corporation was the need to maintain its reliance on newspaper support in the face of a burgeoning private broadcasting sector. This concern had also plagued the Corporation's predecessor, the CRBC, which initially had tried to carry only unsponsored programs on the national network.<sup>98</sup> If the CBC were to be successful, Plaunt realized that the Corporation-print alliance had to hold. The Canadian Press, the national news gathering co-operative to which most of the influential daily newspapers belonged, wanted to keep its monopoly on news gathering and continued to fear the steady encroachment of private stations into this domain. The quest for advertising dollars was fundamental to this tension between the print industry and the private sector.<sup>99</sup> But shortly after the formation of the CBC, its alignment with newspaper owners began to take on a new dimension. Members of the print industry quickly grew alarmed at the possibility of the Corporation having to rely heavily on commercial revenue to extend the public broadcasting system.<sup>100</sup> Although they were aware that the Aird Commission had recommended "indirect" advertising as part of the national service, and that the Radio League too endorsed sponsored programs, the newspaper owners had been conditioned by the CRBC's hesitancy toward advertising.<sup>101</sup> In the 1937-38 fiscal year, the Corporation had income



of about two and one quarter million dollars.<sup>102</sup> Of this amount, commercial revenue accounted for about three-hundred and fifty-thousand dollars.<sup>103</sup> It was the Corporation's policy that this form of revenue was not to exceed five-hundred thousand dollars, but the apparent shift in philosophy, from the days of the CRBC, gave the print owners reason for considerable pause.<sup>104</sup> Even as early as January 22, 1937, Plaunt, in a letter to Donald Manson, had underlined the newspapers' concern:

Mr. Arthur Partridge, general manager of the Canadian Daily Newspapers Association, the business organization which parallels the Canadian Press, called on me privately to-day. He is exceedingly disturbed by reports he has received from newspapers owning stations in various parts of Canada that the Corporation is going into the commercial broadcasting field in a large way.<sup>105</sup>

Plaunt noted that the newspapers' interests were already beginning to threaten withdrawal of their support:

Mr. Partridge and, according to him most newspaper men have jumped to the conclusion that the Corporation is abandoning the pretence of restricting advertising and indeed is moving in the opposite direction. He points out, rightly I think, that the newspapers supported the establishment of the Corporation and Mr. Murray's appointment on the grounds that they believed public service broadcasting would be increased and advertising decreased. He intimates that a commercial policy will result in the Corporation losing its most important backlog of support.<sup>106</sup>

However Plaunt tried to counter some of Partridge's arguments in a letter the same day to Dr. Frigon, the assistant general-manager of the Corporation, claiming that "the Corporation's policy with respect to commercial advertising, both network and local, is unchanged."<sup>107</sup> He informed Frigon that "good commercial network programmes have always been accepted and any enquiries presently being made are largely with a view to some increase"

if the Corporation decided to provide an expanded daily broadcast schedule.<sup>108</sup> Plaunt noted that stations were being asked to cut their commercial rates though advertising was still necessary for public broadcasting:

We are simply asking stations if they will take network commercials arranged by us at 50% of the usual station rates, this being a quite usual practice by other network systems, to cover two agency commissions of 15%, frequency discount, etc. There is no attempt to cut wire rates, the sponsor paying us for the wires at the ordinary rate.<sup>109</sup>

According to Plaunt, "it was a gross exaggeration to say", as Partridge had done, "that the Corporation has an organized sales force working amongst national advertisers. There have been a few people making enquiries, but in point of fact the few programmes which have been signed up have come to us through outside agencies."<sup>110</sup> Although he did not always agree with the newspaper owners' views of what was happening in Canadian broadcasting, nevertheless Plaunt always took the print industry into account in any of the board's major decisions, including the number of stations the Corporation should establish in its formative years of operation.

In early 1937, Plaunt wanted to push hard for a four station scheme whereby powerful outlets would be established in Ontario, Quebec, the West and the Maritimes.<sup>111</sup> Eventually C. D. Howe, the Transport Minister, agreed with the establishment of the four stations, but initially he urged the board of governors to concentrate on two fifty-thousand watt stations in central Canada.<sup>112</sup> To this end, the Government provided the board with a loan of five-hundred thousand dollars. Howe, at first, was reluctant to make any commitment beyond the two stations in Ontario and Quebec but Plaunt thought otherwise. He urged the chairman of the board, Leonard

Brockington, to pursue the possibility of expanding beyond central Canada and, as always, newspaper support was an important consideration:

As I mentioned to you on the telephone there appear to be strong arguments for pressing boldly for agreement on the four station scheme. From the view-point of capturing the essential strongholds of vested interests in Canadian radio, I concede that we must capture Toronto and Montreal in the immediate future. I consider it of the utmost importance, if our whole scheme is not to be jeopardized, that these two stations be decided in order to ensure completed construction by 1st October. But from a political or public point of view, from the view-point of our real function, it would appear to me unwise to concentrate exclusively on the satisfied areas. There is the additional argument that we might thus appear to be going commercial in a big way and this might lose us our newspaper backing.<sup>113</sup>

In this same letter of February 4, 1937, Plaunt stressed the importance of timing in launching a publicly-owned system:

I mentioned to you that I was strongly advised that our best tactics at the present time are to push aggressively for what we consider to be our minimum requirements, both with regard to the basic principle of ultimate ownership of key stations outlined in the Board's resolution, and as regard the immediate construction programme. I am informed that both these matters will receive serious consideration now, but that if they are deferred it will be much more difficult to obtain agreement a year from now. The popular reaction of the Report of the Parliamentary Committee, the new legislation, the appointments to the Board, and the appointments of the General Manager and Assistant General Manager has been so widespread and unanimous that there would be an anti-climax if the project were not proceeded with.<sup>114</sup>

Plaunt had sought to appease the newspapers by arguing that, as the public system expanded, the private stations' role in the broadcasting system would inevitably be diminished. Thus the threat to the print industry

posed by the private operators, both in the areas of advertising and news gathering, would be gradually removed. Plaunt, therefore, wanted his four station scheme as early as possible to meet these twin objectives. But future developments in Canadian broadcasting were tied to an important international conference scheduled for Havana in November, 1937, where radio frequency and power allocations would be determined.<sup>115</sup> Plaunt was undoubtedly looking to the future when, on April 23, 1937, he informed Leonard Brockington that he, Dr. Frigon and Gladstone Murray, had held discussions on "how we should proceed."<sup>116</sup> The three had agreed that "it would be inadvisable to approach Mr. Howe again at this time in the hopes of getting a more specific approval of plans for the Maritimes and the West."<sup>117</sup> Plaunt then outlined for Brockington what he thought would be the proper thrust for a forthcoming radio address by the CBC chairman:

- We all agreed therefore, that our best tactics would be to have your speech contain reference to our specific commitments in Toronto and Montreal and include a general, but emphatic, statement about the Maritimes and the West. Then, if our failure to offer anything specific in these two regions resulted in a row, we would be in a position to show the minister in his own language that our original position was sound.<sup>118</sup>

Plaunt also drew attention to the implications for the Corporation of the Havana Conference. The CBC could not proceed with its national broadcasting plan until an international agreement was reached on a new allocation of broadcast frequencies. But, as Plaunt reminded Brockington, the conference could be used a lever to strengthen the Corporation's hand:

An additional argument of considerable weight which we can utilize when the time comes, is that our hand at the final Havana conference will be greatly strengthened if we are definitely committed to four instead of two high power stations.<sup>119</sup>

The Havana Treaty of November, 1937 was to have significant repercussions on Canadian broadcasting. Signatories to the treaty included Canada, the United States, Cuba and Mexico, although the latter country did not ratify the agreement until 1941.<sup>120</sup> As a result of the treaty, Canada was awarded fourteen clear channels which the CBC intended to use for the public system. As E. Austin Weir has explained, "the conclusion of the Havana Agreement" allowed the Corporation "to embark on a three year plan designed to extend the service of the national network."<sup>121</sup> The private broadcasters, of course, were watching closely developments at Havana. As Ernie Swan has explained:

The Havana Treaty set about to use some common sense in the distribution of frequencies. For instance, CKCL was on 580 kilocycles and it required fifty-thousand watts on 1400 kilocycles to give you the same distance or the same power at a given distance as a thousand watts on 580.<sup>122</sup>

But the private broadcasters were greatly disappointed by the international agreement reached at Havana. The official Canadian delegation consisted of representatives from the Departments of Transport and External Affairs. Commander C. P. Edwards led this group which held voting rights at the conference. But these government officials were also accompanied by a CBC team of observers headed by Donald Manson and Doctor Frigon who seemed to have wielded the effective power on Canada's behalf.<sup>123</sup> Under the agreement, three key private stations CFRB, Toronto, CKAC, Montreal and CKLW, Windsor were to be limited to five thousand watts even though they were entitled to fifty-thousand watts on the frequencies which they held.<sup>124</sup> "Donald Manson reported back to Alan Plaunt who conferred with key political figures," according to T. J. Allard, "these in turn urging the Radio League position" upon C. D. Howe.<sup>125</sup> The Transport Minister had earlier

told Gladstone Murray that "the voting delegates would take their instructions from the Government, not the CBC's board" but, in the end, "Howe lost."<sup>126</sup> Canada's broadcasting situation was improved at Havana toward the end of the 1937 but hardly to the advantage of the private broadcasters. After the conference, it seemed that nothing could curtail the grandiose plan that Plaunt had envisaged. But, for the next two years, a fierce struggle was to ensue with the CBC and the Canadian Press aligned against the private stations and a new independent news agency known as the Transradio Press Service. The issues in dispute were commercial advertising, the radio set licence fee and the role of broadcast news.

Toward the end of 1937, Plaunt was still hearing complaints from newspaper representatives who expressed reservations about the manner in which public broadcasting was unfolding in Canada. Plaunt again sought to ease these fears, but he was obviously growing impatient with the newspaper lobby as a letter to J. F. B. Livesay, General manager of the Canadian Press, revealed in November just about the time of the Havana conference:

I had a slight contre-temps with Arthur Partridge here today, the substance of which I should like to lay before you for your reaction. He has evidently been absorbing the wildly exaggerated rumours regarding the extent of CBC commercial activities. He went so far as to say that the publishers as a whole would rather see the return of unrestricted private radio than the development of the CBC on the present basis. I went so far as to say that if such were the case they (the publishers) must be god dam short sighted.<sup>127</sup>

Apparently the newspaper interests in the country had not counted on having two broadcasting sectors competing for advertising dollars, the main reason for the backing of the public system. Plaunt naturally tried to explain, in dollars and cents to Livesay, the reasons for the CBC becoming involved

in the commercial field:

A. P. has been hearing, for example that we will end up the current fiscal year (March 31) with a deficit of about 600,000 that this and more will have to be made out of commercial revenues next year, that we are going out for upwards of a million a year commercial. The real facts, as you may imagine are these; in order to balance our budget with a 100,000 surplus, we are this year obliged to seek a total of 360,000 revenue from local plus network operations, and that in the immediate future an upper limit (depending on the extent of licence fee increase), of between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  a million will be placed for commercial accounts and further that this limit will, as a matter of basic policy, be diminished as the obligations involved in our capital loans are diminished.<sup>128</sup>

"A. P. should know damn well" said Plaunt, "that I would not remain in the board for 5 minutes were I not convinced that the Corporation were moving in the direction above outlined."<sup>129</sup> Toward the end of his letter to Livesay, Plaunt cautioned him about any shift in public stance by the country's leading newspapers:

If the newspapers are in fact contemplating a grand sabotage of the CBC I think they had better first take a dispassionate look at all the facts and factors. It seems to me that two main considerations stand out the first being the fact that a properly organized publicly owned system will increasingly reduce advertising and the second that as the public scheme grows, by the same token the margin of private commercial operation narrows.<sup>130</sup>

Still the newspaper campaign to control commercial advertising was unremitting even though, by the end of 1937, the Corporation could show considerable progress. In December, two new fifty-thousand watt transmitters, at Hornby, Ontario and Vercheres, Quebec were in operation to serve central Canada.<sup>131</sup> Construction of a five-thousand watt station was

completed in Vancouver with studios in the Hotel Vancouver. There were thirty-four stations on the basic network of the CBC, the majority of them privately-owned affiliates, and because of new wireline contracts, network service could now be provided for upward to sixteen hours each day.<sup>132</sup> The other two fifty-thousand watt stations, which Plaunt had hoped to have established as soon as possible; were not opened until two years later.<sup>133</sup>

Prior to their assault on Transradio, the CBC and newspaper owners joined forces on another important issue - the radio set licence fee which provided the Corporation with badly needed extra revenue. In the 1937-38 fiscal year, the two dollar licence fee had raised one million-nine hundred thousand dollars for the Corporation.<sup>134</sup> If the fee could be increased, the CBC would require less commercial revenue and this economic fact certainly helped to dictate the behaviour of the newspapers. On January 13, 1938, Plaunt wrote to Leonard Brockington to report on a meeting, of newspaper publishers, which Gladstone Murray had attended:

As Bill has doubtless told you, there were 65 newspaper men at the meeting, representing the Canadian Daily Newspapers and Periodicals Association, and the Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association - in other words the whole publishing industry. From Bill's own report, and from outside reports, e.g. Victor Sifton, which have reached me, I gather that the meeting was a great success from our point of view.<sup>135</sup>

Plaunt further informed Brockington that "they passed a unanimous resolution in support of the CBC, and formed a representative committee to work with us, and arranged a delegation to the government to press the case for a \$3.00 licence fee and additional funds for construction."<sup>136</sup> Plaunt anticipated Mackenzie King's reaction given his perception of the influence



and possible danger of the newspaper industry:

As it happens, their submissions, I have learned privately, come at a crucial moment, but by the same token perhaps the psychological moment. An increase is certain; when Mr. King realizes that the whole publishing industry is behind a \$3.00 fee, he may agree to it. At the least he will gain a realization of the factors facing us and them. We are doing everything in our power, both in front of the scenes and behind them, to put this across.<sup>137</sup>

Just four days later, Colonel R. F. Parkinson, chairman of the joint committee representing the various publishing groups, called on Mackenzie King to press for the increase in the licence fee. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Edward Pickering outlined Parkinson's position:

The press of Canada generally had supported over many years the ideal of a public service system of broadcasting. It continues to believe in this, both on grounds of the national interest and the interest of the publishing industry itself. If, through lack of adequate revenue or otherwise, CBC relies unduly upon commercial sources of revenue, the practical effect will be to subsidize advertising over the radio as against advertising in newspapers and magazines. Against this competition the press would have no alternative but to speak out very plainly.<sup>138</sup>

Pickering also described, for King, the various reasons Parkinson and the newspaper interests wanted the licence fee increased to \$3.00:

Colonel Parkinson also stated that an increase in the radio fee from \$2.00 to \$3.00 would enable CBC to cut down commercial programmes to a point which would remove the danger of unfair competition with the press and magazines. While realizing that the increase in the fee is a matter for the government itself to decide, he expressed the view that public opinion would support a fee of \$3.00 just as readily as one of \$2.50; that increased hours of broadcasting, improved coverage and programmes already achieved would form, in part, a justification for the increase; and that further improved facilities and programmes, which a \$3.00 fee would make easily available would ensure for the increase a fair reception by a majority of the listeners.<sup>139</sup>

Parkinson had again reminded King of the various groups, in society, who had equated their own self-interests with the movement for public broadcasting:

He asked me to mention that support for a public rather than a commercial system of broadcasting had come not only from the press but from national organizations representative of education, labour, and all the best elements in the life of the country. He was sure that these, as well as the whole of the press, would lend their support in the event of the increase. If the government increased the fee to \$3.00, it could count upon the sympathetic endorsement and interpretation of all the press of Canada.<sup>140</sup>

Parkinson had essentially put forth the Radio League's arguments which had been advanced just a few years before. King could not ignore the extent of the newspaper lobby which Plaunt and the CBC board had orchestrated. The campaign fell somewhat short of its mark but nevertheless the country was to face a higher fee. On April 1, 1938, the radio licence fee was increased from \$2.00 to \$2.50, the last increase before fees were abolished fifteen years later by the Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent.<sup>141</sup>

The confrontation between the Transradio Press Service and CP, which intensified toward the end of the decade, was the fourth major issue faced by the Corporation. Transradio was headed by Herbert Samuel Moore, a former United Press news correspondent who recognized a growing market for radio news in both Canada and the United States.<sup>142</sup> In 1933, the year before Transradio signed up a number of Canadian stations as clients, CP began to deliver a news summary to CRBC stations but not to private broadcasters.<sup>143</sup> The next few years were to see the publishers remain adamant that news broadcasts should be free of commercial advertising. Moore and the private owners thought otherwise and, with Trans-

radio and CP in bitter competition, it was hardly surprising that the publishers should turn to the CBC to rescue them from this challenge to their news co-operative. Alan Plaunt was on close terms with J. F. B. Livesay, and, given the print industry's earlier support for public broadcasting, the Corporation was expected to consider carefully the newspapers' interests. A letter from Livesay to Gladstone Murray, on December 23, 1937, after he had had extensive discussion with Plaunt, is illustrative of the demands CP chose to place on the Corporation. Livesay informed Murray that the CBC should be prepared to "go to the limit in friendly co-operation with CP" and if necessary be prepared to "go out of its way to meet our reasonable wishes."<sup>144</sup> Noting that he had "told Alan" about his concerns, Livesay singled out three specific areas he considered detrimental to the news agency he headed.<sup>145</sup> These were the Transradio news service, the CBC's Toronto coverage, and the question of censorship. To counter the impact of Transradio, Livesay outlined the steps CP had taken:

Over a year ago we started putting out three daytime radio news bulletins, of about 1,000 words each, released at 8 am., 12:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. local times. This was made possible thanks to the interest of Mr. Howe and the co-operation of the two commercial telegraph companies. It is a ticker service right into the radio studio and is available to every radio station in Canada at an inclusive price of \$10.00 a week. This revenue is divided equally between the two telegraph companies. About 31 stations are taking the service, a total revenue of \$16,120.00 or \$8,060.00 a piece.<sup>146</sup>

He told Murray of CP's attempts to discourage the use of Transradio by discussing the news service with such station owners as James Richardson and Sons Limited, one of western Canada's largest grain merchants and financial houses:

We did this to offer radio stations and the Canadian public an alternative to Transradio, which was then invading the field in the West and coming into the Eastern provinces. Nobody can listen to Transradio as often as I do without being convinced it is a bad news service for the Canadian public. In Winnipeg last September our President, Mr. Duchemin, one of our Western Directors, Mr. McCurdy, and the writer had a long talk with James Richardson in the hope we could induce him to drop Transradio for his three stations in favour of CP. He claimed Transradio was a perfectly good service and had Canadian news.<sup>147</sup>

Livesay earlier had told the 1936 Commons Broadcasting Committee that Transradio was "very intensely American" and "very often anti-British, particularly when we have a crisis in London or Geneva or elsewhere."<sup>148</sup> However, in his correspondence with Murray, he was unable to turn up any anti-British material on the news service after having transcripts made of the broadcasts:

So I afterwards had a transcript made for three days of the Transradio broadcast in Winnipeg. As it happened, there was nothing one could put one's finger on as being anti-British, but it was loaded up with American news, including much crime, and there was particularly not a word of Canadian or British news.<sup>149</sup>

"It seems to me, as I told Alan," said Livesay, "a parallel case would be for Mr. Hearst to come here with a tabloid, boost the circulation to half a million, and publish an entirely Hearst newspaper without any Canadian news. I don't think that would be good for this community."<sup>150</sup> He then mentioned to Murray the true concern of CP as it viewed this new electronic competitor:

Of course a great advantage Transradio has over us is news is the best seller of advertising on the air. There we cannot compete. In my opinion news should not be sold as a

commodity on the air, because there is not there the responsibility, the tradition, that governs the daily newspaper.<sup>151</sup>

"Might I venture to suggest", wrote Livesay, "permission be withheld from new clients of Transradio until CBC has had a chance to review the matter?"<sup>152</sup> In this same letter to Murray, Livesay informed the CBC General Manager that he wanted the Corporation's new outlet in Hornby, Ontario to carry CP daytime bulletins which "only get out in Toronto from CKCL, a purely local station."<sup>153</sup> Also there was a clear warning about censorship practices within the CBC:

I asked Alan to give you the letter from our Montreal Superintendent, Geo. MacDonald, showing there is active censorship at work by CBC in Montreal on Canadian Press news bulletins over your French network. In particular the order has been put out nothing must go on the air about Mr. Duplessis and Mr. Hepburn - presumably also Mr. Hepburn and Mr. King. Now it was fear of that sort of thing that convinced some of us it was not safe in a political ridden country like this to entrust the putting out of news on the air to any other organization but our own, which has no axe to grind and neither seeks nor received favors from politicians. I must say quite definitely that if this practice is not stopped we shall have to abandon giving news bulletins to your Montreal French network.<sup>154</sup>

The feud between Transradio and CP, during much of the 1930s, was vividly captured by Denton Massey, a Conservative member of the 1936 Broadcasting Committee. As he explained:

There have been, both in this country and in the United States, more or less Wars of the Roses between the radio stations and the newspapers, in which, incidentally, the objects of exchange have not been roses by any manner of means. The newspapers have been very bitter in regard to radio in years gone by. Radio was attempting to establish itself as an advertising medium primarily. The vast majority of newspapers felt that a

great many advertiser dollars might be diverted to the air that might otherwise have been expended for the printed page.<sup>155</sup>

However, despite the opposition it encountered, Transradio, led by its vigorous President, had gained a solid foothold on the Canadian radio market. Herbert Moore had told the 1936 Committee that "whereas all other major press services in the world are controlled by newspaper groups, or are subsidized by government, Transradio service is 100 percent independent."<sup>156</sup> Moreover he felt that broadcasters should have the same advantages as newspapers:

It is difficult to understand how it could be argued that Canadian broadcasters are not entitled to the same advantages as are Canadian publishers who freely buy the news service of the Associated Press, the so called British United Press and the International News Service. A glance at any leading Canadian newspaper will reveal the fact that most of them depend as much on American news services as they do the Canadian Press, and the same situation prevails in the Canadian radio field. The Canadian Press in itself is not adequate for publishers or for broadcasters.<sup>157</sup>

Certainly Transradio, which was something of a pace-setter in radio news under the adventuresome Moore, enjoyed considerable success among Canadian private stations. Despite CP's attempts to control this new form of service, the CBC prior to the summer of 1939 had given permission to twenty stations throughout Canada to purchase Transradio which was heard virtually nation-wide. The following stations took Transradio reports which were provided by teletype, telegraph or wireless: CKCO, Ottawa; CFCH, North Bay; CKOB, Timmins; CJKL, Kirkland Lake; CKCW, Moncton; CJCB, Sydney; CFCY, Charlottetown; CHML, Hamilton; CFCT, Victoria; CJIC, Sault Ste. Marie; CFCF, Montreal; CJRC, Winnipeg; CJRM, Regina; CJCX, Sidney; CFCN, Calgary; CFGP, Grande Prairie; CFNB, Fredericton; CKLW, Windsor;

CKCL, Toronto; and CFCO, Chatham.<sup>158</sup> Moore had argued that, in both Canada and the United States, newspaper publishers had turned their back "on the vast millions of people who reside beyond reach of their daily publications."<sup>159</sup> He saw such news agencies as CP trying "to restrain the broadcast of news purely for selfish reasons" and "to prevent radio from gaining any additional advertising business which the newspapers feel belongs to them."<sup>160</sup> Radio news had thus made an important breakthrough in Canada and had temporarily disrupted the alliance between the CBC and the print medium.

With the outbreak of war in September, 1939 which saw the mass media placed under the Defence of Canada regulations whose censorship authority was derived from the War Measures Act, the advantage again had shifted to the newspapers.<sup>161</sup> Their owners now sensed an opportunity to reiterate that print was the only reliable news gathering medium and to perhaps bring an end to sponsored radio newscasts. As a result, the Transradio service was suspended by the CBC after opponents charged that it was not only anti-British but also pro-Nazi. These accusations Transradio denied vehemently. When this action was taken by the CBC, on June 1st, 1940, Herbert Moore wrote a stern letter to Plaunt complaining that great damage had been inflicted "upon Transradio by your Board of Governors."<sup>162</sup> According to Moore, "the action of the CBC board of governors on June 1st, no matter what its ostensible purpose might have been, was engineered by elements who wish to destroy Transradio."<sup>163</sup> Moore saw his opponents as "the publishing monopoly in league with other anti-radio elements and further argued that "an independent press and an independent radio system are the only sure bulwark against the evils of monopoly, whether it be nationalism or fascism."<sup>164</sup> In this regard, the minutes of the June 1st

meeting of the CBC's board lend credence to Moore's views. The day long meeting was resumed at 2:45 p.m. when a large delegation of twenty-eight members of the Canadian Press appeared.<sup>165</sup> Among them were such prominent publishers as Rupert Davies, President of CP; Georges Pelletier of Le Devoir, a former Radio League activist; M. C. Nicholls of the Vancouver Province; H. C. Hindmarsh of the Toronto Star and Victor Sifton, whose editor, John Dafoe of the Winnipeg Free Press, was an influential colleague of Plaunt.<sup>166</sup> It is clear from the minutes of the board's meeting that the newspaper publishers were attempting to capitalize on the temper of the times which saw governmental censorship imposed on all radio and print news with the outbreak of war. As Carlton McNaught has written:

Moreover, as the war proceeded, there were intimations that purchase of news by the private stations might be forbidden altogether. Suggestions had been made that some of this radio news was not suitable for Canadian listeners in war-time, despite the fact that all broadcast news was subject to censorship.<sup>167</sup>

Hence the time was ripe for the newspaper publishers to push the CBC for more stringent regulation because advertisers, who helped the private stations pay for such services as Transradio, were anticipating a sponsorship ban on radio news in war-time conditions.<sup>168</sup> The publishers seemed to be aware their moment had arrived.

The minutes of the June 1st meeting show that Victor Sifton "emphasized that the Canadian Press was not asking for a monopoly but thought that particularly under war conditions it was not desirable to allow news to be sponsored commercially."<sup>169</sup> M. C. Nicholls "gave a brief history and an indication of the management and reliability of the Canadian Press news. He said that sponsored news was not desirable."<sup>170</sup> Similarly, "Mr. Hindmarsh said that Mr. Atkinson," the owner of the Toronto Star,



"wished to convey his regrets at not being able to be present. If he had been present, he would have urged that the Canadian Press was the only reliable news that should be taken by broadcasting stations."<sup>171</sup>

The newspaper representatives got a sympathetic reception from General Victor Odlum, a member of the CBC board, who left the meeting early to attend to military duties. The minutes of the meeting explained how he stated his position:

General Odlum outlined his ideas about some of the news services now being broadcast. He said that he would not make the recommendation which he had in mind now if it were not that the present was very critical and that precautions for the safety of the nation had to be considered. He was of the belief that all sponsored news services should be discontinued.<sup>172</sup>

The counter-arguments on behalf of the private broadcasters were advanced by Joseph Sedgwick, brother of the CAB president, and general counsel for the private industry. Heading a delegation representing the CAB, Sedgwick underlined the significance of broadcast news as a money-maker for private stations which would undoubtedly suffer a sharp financial setback, if this form of income were denied them. He told the board of governors, as the minutes of the meeting revealed, "that the loss of revenue to the private stations if there was a prohibition on sponsored news would approximate \$500,000 per annum."<sup>173</sup> After hearing both sides of the issue, the board decided to cancel the licences of Transradio and British United Press, a subsidiary of United Press, which also served nine private stations in Canada.<sup>174</sup> These were: CKCO, Ottawa; CKAC, Montreal; CJOR, Vancouver; CHNC, New Carlisle; CHRC, Quebec; CHAB, Moose Jaw; CKCK, Regina; CKBI, Prince Albert; and CJGX, Yorkton.<sup>175</sup> The permits of the two foreign-owned news agencies were to lapse as of July 1st but, according to the meeting's minutes, "new permission might be applied for

and would then be dealt with on their merits."<sup>176</sup> When questioned in the House of Commons on the board's decision, the Transport Minister; C. D. Howe made the latter quite clear:

It is not my understanding that Trans-Radio news has been prohibited. The matter is one that was dealt with by the board of governors of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at their meeting last Saturday, and the information that has reached me is that both British United Press and Trans-Radio news service have had their permits cancelled as of July 1st with the understanding that if they can show before that time their news source is accurate, new permits will be issued.<sup>177</sup>

Howe also noted, in his reply to M. J. Coldwell, the leader of the CCF, that the exact ownership of Transradio was in doubt:

There are three sources of news in Canada, the two organizations I have mentioned and the Canadian Press. There has been some trouble over news being put out in an unduly alarming form and many complaints have been received from radio listeners in this connection. There has also been difficulty ascertaining the exact ownership of Trans-Radio news. The owners are believed to be two gentlemen in the United States. This organization puts out bulletins with a London date line, but we have not been able to find its London offices or London sources of news. All these matters are to be examined into and if these organizations can show their bona fides, permits will be restored.<sup>178</sup>

The leader of the opposition, R. B. Hanson, then asked Howe, "does the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation constitute itself a censor of British news, through whatever channel it may come?" To this, the Minister replied:

As a matter of fact that news is not censored before it is issued. Transradio news comes in over the radio to the different distributing points. I am not suggesting that it would not be possible to censor this news, but as a matter

of fact the machinery does not operate in that way. The particular station is held responsible for the news it broadcasts, and is responsible to the censor if alarming or untrue statements are put out. The censor does not attempt to censor news coming from legitimate sources in London and elsewhere. This would not be done in any case unless we had reason to believe that messages were being put out under a London date line which did not originate in London.<sup>179</sup>

The minutes of the June 1st CBC meeting clearly suggest that British United Press, which eventually had its licence reinstated, was in a preferred position compared to Transradio and more in line with what Howe had described as "legitimate sources."<sup>180</sup> After the board decided to cancel both licences on June 1st, according to the minutes, "it was stated, however, that new permission might be applied for and would then be dealt with on their merits. The Board added that, should such an application be filed by British United Press, it was not aware of any fact which would at present justify its denial."<sup>181</sup> No mention was made of Transradio whose president later informed Plaunt that his company "has submitted to the Honourable Minister of Transport, Mr. C. D. Howe, our bona fides in respect to independent ownership and adequate London representation."<sup>182</sup> He also noted that "because of the delay in reconsideration, our competitor has in many places already taken over our clients, enjoying a security and preferentiality which is neither earned nor merited, as will be seen by studying the numerous complaints concerning it which have reached the Censorship authorities and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation itself."<sup>183</sup> At the June 1st meeting also, it was moved by Wilfrid Godfrey and seconded by Plaunt that the Corporation's regulations on sponsored newscasts be amended by adding a new clause which stipulated that "no one shall broadcast advertising content in the body of a news broadcast."<sup>184</sup> The newspaper-CBC alliance had again stymied the private sector.

Thus toward the end of the decade and after what Plaunt chose to call the "promotional stage" of the CBC, this second phase of public broadcasting was relatively successful.<sup>185</sup> The first CBC board had set a reasonably high standard and its members were Canadians of vision. Plaunt's previous experience had meant that he carried a heavy burden and, for the most part, was the board's mainstay through the Corporation's difficult early years. The administrative structure of the board, with separate policy and executive functions, which Plaunt had envisaged as the most suitable method of operating a public system, seemed to have worked well in this initial testing period. But Plaunt reiterated the need for a clear division between policy and management, if the board were to be successful in the future. His remarks, in a letter to Leonard Brockington, toward the latter part of 1938 also contained a hint of future problems that were to revolve around the General Manager of the Corporation:

The Board's job is policy: the Executive's job is management. If we have insufficient confidence in Mr. Murray's managerial judgment we should, rather than jeopardize the constitution for all time, seek someone in whom we can place our confidence.<sup>186</sup>

Plaunt also saw that the CBC had now reached a turning point and that the public system had been extended while freedom from government interference had been preserved:

I say that I feel the promotional stage is completed. I mean that with the completion of CBK and CBA we will have the essential nucleus of a national system. We now have effective control. There can be no turning back. The rest is extension, consolidation, upon the basis of this framework. Also, other main lines have been drawn, - the programme policy, freedom from government interference, freedom of speech and discussion, recognition of the importance, in a business of this kind, of flexibility.<sup>187</sup>

Moreover the CBC, in general, had been able to maintain an effective alliance with the print industry, a symbiotic relationship that had managed to raise the radio set licence fee and banish Transradio news. However Vic George, who claimed responsibility for bringing Transradio to Canada, has maintained that "if the man who ran it was pro-Nazi, he certainly kept it a dark secret from me."<sup>188</sup> Undoubtedly Herbert Moore had shown that he was an aggressive newsman and a strong competitor for the print wire services, but "all he was doing was being pro news instead of being pro American or pro whatever you like."<sup>189</sup> Nevertheless Moore had made it uncomfortable for print news services, because "they were being scooped" by this journalist "who had built his contacts in Europe."<sup>190</sup>

The quality of programming remained a chief concern of the board especially after criticisms were raised that the CBC was focusing less on the promotion of Canadian culture and more on the importation of American programs. Yet, in 1938, the CBC's drama department had been formed and was to broadcast some three hundred and fifty plays over the next four years, none of them commercially sponsored.<sup>191</sup> Plaunt was especially mindful of the CBC's educational role and sought to encourage a higher level of programming on the public system which he felt could still appeal to a variety of Canadians. In April, 1938, he had questioned Murray on the failure of the Corporation to carry the Metropolitan Opera Company's broadcast "Parsifal" which he felt would have enhanced "the prestige of our system."<sup>192</sup> He told Murray that he realized "such a sustained and difficult broadcast would only appeal to a certain number though I have reason to think that the discriminating minority is not confined to the upper income brackets."<sup>193</sup> Plaunt seemed to be aiming at cultivating a wider audience over a period of time through cultural

programming, an approach similar to the BBC in England.

He was obviously in a self-congratulatory mood, toward the end of 1938, when he wrote to Brockington listing the Corporation's achievements and shortcomings but emphasizing the former:

Throughout I have done the minutes, prepared the annual reports, written innumerable policy memoranda, handled as liaison the various crises, prepared material for your speeches, and so on ad infinitum. In short I have done anything and everything that the circumstances of the promotional period seemed to demand. The gap existed: perhaps no one else could at this stage have filled it.<sup>194</sup>

Plaunt was undoubtedly entitled to this place in the sun, but now it was time to look to the future. "I do not mean that many and important obstacles will not have to be met during the period of consolidation", wrote Plaunt, "they will, and I certainly hope to share in the overcoming of them. But my conviction holds that the groundwork job has been done."<sup>195</sup>

In future, Plaunt wanted his participation in the CBC "to be limited to that of an ordinary member of the Board."<sup>196</sup> As he wrote to Brockington, "this sounds rather like an obiter dicta. In a sense it is. In a sense I am taking leave of a first love."<sup>197</sup>

## CHAPTER VIII

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Archives, Ottawa, CRBC Files, "Description of the Origin of 'The Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission,'" 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 199.

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 15, May 14, 1936, 654.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 655.

<sup>7</sup> T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 117-118.

<sup>8</sup> House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 15, May 14, 1936, 655.

<sup>9</sup> PAC, Hearings of the Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting, Vol. 1, London, May 14, 1929, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Nolan, "Presentation for the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications commission with respect to concentration of Ownership in Private Broadcasting and the question of Cross-ownership", April 25, 1979, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> T. J. Allard Papers, CRTC, Unpublished portions of books on broadcasting, "Re: Page 36 of Typescript Submitted to Date: First Amendment Thereto," 2. For a look at the Toronto Star during the inter-war years, see Wilfrid Eggleston, While I Still Remember (Toronto, 1968) and for an examination of the career of Joseph Atkinson see R. Harkness, J. E. Atkinson of the Star (Toronto, 1963).

<sup>13</sup> Charles A. Bowman, Ottawa Editor: The Memoirs of Charles A. Bowman (Sidney, British Columbia, 1966), 121.

14 House of Commons, Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 15, May 14, 1936, 657.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ken Dewar, "The CBC: A Note on the Past and an Eye to the Future", Canadian Forum (October, 1979), 7.

18 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, PAC, Interview, Gerry Quinney, September 27, 1976.

19 Ibid., and Warren K. Agee, Phillip H. Ault, and Edwin Emery, Introduction to Mass Communications (New York, 1982), 156.

20 For a discussion of both print and broadcast wire services in Canada, see Carman Cumming, Mario Cardinal and Peter Johansen, Canadian News Services: Research publications of the Royal Commission on Newspapers Volume 6 (Hull, 1981).

21 Warren K. Agee, Philip H. Ault, and Edwin Emery, Introduction to Mass Communications (New York, 1982), 109.

22 Ibid.

23 Interview, H. E. Kidd, October 1, 1974.

24 I. Norman Smith, The Journal Men: Three Great Canadian Newspapermen and the Tradition They Created (Toronto, 1974), 99.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 100.

27 Ibid., 101. For a discussion of the early impact of the Canadian Press, see Carman Cumming, "The Canadian Press: A Force for Consensus" in G. Stuart Adam, ed., Journalism, Communication and the Law (Scarborough, 1976), 86-101. For still further details of the changes in news gathering created by the development of wire services, see Robert W. Desmond, The Information Process: World News Reporting to the Twentieth Century (Iowa City, 1978), 313-168, 349-368.

28 Warren K. Agee, Phillip H. Ault and Edwin Emery, Introduction to Mass Communications (New York, 1982), 156.



29 Ibid., 157.

30 Ibid.

31 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 35-38.

32 Progressive Conservative National Headquarters, Ottawa, Pamphlet entitled "Summary of Leadership Conventions 1927-1967", prepared for the party's 1976 leadership convention, 2.

33 London Free Press, July 16, 1930.

34 Ernest Watkins, R. B. Bennett: A Biography (Toronto, 1963), 226.

35 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, February 4, 1937.

36 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 150.

37 Ibid.

38 K. Z. Paltiel, Political Party Financing in Canada (Toronto, 1970), 77 and W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto, 1967), 31.

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42 W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto and Montreal, 1967), 129, 158-161.

43 Mackenzie King Diary, PAC, November 19, 1936.

44 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 195.

45 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, October 12, 1938.

46 Ibid., Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, July 21, 1936.

47 For a discussion of Brophy's radio career, see Peter Stursberg, Mister Broadcasting: The Ernie Bushnell Story (Toronto, 1971), 63-64.

48 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Murray, July 21, 1936.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourn, C. D. Howe: A Biography (Toronto, 1978), 101.

54 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 205..

55 Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.

56 Ibid.

57 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 192, footnote 3.

58 Mackenzie King Papers, PAC (microfilm) E. A. Pickering to Mackenzie King, September 3, 1936, C141176, C-4278.

59 Ibid.

60 Reginald Whitaker, The Government Party (Toronto, 1977), 77.

61 Ibid., 87.

62 Ibid., 90.

63 Ibid., 99.

64 Ibid., 98.

65 J. L. Granatstein, A Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft 1929-68 (Ottawa, 1981), preface xi.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 For a discussion of the "New Liberalism" during this period, see H. Blair Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King: The Prism of Unity 1932-1939, Volume III (Toronto, 1976), 28-49.

69 Mackenzie King Diary, August 27, 1936.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid., September 8, 1936.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., September 10, 1936.

77 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 195.

78 Ibid. and Peter Stursberg, Mister Broadcasting: the Ernie Bushnell Story (Toronto, 1971), 64.

79 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 125.

80 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Murray, September 25, 1936.

81 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 207-208 and J. L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins 1935-1957 (Toronto, 1982), 82-83. Professor Granatstein has noted that Plaunt tried to get Lester Pearson to join the CBC in a public relations role.

82 Interview, Graham Spry, August 31, 1979.

- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Mackenzie King Diary, November 19, 1936.
- 87 W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto and Montreal, 1967), 85.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Neil McKenty, Mitch Hepburn (Toronto, 1967), 88.
- 90 Ibid., 93, 72. See also R. M. H. Alway, "Hepburn, King and the Rowell-Sirois Commission", CHR (June, 1967), 113-141.
- 91 Reginald Whitaker, The Government Party (Toronto, 1977), 64.
- 92 W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto and Montreal, 1967), 85.
- 93 Mackenzie King Diary, November 19, 1936.
- 94 Ibid.
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- 96 Mackenzie King Diary, November 19, 1936.
- 97 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Donald Manson, December 23, 1936.
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- 99 Ibid., 149-150.
- 100 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 226.
- 101 Ibid., 227.
- 102 Ibid., 211.

- 103 Ibid., 212.
- 104 Ibid., 217.
- 105 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt Donald Manson, January 22, 1937.
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 Ibid., Plaunt to Augustin Frigon, January 22, 1937.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Ibid., Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, February 4, 1937.
- 112 Ibid.
- 113 Ibid.
- 114 Ibid.
- 115 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 213.
- 116 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Brockington; April 23, 1937.
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 214.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Ernie Swan, September 21, 1976.

123 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1951 (Ottawa, 1979), 144.

124 Ibid., 145. Allard has noted that "Manson was determined to use the mechanics of frequency and power allocations to eliminate CFCN, Calgary and CKY, Winnipeg so that Corporation stations might be erected at high power on the Prairies; and to reduce the size of CFRB and CKAC." CKLW was eventually included as well.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid.

127 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to J. F. B. Livesay, November 14, 1937.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.

131 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto and Montreal, 1965), 216.

132 Frank Foster, Broadcasting Policy Development, 71.

133 Ibid., 81. The two stations were located at Watrous, Saskatchewan and at Sackville, New Brunswick.

134 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto 1969), 211.

135 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, January 13, 1938.

136 Ibid.

137 Ibid.

138 Mackenzie King Papers, Edward Pickering to Mackenzie King, January 17, 1938, C141203, C-4278.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid.

141 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 126-127 and E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting (Toronto, and Montreal, 1965), 263.

142 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Herbert Moore to Plaunt, June 21, 1940.

143 Carman Cumming, Mario Cardinal, and Peter Johansen, Canadian News Services: Research Publications of the Royal Commission on Newspapers Volume 6 (Hull, 1981), 8.

144 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, J. F. B. Livesay to Gladstone Murray, December 23, 1937.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.

148 House of Commons, Special Committee on the Canadian Radio Commission, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 3, April 7, 1936, 78.

149 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, J. F. B. Livesay to Gladstone Murray, December 23, 1937.

150 Ibid.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 House of Commons, Special Committee on the Canadian Radio Commission, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 3, April 7, 1936, 74.

156 Ibid., No. 11, May 7, 1936, 385.

157 Ibid., 383.

158 Carleton McNaught, Canada Gets the News (Toronto, 1940), 253.

- 159 House of Commons, Special Committee on the Canadian Radio Commission, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence (Ottawa, 1936), No. 11, May 7, 1936, 381.
- 160 Ibid., 382.
- 161 W. H. Kesterton, A History of Journalism in Canada (Toronto, 1967), 247.
- 162 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Herbert Moore to Plaunt, June 21, 1940.
- 163 Ibid.
- 164 Ibid.
- 165 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, CBC Minutes and Agenda, "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Governors", Ottawa, June 1, 1940, 3.
- 166 Ibid.
- 167 Carleton McNaught, Canada gets the News (Toronto, 1940), 254.
- 168 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, CBC Minutes and Agenda, "Minutes of the 15th Meeting of the Board of Governors", August 19, 1940, 4.
- 169 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, CBC Minutes and Agenda, "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Governors", June 1, 1940, 3.
- 170 Ibid.
- 171 Ibid.
- 172 Ibid., 4.
- 173 Ibid.
- 174 Ibid., 5.
- 175 Carleton McNaught, Canada gets the News (Toronto, 1940), 253.
- 176 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, CBC Minutes and Agenda, "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Governors", June 1, 1940, 5.
- 177 House of Commons, Debates, June 6, 1940, 608-609.



- 178 Ibid.
- 179 Ibid.
- 180 Ibid.
- 181 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, CBC Minutes and Agenda, "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Governors", June 1, 1940, 5.
- 182 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Herbert Moore to Plaunt, June 21, 1940.
- 183 Ibid.
- 184 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, CBC Minutes and Agenda, "Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Board of Governors, June 1, 1940.
- 185 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, October 12, 1938.
- 186 Ibid.
- 187 Ibid.
- 188 The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Interview, Vic George, January 21, 1977.
- 189 Ibid.
- 190 Ibid.
- 191 E. Austin Weir, The Struggle for National Broadcasting in Canada (Toronto, 1965), 267-268.
- 192 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, April 16, 1938.
- 193 Ibid.
- 194 Ibid., Plaunt to Brockington, October 12, 1938.
- 195 Ibid.
- 196 Ibid.
- 197 Ibid.

## CHAPTER IX

### Pacifism versus Imperialism

Canadians were in a sombre and apprehensive mood as the decade of the 1930s came to a close. They had good reason to be anxious as federal-provincial tensions within the country strained the fabric of the nation. Mackenzie King's appointment of the Rowell-Sirois Commission in 1937 was aimed at defusing some of the constitutional and financial difficulties the Depression had created for both levels of government.<sup>1</sup> The Liberal Government subsequently found itself challenged by strong provincial administrations, in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia. If domestically conditions appeared to be bleak, they were no less so on the international stage. By the 1930s, the spectre of war hung over Europe and North America and Canadians, who recalled the horrors of the Great War, recoiled at the thought of being drawn into another holocaust. Yet despite this somewhat dismal future, Canada had emerged through the inter-war period with greater autonomy in international affairs. The nation had also advanced culturally, and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was undoubtedly the greatest single manifestation of this form of growth. However there were other signs as well. The Dominion Drama Festival was inaugurated in 1933 and six years later, when war broke out, the National Film Board was established.<sup>2</sup> Interest in Canadian painting was quite pronounced, during this period, even though relatively few citizens, except the wealthiest, were able to purchase the paintings of the Group of Seven.<sup>3</sup> But these national achievements now seemed to fade into the background as the country prepared to face another round of economic and political adjustments given the crises that seemed to be

looming internationally and on the home front.

When Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939, the CBC was only three years old and was in the midst of trying to consolidate its position after undertaking its earlier promotional phase. In peacetime conditions, Plaunt's view of the Corporation as "a new form of public organization" relatively free of government interference was perhaps viable.<sup>4</sup> But, when war struck, both the private broadcasters and the Corporation's own stations inevitably were to become subordinate to the demands of the State and the censorship directorate. Thus the normal methods and operation of the CBC could be profoundly altered, in the event of war, even though Plaunt, as a leading member of the Board of Governors, steadfastly insisted that the CBC should remain as independent as possible.<sup>5</sup> These changed conditions were to produce considerable differences of opinion between Plaunt and Gladstone Murray, the CBC's General Manager, as to the functioning of the Corporation. As well, both men had their own personal hardships to undergo during this period. Plaunt was suffering from cancer and underwent his first major operation, in the fall of 1939.<sup>6</sup> Murray, meanwhile, had fallen victim to alcohol, and his drinking habits became more pronounced as the war progressed.

The war period was an exceptionally difficult time for the CBC, because it was obvious that the Corporation would receive closer government supervision in its day to day operations. The behaviour of both Murray and Plaunt and the tensions that grew between them have to be seen, therefore, with the world conflict as an important backdrop. The great enmity that developed had as much to do with their ideological outlooks on the war as it did their individual concepts of public broadcasting. Plaunt's firm isolationist position, his attempts to influence CBC appointments, and the larger question of access to the public broadcasting system were factors

that helped to create a tense atmosphere surrounding the CBC in 1939 and 1940. Besides these antagonisms, there were other irritants as well. Plaunt's staunch defence of Frank Underhill, a University of Toronto historian who publicly espoused a neutralist stance for Canada in wartime, brought him into sharp conflict with George Drew, the Ontario Conservative leader and a confidant of Murray's.<sup>7</sup> At issue was the notion of academic freedom and the right of Canadians to dissent openly, in wartime, with those in the political arena. Similarly, in the summer of 1939, Plaunt had urged Mackenzie King to keep Canada out of the war for fear that armed intervention would be disruptive of national unity.<sup>8</sup> During this time also, Plaunt undertook a major study of the Corporation's structure and administrative personnel and his subsequent report was to cause further resentment between him and Murray.

In addition, a White Paper on political broadcasting, which Plaunt had written as a guide for the CBC in determining party access to broadcast facilities during and between elections, was not implemented in the manner he had preferred.<sup>9</sup> This was another item that sent him and Murray along separate paths. Then there were the divergent views of the two men toward the method of operating the CBC and its relations with private broadcasters. Plaunt felt strongly that the Corporation should dominate in virtually all aspects of Canadian broadcasting, whereas Murray envisaged public broadcasting as more of a partnership between both private and public sectors. Canada's entry into the war and the subsequent Defence of Canada Regulations, which governed broadcasting, thus sparked a widespread controversy which took its toll on Corporation personnel. A series of resignations took place in the fall of 1939 and Plaunt too resigned the following year, because he was distraught over these grievances already outlined and

perturbed about the role the CBC was to assume in wartime.

Plaunt and Murray had been allies in launching the CBC as a distinctive broadcasting structure for Canada, but the two of them were dissimilar in many ways. Murray had had a distinguished record during the First World War as a member of the Royal Flying Corps.<sup>10</sup> One of his most memorable feats was his flying behind enemy lines to drop a wreath on the airdrome of the great German ace, Baron von Richtofen.<sup>11</sup> Prior to World War Two, he had exhibited a pronounced pro-imperialist stance and supported active assistance for the evolving assertive British foreign policy. Once war had occurred, he supported extensive government control of the media; he also attempted to consolidate his own control over the CBC especially, in his dealings with C. D. Howe who was a highly influential minister during the war years. According to Edward Pickering, who had joined the CBC in November, 1938 after serving in the Prime Minister's office, Murray took "advantage of the outbreak of war to bring the CBC under the direct administration" of the minister responsible for its operation, C. D. Howe, and, in that way, "supercede the control of the board."<sup>12</sup> Pickering has recalled how Murray and Howe managed a closer working relationship when the war started:

On the Sunday that war broke out, I discussed with Murray the constitutional position of the CBC in the time of war. I developed the position that if the government was going to do anything under the War Measures Act, then it should be done not by word of mouth but by order in council or some clear regulatory device that would be a clear basis on which this would happen. He suggested I put my views in writing which I did. It became clear in the next few days that Murray never transmitted that to the Minister or to the board and he allowed Howe really to take over. I'm not saying that this was a conspiracy. I just believe that C. D. with his direct methods began telling him what to do and what not to do.<sup>13</sup>

Murray, according to Pickering, "succeeded for quite a long time in reducing the authority of the board and Alan eventually resigned because of the board's ineffectiveness."<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, for Plaunt, these were distressing years as he watched the influence of the broadcasting structure, that he had worked so hard to build up, reduced drastically. The entire censorship machinery was anathema to him and, being an isolationist and pacifist, he was particularly upset at the CBC ruling that news or commentaries carried on United States stations could not be heard on Canadian stations.<sup>15</sup> Clearly he had been on the side of American neutrality and was close to the position adopted by the CCF on the role of Canada in the war. Prior to September, 1939, Plaunt's attitude toward the war manifested itself in four ways: his attempt to rally prominent citizens to the neutralist side, his desire to have progressive-minded individuals on the CBC board, his criticism of the Corporation's programming and his concern that all viewpoints on Canada's war effort be heard on the CBC.

Plaunt had come to the financial aid of the CCF, because he believed in many of the party's social objectives. David Lewis, who has explained how Plaunt provided ten thousand dollars to help finance the party's national office at 124 Wellington Street in Ottawa, outlined his attitude toward Canada's war effort:

Plaunt was not a socialist in the doctrinaire sense but he was a humane person and a strong supporter of CCF policies in public broadcasting, utilities, and resources as well as in the area of social security and social welfare. Most important in his eyes, however, was our foreign policy. Plaunt was one of a large group of interested Canadians, many of them members of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, who demanded that Canada have the freedom and the courage to refuse to be dragged into a European war merely because Britain was involved. This

had urgent relevance in the thirties as the Second World War became daily more imminent. The CCF and its Members of Parliament shared this view and propagated the right of Canada to act independently on the outbreak of war.<sup>16</sup>

It was to this end that Plaunt undertook a new cause in the late 1930s - the organization of a Neutrality League along with such individuals as Frank Scott, Frank Underhill and other members of the League for Social Reconstruction.<sup>17</sup> One of the Ottawa members of this league was Alan Gibbons, Plaunt's friend from their student days at the University of Toronto, who helped marshal support for the isolationist position:

A lot of young people in those days were North American isolationists. They would say to hell with these proud men in Europe and let them stew in their own juice. Having that attitude we didn't want to get mixed up in the war.<sup>18</sup>

Gibbons noted how Plaunt helped to spearhead the pacifist campaign and how the group got "a list of prominent individuals to support our views."<sup>19</sup>

A pamphlet with the title "Canadian Unity in War and Peace", which promoted Canada's right to neutrality, was published in the Winnipeg Free Press on March 8, 1939.<sup>20</sup> International developments had always drawn Plaunt's interest and, as his activity on the CBC board began to diminish somewhat after the Corporation's early years of operation, he found more time to travel abroad. The year before the "phoney" war began Plaunt and his wife Dorothy, along with Gibbons and George Smith, who had known him during university days at Toronto, had visited Europe when the spectre of war hung over the continent. As Smith explained to Brooke Claxton:

I remember his arrival in Paris in 1938. He had been delayed by CBC business in Canada. We met him at the Gare du Nord. During the next week he and Dorothy, Alan and I were together in Paris, Chartres and at the Hague. Sightseeing, shopping, and gastronomy. With Alan Gibbons' car, we covered a lot of ground in a short time. It was a time of uninterrupted

fun although we were all aware that the shadows were falling over Europe. Alan Gibbons tried to persuade me to go with him to Prague and Vienna - he said this would be my last chance - but I had to return to England to catch my ship for Canada. At Rotterdam, in the Boymans Museum, another side of Alan Plaunt emerged - a love of good pictures. There was an exhibition of pictures from private collections not usually to be seen. This collection stirred the greatest enthusiasm.<sup>21</sup>

In the fall of that same year, Plaunt had discussed with Norman Lambert, head of the National Liberal Federation, the possibility of forming the Neutrality League. Lambert's diary shows that he and Plaunt met frequently both on social occasions and over business luncheons. On September 19, 1938, Lambert recorded the following:

Saw Alan Plaunt at lunch and discussed League for Canadian Neutrality. He mentioned Frank Scott as possible leader.<sup>22</sup>

Plaunt also met Lambert about two weeks later and received some advice on the membership makeup of the proposed league. Lambert felt that such an organization should have a fairly broad spectrum of support and go beyond members of the CCF and the League for Social Reconstruction. He advised Plaunt "against adopting existing CCF or LSR organizations lest the idea be handicapped from the start. It should arise from a wider base."<sup>23</sup> The Neutrality League was discussed between them again on October 14 and after the meeting Plaunt "left certain files" with Lambert for his consideration.<sup>24</sup> During this period also, Plaunt appeared to be trying to ensure that any new appointments to the board of governors of the CBC would be somewhat sympathetic to the views he had espoused on Canada's role in the forthcoming war. In particular, he saw the possibility of replacing three members Alexandre Vachon, J. W. Godfrey, and Canon Wilfred Fuller, an Anglican clergyman who had taken the position earlier vacated by Wilfrid Bovey, with



individuals who might hold more progressive views on both national and international issues.<sup>25</sup>

Late in 1938, Plaunt wrote to Brooke Claxton seeking his opinion on potential replacements for the three members. Stressing, in his letter, that he was "exceedingly indiscreet" in expressing his ideas "other than verbally," he outlined the kinds of individuals he saw desirable for the future of the board:<sup>26</sup>

Assuming the desirability of some new appointments at the present time, the big question is, who? and I would particularly appreciate your suggestions on this aspect. To replace Vachon one should I suppose try to get a youngish French Canadian of wide and liberal views who would be as persona grata as possible (or at least not non persona grata) with both Ottawa and Quebec City. Perhaps also he should come from somewhere other than Montreal. To replace Fuller I think we should either revert to our original idea and appoint an English Canadian from Quebec, or someone from the prairies. If from Quebec, who could you suggest who would be liberal minded and agreeable to the French speaking members of the Board? If from the West can you suggest anyone from, say, Saskatchewan or Alberta, who would be a genuine representative of the Prairies viewpoint and who at the same time could not be taken exception to by Jimmie Gardiner. To replace Godfrey we should have someone, if possible, with less of an Imperialist bias.<sup>27</sup>

"Given intelligent appointments" he said, "I feel sure the ship has a good chance of surviving."<sup>28</sup> Plaunt obviously wanted the CBC board and administrative staff to contain personnel with forward looking views as his letter to Claxton had suggested. In this regard, it is worth examining such appointments from Murray's standpoint because the General Manager, who carried out the board's policies, had some general misgivings about the kind of employees the Corporation initially intended to hire. In Murray's personal papers are two pages of handwritten notes for an interview on the

CBC's early days conducted in 1961 to celebrate the Corporation's twenty-fifth anniversary. In answer to the question, "what was the first problem that confronted you?" as General Manager, Murray offered the following response:<sup>29</sup>

The first problem, of course, was appropriate staff. A difficulty I had to face was that the most influential of my associates wished to build a staff of left-wing political bias. There was of course no question of not welcoming left-wing workers but it certainly would have been wrong to confer upon them decisive policy power in line with their politics. The same thing of course would have applied to Progressive-Conservatives, Liberals and Social Creditors if they equalled or excelled the power of the other parties. Communists in those days did not matter enough to worry about.<sup>30</sup>

At roughly the same time when the CBC's regulatory power over the private broadcasters was removed in 1958, Murray made these observations:

Recalling my experiences as the first general manager of the CBC, I am delighted with the legislation that will spare the CBC the task of regulating private radio. This was a task I tried to shed in vain in the early days. The snag was that a conspiracy existed to abolish private radio and give the CBC monopoly control throughout Canada. The left wingers behind the conspiracy thought I would follow along because of my previous experience in the BBC. Actually my experience in the BBC convinced me of the importance of the co-existence and rational competition of public and private radio.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps the most graphic indication of the differences between Plaunt and Murray, over the CBC's role in reporting developments surrounding the war, is contained in a bitter letter Plaunt wrote to the General Manager early in 1939. In ways, it was uncharacteristic of Plaunt because he seldom seemed to interfere personally and directly in programming policy. However, this time, he could not restrain his anger over "The CBC's Special New Year's Feature."<sup>32</sup>

As a combination of banality, bad taste, cheap sentimentality, jingoism, and incoherent production, this programme would, in my opinion, be hard to beat. In the first place the conception - boss, man-in-the-street, mother ("she who watches"!) was childish, to say the least, and well calculated to confuse. The script was banal and tasteless. Absurd repetition, for example, of January nineteen thirty-eight, February nineteen thirty eight, March nineteen thirty eight, ad nauseum; and of "The CBC now brings to you a resume of the days news supplied by the Canadian Press," about twenty times.<sup>33</sup>

Aside from these production aspects, Plaunt was extremely irritated at the ideological overtones to this radio feature:

The parts relating to Canada and the Empire during the various European crises, and the references to the Crown, were especially objectionable. They were crude and infantile - a travesty on the real currents of thought and feeling in Canada.<sup>34</sup>

He was obviously disturbed at the attitudes residents of the United States could have toward such a program:

An American listening in would get no impression other than that we were a mawkish and sentimental bunch of imperialist half-wits, slavish Chamberlain worshippers with no identity or independence of our own. I need not elaborate on the sentimentality. The whole production dripped of it. Genuine sentiment is one thing; this saccharine stuff is false and disgusting.<sup>35</sup>

Plaunt also singled out a number of what he considered to be distortions by omission, in particular, the Lima Conference, which was probably the most notable event in Latin-America in 1938:

So much for commission. On the side of omission, the production revealed the most obvious gaps. For example, the Lima conference of such great importance to the countries of America, was not so much as mentioned.<sup>36</sup>

The conference held at Lima, Peru was opened on December 9th and lasted for eighteen days. Secretary of State Cordell Hull led the United States delegation and one of his objectives was to gain agreement among American

nations for a solid front against Fascism and Communism.<sup>37</sup> This was a difficult task, in many ways, because such countries as Argentina and Uruguay had close commercial ties with European countries. Nevertheless, the Declaration of Lima, which was approved by the twenty-one delegations on Christmas Eve, called for joint action by American states to meet any common threat and, if any of the states so chose, the foreign ministers of the various countries could be called together at once.<sup>38</sup> The agreement passed at the eighth Pan-American conference did not have the full status of a treaty. But the conference represented the first clear attempt to establish a doctrine of continental solidarity.<sup>39</sup> Plaunt had seen the CBC's failure to refer to the developments at Lima as a great oversight and reminded Murray that he was not accustomed to expressing this kind of complaint:

As you know that is the first time I have written at length about programme. This one made me realize how urgent it is for us to get producers of taste, ability and discrimination.<sup>40</sup>

"You are at liberty to pass this on to those immediately responsible," wrote Plaunt, "if you so desire."<sup>41</sup>

This state of grievance seemed to give Murray cause for considerable pause because, just a week or so later, he wrote a delicately worded letter to Plaunt seeking his advice on the question of allowing politicians on the CBC. It is clear from Murray's remarks that the Corporation was making some significant decisions governing the flow of information to the public, in this crucial period, leading up to the declaration of war:

In a special education series which is being worked out by Donald Buchanan there was a suggestion that in the final discussion the leader should be Coldwell of the CCF. In view of the fact that yesterday I turned down Maitland in a Forum because he was the leader of the Conservative party in B.C., I felt it

was undesirable to put Coldwell in a specially conspicuous place. So I told Buchanan that he might include him in the series, but not at the end and as a matter of fact I would feel happier if he were not in at all.<sup>42</sup>

It is worth recalling that Plaunt and Donald Buchanan were close colleagues and that Plaunt had helped to fund the office of the CCF while he was a member of the Board of Governors of the CBC. Murray seemed to be fully aware of Plaunt's political leanings in his discreet letter:

I wonder what you think about this. There apparently is the prospect of some trouble from educational people, but I think that if we apply one rule to the 'right' of politics, we should do the same thing to the 'left'. If you have any strong feelings one way or the other, would you please send me a wire in Toronto tomorrow because there is a possibility of trouble.<sup>43</sup>

Certainly Buchanan, as Director of Talks and Public Affairs Broadcasts for the CBC, had wanted to ensure that the isolationist sentiment was communicated to listeners. Buchanan, in an internal memo to Murray, informed him he was looking for "a few names of Canadian nationalists or Canadian isolationists."<sup>44</sup>

Most authorities on international affairs appear to be either collectivists or imperialists. This does not leave us with much choice. Frank Underhill of the University of Toronto is an isolationist, but he would arouse too much controversy by the way in which he would express his opinions. Escott Reid, who is on leave of absence for a year from his post as national secretary of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, and who at present is acting as a professor at Dalhousie University, where Dr. Stewart is, might be the ideal person, if he would accept. He is a man who has moved slowly in recent years from the collectivist position to a point of view in which he believes more in complete freedom of action for Canada. He is a fairly good speaker in public, but I have never heard him on the radio.<sup>45</sup>

During the same month, the CBC was embroiled in a controversy with George McCullagh, owner of the Globe and Mail, who was denied permission to buy time on a network of stations for a series of radio addresses. McCullagh had lost faith in both old line political parties and wanted to present his views on a new non-political movement which he had envisaged.<sup>46</sup> Murray informed him that the board of governors had recently approved a ruling which stated that "no individual may purchase any network to broadcast his own opinions."<sup>47</sup> But the owner of the Globe and Mail eventually got around the ruling by recording his speeches and having nineteen privately-owned stations play the records simultaneously.<sup>48</sup> There were also less publicized incidents of politicians exerting pressure on the Corporation from behind the scenes. Orville Shugg, who had produced the initial program in the CBC's Farm Broadcast service on February 6, 1939, bore the brunt of criticism from an Ontario Member of Parliament.<sup>49</sup> As a result, there was an attempt to remove him from the farm broadcasts even though, within the next nineteen months, these successful programs were heard from coast to coast on a regional basis. When Shugg's probationary period at CBC was concluded, he learned from Murray that complaints over the confirmation of his appointment had been received:

Gladstone Murray explained to me what the problem was. I had run afoul of the politicians. He thought this was a great joke because the Honourable Paul Martin from Windsor was trying to keep me out of the Corporation. The reason he was trying to keep me out was he was acting on behalf of my local constituency in Kent-East Lambton where I had worked for the H. H. Stevens candidate Bert Fansher. This particular day Murray laughed and said, 'Well Shugg, you are the exception to the rule. Instead of the politicians trying to get you into the Corporation they are trying to get you out.'<sup>50</sup>

"I was mightily impressed by the loyalty of Gladstone Murray to his staff",

said Shugg, "where under many normal conditions the chief executive would have caved into the politicians and I would have been out on my ear."<sup>51</sup>

Later Shugg was to underline the friction that had developed between Murray and Plaunt in a letter to a former member of the New Canada Movement:

Some things I am about to write must be treated with circumspection. You may or may not know that for some time before, and certainly after his resignation from the Board of Governors, Plaunt and Murray had no use for each other. One of the reasons I was able to carry on my friendship with Plaunt, unmolested, was because it was known to only one or two people in the CBC, and to them but sketchily.<sup>52</sup>

Another controversy in which Plaunt became embroiled - the Frank Underhill Affair - also served to expose his conviction that Canada should not necessarily follow Britain's position on German aggression. Plaunt believed that the isolationist stance should be promoted publicly by academics, the majority of whom seldom became directly involved in political debates during the inter-war years. As Michiel Horn has noted, the late 1930s was a time when the boundaries of academic freedom were "not yet secure" and "some people insisted that one function of education ought to be the reinforcement of sound principles and constituted authority, [and] that one duty of professors is to uphold established verities, especially in times of danger."<sup>53</sup> The Frank Underhill case arose in the spring of 1939 when war feelings ran high and Hitler's motorized infantry were on the march having occupied Bohemia, Moravia and Prague.<sup>54</sup>

Plaunt, a friend of Underhill, strongly defended the University of Toronto historian and Professor George Grube, a pacifist, who taught at Trinity College, after both professors were criticized by Mitchell Hepburn and George Drew in the Ontario Legislature. Professor Grube had questioned the latest increases in Canadian defence spending and, for this, Hepburn

felt he should be disciplined. The Ontario Premier expressed his concern over left-wing dissent: "usually when we find communistic activities, we find among them leading spokesmen who are associated with our universities."<sup>55</sup> Drew, who also raised the issue of academic freedom in the Legislature, referred to a speech given by Underhill four years earlier. At that time, Underhill had stated that "we must make it clear to the world, and especially to Great Britain, that the poppies blooming in Flanders fields have no further interest for us. We must fortify ourselves against the allurements of a British war for democracy and freedom and parliamentary institutions."<sup>56</sup> For Plaunt, any attempt by politicians to muzzle freedom of speech was something he could never stomach. On April 17, 1939, he wrote a pointed letter to Drew in which he argued vigorously on behalf of the two professors and criticized the Conservative leader for his statements on the war effort. "Dear George", wrote Plaunt, "I have deliberately canvassed the views of a considerable number of people of all political persuasions and I can assure you that it is generally and strongly felt that these statements constitute an attack on the very basis of our democracy."<sup>57</sup>

The form of the attack is your demand that professors or teachers who express critical views on Canadian external policy within or without the university or educational institution should be prevented, in the name of British democracy, from doing so. You would deny a teacher selected by the university the right - and duty - of interpreting facts and situations as he sees them. This is known as academic freedom and is cherished by all genuine democrats as one of the pillars of democracy.<sup>58</sup>

Plaunt drew upon his Toronto and Oxford university experience to help buttress his arguments against Drew:

I have studied British institutions both at the University of Toronto and at Oxford and have always assumed the essence of British democracy to be summed up as follows: "I



may not agree with what you say but I shall defend with my life your right to say it." Surely you must know that a large number of teachers in English universities take an active part in politics, Conservative, Liberal, Labour, even Communist. Several noted socialists, for example; from the universities of London and Oxford (I refer to Harold Laski and G. D. H. Cole) are prominent in the higher councils of the Labour party. Indeed professors often contest seats for parliament. No responsible politician at Westminster would dare to question the right or indeed the value of these men airing their views, often denunciatory of the government, by pen or platform.<sup>59</sup>

Plaunt also accused Drew of using the legal protection afforded him as a member of the Ontario Legislature in an undemocratic manner:

In reading the reports of the discussion in the legislature last Wednesday and Thursday, the utterances of these professors were described as "seditious." If these two men have done or said anything which is in fact seditious they are, like you or me, subject to the ordinary penalties of the law, and should long since have been prosecuted by the Attorney-General. It is merely cowardly to hurl insults at defenseless citizens under cover of parliamentary privilege.<sup>60</sup>

Toward the end of Plaunt's letter was a parting salvo at Drew and his intolerant convictions about Canadian obligations towards Britain:

One final word. I have read with interest your many eloquent appeals for Canada to prepare to fight for democracy. The events to which I have referred compel me to enquire how you define democracy. As you are doubtless aware, many Canadians take the view that Canada should not intervene in European wars. Is not the number of such people likely to increase if it is felt, as you appear anxious to demonstrate that we must destroy democracy at home in order to fight for it abroad.<sup>61</sup>

Plaunt forwarded a copy of this letter to the Reverend D. Bruce Macdonald who was Chancellor of the University of Toronto. He informed

him that "it is generally felt here that both Colonel Drew and Premier Hepburn have outraged the elementary principles of democracy."<sup>62</sup> As Plaunt explained, "if the Premier attempts to implement his threats, I feel certain that public opinion will effectively support the Boards of Governors of the University and of Trinity College in resisting. It is obvious that the vital principle of a university is involved."<sup>63</sup> In his reply, Drew took Plaunt to task for his 'divided loyalties'. "Canada is a British country", he stated, "and those of us who believe that Canada should remain British have a right to say that in our great institutions of learning anti-British Doctrines shall not be taught."<sup>64</sup> Drew, the ultimate WASP, also attacked the apparent fusion of pro-communist and isolationist forces: "Our youth are instructed by parlour pinks who preach Empire disunity from the cloistered protection of jobs which give them all too much free time."<sup>65</sup>

In the end, Underhill kept his job at the university and Grube promised to be somewhat more discreet in his public statements. But Plaunt's exchange with Drew had shown the intensity of his belief that freedom of expression must be allowed on public issues even in wartime. Moreover Plaunt's defence of both professors was only natural because the three shared the same views on Canada's war effort. It was hardly surprising that Grube should feel free to call upon Plaunt to help fund the Canadian Forum which was in trouble financially at the start of the war. Grube wrote to Plaunt on June 7, 1939 asking for five hundred dollars which he had promised:

You will recall that when we were lunching at Hart House, recently, you suggested that you would be able to help the Forum during the coming year, and that you were willing to make yourself responsible for \$500 in the course of the year - part of which was to be spent on rehabilitating the paper (about \$200), and the rest probably on secretarial assistance to the editorial side.<sup>66</sup>

Grube reminded Plaunt that the Forum could serve as a convenient vehicle for him if he chose to state his position on Canada's participation in the war:

I hope you will also keep in mind that the Forum is the only publication, or very nearly, which welcomes articles that take the isolationist position, and that if you come across anything good in that line, or feel like writing something yourself we should be very glad to see it.<sup>67</sup>

Plaunt eventually provided the money requested, one of several contributions he had made throughout the 1930s, to help the financially troubled journal.

The debate over Canada's role in the war effort found its way into Parliament, of course, on numerous occasions. There Mackenzie King steadfastly held to his guideline that "Parliament will decide."<sup>68</sup> King, who remembered vividly the horrors of World War One and its damage to national unity, argued that Parliament would decide on the level of Canadian participation. Plaunt, a non-interventionist who saw involvement in the war also as "a nightmare and sheer madness", had been doing his utmost in 1939 to persuade King to stay clear of the European conflict.<sup>69</sup> In August, just a couple of weeks prior to Canada entering the war, he wrote the following to the Prime Minister:

Permit me to express my warm appreciation of the position taken by yourself and your colleagues in the present crisis. I have been especially interested, in the last ten years, in studying Canadian opinion as it bears on external policy, and I am convinced that the great majority of Canadians are similarly grateful of your courageous and steadfast refusal to be stampeded by a vocal but minority group. Canadian unity being the paramount Canadian interest, it must seem obvious to most Canadians that no other course can properly be followed.<sup>70</sup>

Plaunt then explained to King his isolationist position:

For my own part, of course, I have long held and expressed the conviction that a policy of armed intervention in Europe would render impossible of fulfillment the hope of creating a unified, democratic Canadian nation. This belief, to my knowledge, is widely though not always articulately held. I also share the view that the armed intervention of North American nations can hinder rather than help a genuine solution of the basic European problem.<sup>71</sup>

Plaunt's outlook on the war, as explained in his correspondence with Mackenzie King, inevitably clashed with Murray's position which was decidedly more interventionist. In July and August of 1939, Murray had visited England where he reportedly conferred with Lord Perth, head of the British propaganda department.<sup>72</sup> Plaunt was greatly annoyed at the impression this action of the CBC General Manager might create in Canada and he became even more 'disenchanted when Murray travelled frequently to New York, at CBC's expense, to meet with Sir William Stephenson, the famous "Quiet Canadian", whose code name was "Intrepid."<sup>73</sup> Ernie Bushnell, who had organized the CBC's team of war correspondents, has recalled how Murray's actions soured Plaunt:

I know this to be the case. Mr. Murray got mixed up with Stephenson down in New York. As you may recall, Mr. King was not too kindly disposed toward the war and Alan Plaunt was his disciple, no doubt about it. So once this became apparent that Murray was certainly seeing someone down there on these frequent trips to New York, I think that is when Alan really was against him and from there on they decided they would have to get rid of him.<sup>74</sup>

The ideological differences between Plaunt and Murray grew more pronounced as Canada's entry into the war became apparent. But there were other disagreements which were related to some of the work undertaken by Plaunt as he began his final year as a member of the CBC Board of Governors.

During the summer of 1939, Plaunt undertook the last of his major projects for the CBC. Along with Edward Pickering, he co-authored a White

Paper on political broadcasting, which represented the first real attempt to develop a clearly defined policy with respect to broadcasts of a political nature, so important in any election held in wartime. It was Plaunt's view that no privileged group should have unfair access to the broadcasting system at election time. Between elections, he felt political parties should be allowed to purchase network time, as the White Paper stipulated. This document governed political broadcasts in Canada for the next three decades and served as a basic guide for parties and broadcasters up until the Election Expenses Act of 1974.<sup>75</sup> As his second project, Plaunt, along with J. C. Thompson, an outside consultant with the firm of Clarkson, Gordon, Dilworth and Nash of Montreal, undertook "comprehensive surveys of the Corporation's personnel and organization."<sup>76</sup> This report eventually led to Plaunt's resignation from the board, because he felt the governors were trying to avoid taking action on his recommendations. In his report, Plaunt was quite critical of some of the holdover personnel from the days of the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission and of Murray himself. Plaunt noted that "many appointments made or sanctioned by the chief executive have been based on insufficient or irrelevant considerations."<sup>77</sup>

In addition, of course, the Corporation, wisely wishing to avoid any appearance of victimization, took over the whole of the Radio Commission staff. The understanding was that all members of the old Commission staff would be given a fair trial and, if they provided suitable for the somewhat different purposes of the Corporation, retained. But no serious attempt of a periodical review of either the new or the old staff has ever been made. The result is that the majority of the staff, which consists of hard-working, capable, and conscientious people, cannot help being discouraged to find demonstrably incompetent persons retained. Worse than this, the spectacle of persons retained who have been guilty of misconduct, insubordination and even irregularity is not calculated to improve the morale of the organization as a whole.<sup>78</sup>

One of the former staff members of the Radio Commission, René Landry, who the following year became the Radio Censor, has maintained that "Plaunt and Manson were close and they wanted me out of the way that I know."<sup>79</sup> According to Landry, under Plaunt's proposals for reorganization, Donald Manson would have assumed his administrative duties. "There was always a suspicion that I was sort of spying for some party," Landry has recalled, "perhaps because of family background. They thought I was a strong Conservative."<sup>80</sup> Plaunt laid the blame for many of the conditions he had described squarely on Murray's shoulders:

If one looks for the causes of this situation - which I do not wish to exaggerate - one is ultimately obliged to conclude that it lies in the inability of the General Manager to take firm action in this regard. Whatever the reasons, the results are a deteriorating morale and a sense of discouragement in a type of business which requires, above all things, flexibility, initiative, new ideas and vitality.<sup>81</sup>

According to Murray, some of Plaunt's recommendations were "insufficiently related to facts of conditions that have to be faced," presumably referring to the Corporation's role in wartime when it was not as free to act on its own.<sup>82</sup>

In October, 1939 Plaunt was admitted to hospital for the first of a series of operations on stomach cancer that impaired his public activity during the remaining twenty-three months of his life.<sup>83</sup> Plaunt now became less tolerant in his dealings with Gladstone Murray and the tension between the two men intensified. The cumulative result was that the CBC suffered a severe morale problem at the executive level. It was at this time that a number of prominent individuals resigned from the Corporation, largely over the role of the CBC in war time. Edward Pickering resigned from the CBC, on October 2nd, and Leonard Brockington, the chairman of the board of governors, did likewise at the end of the same month over differences

with Murray.<sup>84</sup> Since both of these officials were associated with Plaunt, the latter's feud with Murray was now in the open. Pickering, who was concerned about the closer working relationship between Howe and the general manager, has recalled how "they cancelled a scheduled meeting of the board" that had been planned for September 6, 1939:<sup>85</sup>

Howe sent a telegram to Brockington asking him to defer it. I was in Bill Murray's office when Brockington got that telegram and phoned Bill and Bill denied that he knew anything about it and he had a copy of it right in front of him and he had shown it to me. My resignation grew out of Bill's attempt at this point to sort of hive me off where I would not be any threat to him.<sup>86</sup>

Meanwhile Brockington, who had also differed with Murray, recommended that Plaunt should be the new chairman of the board of governors. In a letter to Mackenzie King, he outlined the reasons for seeing him as his logical successor:

Since the formation of the present Board, he has worked tirelessly for the realization of the principles underlining the Aird Report and the present Broadcasting Act .... I should add, also, that being a Canadian of mixed French and Scottish origins, with a good working knowledge of the French language, he has been able perhaps better than any of us to appreciate the character and aspirations of the diverse elements of our country. He is most highly regarded by the people of Quebec and by the farmers of the west. If I were to assess the contribution made by individuals to national radio, I would place his consistent and untiring effort easily first.<sup>87</sup>

Yet the successor to Brockington turned out to be René Morin, General Manager of the General Trust of Canada, a subsidiary of the Banque Canadienne Nationale. The newspaper La Presse, which owned the private station CKAC in Montreal and had championed the interests of private broadcasters, had a large financial account with General Trust.<sup>88</sup> Plaunt was therefore greatly suspicious of Morin's connection "with big business" and felt his

ties to the private sector would likely render him "hostile to public ownership in general and to this enterprise in particular."<sup>89</sup>

In a broader sense, Plaunt was to grow more disillusioned with the CBC's rôle as the war progressed. The imposition of censorship was an aspect of wartime which Plaunt found difficult to reconcile with his social views generally. Under the Defence of Canada Regulations, of September, 1939, censorship was imposed on all forms of communications emanating from or directed to Canada. This condition was brought about by two factors. Firstly, there was a need to restrict communications to prevent the enemy from obtaining military, economic, or other forms of intelligence detrimental to the national interest. Secondly, the government saw the need to safeguard against the spreading of reports which might be harmful to the population en masse, affect the morale of the armed forces, or hurt relations between Ottawa and foreign governments.<sup>90</sup> Radio presented a special problem for state authorities because no previous guidelines had developed in North America about how to deal with this medium during war conditions.<sup>91</sup> By the time of World War Two, there had been a lengthy print tradition in Canada and politicians were reasonably comfortable dealing with newspapers which also had to adhere to the temporary restrictions imposed by the state. But now radio had been perceived by Canadians as both an entertainment medium and a vehicle for providing news information. Gerry Quinney has drawn attention to the high level of reports provided by CBC network correspondents whose broadcasts became increasingly important to a concerned and war weary nation:

I don't think we could have gotten through the Second World War without those radio reports and the intimacy of what was going on in London. It was a powerful medium. Canadian reporters who were now associated with the CBC and some of whom came out of



private industry were doing a tremendous job. There was Bob Bowman. He was on the air every day. Gerry Wilmot was another one who came out of private broadcasting and Peter Stursberg. I think that was the great power of broadcasting. It was probably the ultimate of the whole radio broadcasting art and I don't think we will ever achieve that again.<sup>92</sup>

This new age of radio immediacy thus prompted authorities to regulate the medium and apply two of the Defence of Canada Regulations to broadcasting. These regulations, which have formed the framework of radio censorship in Canada, provided the following strictures:

16. No person shall, in any manner likely to prejudice the safety of the State or the efficient prosecution of the war, obtain, record, communicate to any other person, publish or have in his possession any document or other record whatsoever containing, or conveying any information being, or purporting to be, information with respect to any of the following matters, that is to say:

- (a) the number, description, armament, equipment, disposition, movement or condition of any of His Majesty's forces, vessels or aircraft;
- (b) any operations or projected operations of any of His Majesty's forces, vessels or aircraft;
- (c) any measures for the defence or fortification of any place on behalf of His Majesty;
- (d) the number, description or location of any prisoners of war;
- (e) munitions of war;
- (f) any other matter whatsoever information as to which would or might be directly or indirectly useful to the enemy.

39. No person shall:

- (a) act in any manner, spread reports, or make statements or utterances intended or likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty or to

interfere with the success of His Majesty's forces or of the forces of any allied or associated powers or to prejudice His Majesty's relations with foreign powers;

- (b) act in any manner, spread reports, or make statements or utterances intended or likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, discipline, or administration of any of His Majesty's forces; or
- (c) act in any manner, spread reports, or make statements or utterances intended or likely to be prejudicial to the safety of the State or the efficient prosecution of the war.<sup>93</sup>

The manner in which these provisions established under the War Measures Act, which Donald Smiley has described as "Canada's other constitution", were applied to broadcasting was relatively simple.<sup>94</sup> In this regard, it is worth examining how radio censorship was organized to provide the kinds of precautions seen as necessary in the time of war.

The office of the Radio Broadcasting Censor was established at Room III in the Victoria building on Wellington Street in Ottawa at the start of the war. René Landry, the former secretary to the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, assumed the politically sensitive position of overseeing radio operations and, along with an assistant, served as members of a governing board known as the Censorship Co-ordination Committee.<sup>95</sup> This body, which supervised general censorship policies, contained representatives of the various branches of censorship including officials of the intelligence services of the navy, army, and air force under the chairmanship of the Minister of National War Services. The CBC's role was significant in the censorship apparatus which covered, besides radio and the press, cables, telegrams, letters and ship to shore communications. Within the Corporation was a separate division known as "the stations relations department" which acted as a liaison between the Radio Broadcasting Censor

and all Canadian radio stations.<sup>96</sup> In other words, the CBC was a sort of clearing-house for instructions which were received from the censorship authorities and passed on to broadcasters throughout Canada. However, the Corporation had no censorship power of its own and was seen largely as a convenient administrative agency since it operated stations of its own and also regulated the private broadcasters.<sup>97</sup> Whatever their previous differences, both broadcasting sectors in Canada found a somewhat closer union in wartime given the censorship regulations which applied to both public and private radio.

Sections 16 and 39 of the Defence of Canada Regulations served as the broad guidelines for broadcasters. But, from time to time, there were special directives issued from the radio censor who served as the official interpreter of the regulations. Three aspects of broadcasting, the spoken word, platform addresses and weather forecasting, felt the censor's hand most often, even though a certain amount of flexibility was built into the system.<sup>98</sup> Broadcasts in other than the two official languages of Canada, English and French, were forbidden with the possible exception of religious services originating within a church which might be heard in any language. Other than the latter, all radio talks had to originate in a studio which was defined as "any room from which the public is excluded, linked up by wire facilities to a transmitter."<sup>99</sup> In this way, it was felt greater control could be exercised over broadcasts which could be detrimental to the national interest. Moreover, while weather information was allowed in newspapers, it was excluded from radio, largely because it might provide assistance to the marauding U-boat packs.<sup>100</sup>

The method of procedure among censorship officials was outlined in a letter from René Landry to Mr. Justice T. C. Davis, the Associate Deputy Minister of National War Services:

At the beginning of the war, a meeting was held of various cabinet ministers totalling, I believe four or five with then Director of Censorship, Mr. Walter Thompson, and myself as Radio Broadcasting Censor. The question of censorship applicable to talks and addresses was fully discussed and the meeting came to the conclusion that all talks should be restricted to studio broadcasting; this, because of the fact that there is no means of determining what a speaker might say while delivering an address ad lib from a public meeting. It think it was also considered at the time that it would be most difficult to grant a group certain privileges which would be denied others. The whole question was, I believe, submitted to Council when it was agreed that the present restrictions should be imposed.<sup>101</sup>

However Landry also noted, in his letter to Davis, that occasionally allowances were made whereby the strictures surrounding broadcasting were eased:

An exception was made later in the case of addresses delivered at luncheons or dinners under the auspices of recognized organizations such as the Kiwanis, the Rotary, the Canadian Club, etc., whose functional meetings are usually held at luncheons or dinners. It was fully agreed that in these cases the station responsible for the broadcasting of such addresses would also be responsible to examine the texts of these addresses in advance of broadcast. A little later on, the general policies were amended to permit, in certain cases, the broadcasting of addresses delivered at public meetings, and which are directly related to the war effort, provided they are recorded in advance of broadcast. Of course, there has been a few exceptions made whereby speakers were allowed to broadcast from public meetings in exceptional circumstances where the addresses were directly related to the war effort, such as at the opening of both the War Savings and Victory Loan Campaigns.<sup>102</sup>

Landry was somewhat skeptical of a request by Davis to relax the regulations still further.

The proposed easement in the general policies, as suggested in your letter, which would permit certain war services auxiliary organizations to broadcast directly from public meetings, may

have such a wide repercussion on the part of other non-political organizations that if such an easement was made it should apply to all broadcasts except those that are political in nature.<sup>103</sup>

Landry informed Davis that he thought the "restrictions imposed on political broadcasting should continue to apply" because "a departure from the existing policies may prove dangerous and would complicate enormously the administration of the broadcasting censorship."<sup>104</sup> However he did not play down the propaganda role of radio in wartime:

I fully understand the importance, as a means of propaganda, of having the public listen to certain broadcasts on matters directly related to the war effort. I believe it is essential that it should be so, but at the same time, I am not quite sure that our democratic principles would tolerate the privilege of free speech being given to one group and denied others; that, I presume, is a matter of government policy. I can see no objection to speakers being allowed to broadcast from public meetings, provided their addresses are recorded in advance of broadcast. In so doing, the main principles of censorship are safeguarded and there is also an effective means of controlling all statements.<sup>105</sup>

It is interesting to note the differences in censorship practices during the war between Canada and the United States, a country that did not enter the conflict until December, 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbour.<sup>106</sup> In the United States, as Canada's radio censor had observed, there were "no basic regulations comparable to the Defence of Canada Regulations."<sup>107</sup> Regulatory agencies of broadcasting in Canada, such as the CBC, the Board of Broadcast Governors and the present day Canadian Radio, Television and Telecommunications Commission, have tended to be more interventionist than the Federal Communications Commission.<sup>108</sup> In fact, the Mayflower Decision of 1941 has been seen as an historic ruling by the FCC, because it marked the first time that the broadcast agency had assumed jurisdiction over program content.<sup>109</sup> The FCC in this celebrated case

involving the Mayflower Broadcasting Corporation, decided that a broadcaster could not be an advocate and outlawed on-air editorials. The decision showed a clear bias toward print and sought to guarantee that, unlike newspaper publishers, the owners of broadcasting stations would remain muted in any discussion of public issues.<sup>110</sup> The Mayflower Decision was a sharp break with the Commission's traditional practice of regulating mainly the technical aspects of broadcasting. During the war, the FCC took on new monitoring operations, but these dealt mainly with foreign radio broadcasts and code messages within the United States.<sup>111</sup> Censorship activity then, in both countries, served to underline how differently the two broadcasting systems had evolved. The traditional laissez-faire approach in the United States was in marked contrast with Canada's stringent measures which essentially made broadcasting an extension of the state.

These differences in regulatory methods did not go unnoticed by censorship authorities in Canada. After the United States had entered the war, René Landry visited Washington, for a meeting with his American counterpart, and came away surprised at the relaxed approach the Americans had taken to the regulation of broadcasting. Thus he wrote to the Honourable J. T. Thorson, the Minister of National War Services:

The impressions I have gathered of our interviews are that possibly due to the relatively short period of time that has elapsed since the appointment of Censorship officials in the U.S.A., there do not yet exist policies or regulations relative to broadcasting that are comparable to those which are being made to apply at present in Canada. It seems that the Censorship measures concern mainly the external communications and that no provision exists to regulate internal communications.<sup>112</sup>

Landry informed Thorson that "it has been made clear to me, however, that there is no desire, for the moment at least, to curtail the liberties of the individuals as regards free speech."<sup>113</sup> Landry also underlined, for

the minister, just how relaxed the regulations in the United States appeared:

In view of this attitude, no measures have yet been taken to restrict the broadcasting of addresses from public meetings. Commentators are left pretty much to themselves to decide upon the material used in their broadcasts. The result is that there has been any amount of conjecture made of the various situations arising from the action of the armed forces or from enemy action. Further, actuality broadcasts, where the public is interviewed on the street, are still tolerated. As also, programs usually known as "Quiz Programs", where a diversity of questions are put to individuals, such questions often relating to matters directly connected with the defence of the country, or with measures concerning the War Effort. No doubt, these situations will be remedied in due course.<sup>114</sup>

But Landry did not want the Canadian wartime provisions changed even though the strictures were much tighter than in the United States:

In the meantime, I feel most decidedly that it would not be in the national interest to relax any of the existing Broadcasting Censorship Regulations. True it is that the broadcasting situation in the U.S.A. offers complications which possibly do not exist in Canada, and that it may be some time before adequate control over broadcasting is exercised. Nevertheless, I feel that until progress is made no alterations should be made to our existing regulations.<sup>115</sup>

The regulation of broadcasting in Canada tended to overlap with other forms of censorship such as the transmission of messages by letter which came under the Postmaster General's Department. The Director of Internment Operations, Colonel H. Stethem, informed the Chief Postal Censor of the problems involved in controlling messages sent to German prisoners of war:

The German authorities are periodically broadcasting messages to German prisoners of war interned in Canada. One of these broadcasts was made on the evening of June 10th. As a result of these broadcasts, it will be found that a number of persons in the United States

endeavour to transmit the messages to the prisoners by postal communication. The transmission of these messages is not desirable, and it would be appreciated if your examiners would delete any reference to the broadcasts or messages, if necessary rejecting the letter.<sup>116</sup>

Certainly broadcasting was more closely regulated in Canada than the print medium during the war. As the Censorship Co-ordination Committee explained, "Canadian Press Censorship is largely of an advisory nature and aims at obtaining the voluntary and loyal co-operation of newspapermen and publishers throughout the country."<sup>117</sup> The policy of press censorship was outlined in the following way:

From the foregoing it is clear that although the Secretary of State of Canada has been empowered to require that Press matter be submitted for censorship prior to publication the policy actually adopted has been that this should rest on a voluntary basis. The Press Censors are available on a 24-hour day-7-days-a-week basis, to advise in respect of any point that may be submitted. Should in their view the matter submitted be unobjectionable, the editor or publisher, as the case may be, may publish the item in all security. On the other hand, should matter be published in disregard of the Press Censors' advice to the contrary, it is incumbent on them to report the circumstances to the appropriate authority who in turn will decide if an offence has been committed and whether or not prosecution should follow.<sup>118</sup>

The restrictions on newspapers were illustrative of the politicians somewhat skeptical attitude toward broadcasting as a responsible medium, an outlook which Canadian Press representatives had chosen to nurture before the CBC Board of Governors and in repeated delegations before cabinet ministers.

Given Plaunt's firm convictions towards freedom of speech, he naturally accepted the authority of the censorship directorate somewhat grudgingly, because this administrative machinery inevitably relegated the CBC to a



secondary role. Moreover he was insistent that all political parties should have equality of opportunity on the public system including the CCF whose position, on the war effort, Plaunt had endorsed. But as the year 1939 came to a close, there was evidence of movements, within the CBC, to have the broadcasting system serve the government's interest first and foremost. Jack Pickersgill, who had replaced Norman Robertson in the Prime Minister's office two years earlier, informed Mackenzie King of recent developments which could embarrass the government:

I have learned, privately, that the C.C.F. made a request to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to have at least one broadcast allotted to some speaker, who would represent their point of view on Canada's war effort, and that the request was refused on the ground that politicians were not being asked to broadcast. I believe they have renewed the request and have pointed to the Prime Minister's and Mr. Manion's broadcasts to support their claim to state their position.<sup>119</sup>

Pickersgill explained to King that he had reservations about an upcoming radio address by C. D. Howe on "Broadcasting and the War:"

There has been a widespread impression, since the outbreak of war, that broadcasts given over the C.B.C. networks must have official sponsorship. A broadcast by Mr. Howe on the subject given in the schedule would probably strengthen that impression, unless he confined himself to saying that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was being left as free as in peace time, apart, of course, from the censorship.<sup>120</sup>

As an alternative, Pickersgill suggested that Howe address his radio audience on another topic which would play down any perception of the CBC serving as an arm of government:

Might this difficulty not be avoided if Mr. Howe were to broadcast on the work of the War Supply Board or some other aspect of the war effort for which he has a direct responsibility, and if the talk on "Broadcasting and the War" were given by a member of the Board of Governors, or by the General Manager of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation?<sup>121</sup>

King could readily identify with the gentle warning advanced by Pickersgill in light of his unfortunate experience during the 1935 federal election. In that campaign, the "Mr. Sage" political broadcasts, which had greatly offended King, were presented on stations owned by the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission. This partisan use of the public system, by the Conservative government led by R. B. Bennett, was a major factor in the Commission's demise. It was hardly surprising Pickersgill should anticipate that "in view of the approaching general election, all opposition parties are likely to seize on any evidence of government control of radio and to charge that it is being used for partisan ends."<sup>122</sup>

The timing of nineteenth general election, on March 26, 1940, fell upon the country with dramatic suddenness and caught the opposition parties completely by surprise. King had prorogued the special war session of Parliament the previous fall and, at that time, had promised another parliamentary session before dissolution and an election campaign. However, sensing opportunity, after Ontario's Premier Mitchell Hepburn had called for a formal vote of censure on King's failure "to prosecute Canada's duty in the war" in a "vigorous manner", the Prime Minister chose to dissolve Parliament on January 25, the very day it had opened.<sup>123</sup> A parliamentary sitting of an hour or so had become a "session."<sup>124</sup> Just three days earlier, the CBC had ruled that "paid political or controversial broadcasting on CBC stations, networks or hookups, except during elections, be suspended for the duration of the war."<sup>125</sup> This decision was contrary to one of the main provisions in Plaunt's White Paper governing political broadcasts, which had allowed for the purchase of network time between elections by all parties. As a result, for the remainder of the war years, the CBC functioned essentially as an extension of the government which had virtually free access to radio while the opposition parties were muzzled effectively.<sup>126</sup>

Thus the CBC's role became even more of an aggravation for Plaunt as he saw the Howe-Murray alliance eroding the board's independence and the general public losing faith in the Corporation. Howe's considerable influence, in the war cabinet, as head of the new Department of Munitions and Supply made Plaunt's position more unbearable because he personally disliked Howe. Just a few years previously, Plaunt had described Howe as "the egotist big executive in politics" and had forecast that he could "cause the government a lot of embarrassment before he is through."<sup>127</sup> Plaunt also saw Murray trying to consolidate his own position, in these changed circumstances, and their differences combined with all of the other factors related to the war created an even more unfavourable climate for Plaunt.

Murray's behaviour, at the time of dissolution, lends credence to Plaunt's reading of the situation surrounding him. Jack Pickersgill has recalled one development that surprised Liberal party officials greatly:

My recollection is that in the 1940 election it was intended that a scheme of division of time amongst the political parties for election broadcasting would be followed that had been worked out by the board of the C.B.C. of which Leonard Brockington had been the head and they were very fair minded people. At the moment of dissolution, Mr. Gladstone Murray, the General Manager, in order to curry favour with the Government, had abolished this whole thing and really proposed to give all, or practically all, the time to the government.<sup>128</sup>

According to Pickersgill, Mackenzie King was extremely angry when he heard about this incident:

First of all, I saw Norman Lambert who was President of the Liberal Federation and he was flabbergasted. He said it could defeat the government, this sort of Hitler-like tactic. And I saw Mr. King and he was outraged as well. We knew that the representatives of the opposition parties would raise an awful row with the CBC and would ask for a meeting with them. So Norman Lambert

instructed Walter Herbert, who was the secretary of the Liberal Federation, to go and raise a bigger row than the opposition parties. And that killed one issue completely in that election.<sup>129</sup>

In this regard, Lambert's diaries show an interesting sequence of events. Just two days after dissolution, Lambert had spoken with Howe by telephone and discussed the allotment of time that would be given the individual parties. According to Lambert, Howe "said he and Murray had decided on 4-half hours only for the election for each of the two main leaders."<sup>130</sup> Yet, by February 1st, these broadcasting arrangements had been changed, presumably after Liberal officials had intervened, as Pickersgill has suggested. Lambert entered these notes in his diary on February 1st:

Walter Herbert reported final arrangements with radio, 5½ hours for Liberals altogether. He said that Murray approached the meeting by saying that he hadn't expected to find everybody so completely united; had hoped for a division of opinion.<sup>131</sup>

Plaunt was perturbed over the fact that some of the provisions contained in the White Paper on political broadcasting were suspended early in 1940.<sup>132</sup> But, in the 1940 election campaign itself, all parties shared time on the public broadcasting system, and the CCF profited greatly from the new broadcasting arrangements. David Lewis, who represented his party in the discussion over the allotment of air time, has recalled that M. J. Coldwell was heard regularly:

The 1940 election was the first in which the political parties were allocated free time on the CBC network. I had acted on an all-party committee which worked on the rules and the formula for the division of free time and had done my utmost to ensure its success. It would mean a great deal to the CCF, because we had no money to buy time on the private radio stations. Coldwell took most of the broadcasts and was excellent before the microphone. His mellifluous voice, clear diction, and interesting delivery made him a natural.<sup>133</sup>

By 1940, King was a more effective radio speaker after taking several coaching lessons on his speaking technique. But Robert Manion, according to the Canadian Forum, was something of a failure. Though "musical in conversation", his voice "was harsh on the air and he had no real radio-technique."<sup>134</sup> He was so bad, according to the Forum, that "if you didn't hear him you wouldn't believe us."<sup>135</sup>

After his White Paper proposals were modified and the censorship apparatus began to take hold increasingly, when the real war replaced the "phoney" war in the spring of 1940, Plaunt grew more disillusioned. In July, 1940, he wrote to the CBC chairman, René Morin, complaining that the board of governors was rapidly losing its independence from government. Plaunt was against the board becoming subordinate to Walter Thompson, the Director of Censorship, whom he claimed was "regarded as having a strong bias in favour of the Canadian Press."<sup>137</sup>

I dare say you were as amazed as I was to read the Gazette's front page story last Saturday regarding news broadcasting policy. You have, no doubt, also perused the extract from Hansard of Friday, the 28th, which Mr. Murray has sent us and on which the Gazette's dispatch apparently was based. On the face of it, Mr. Howe's statement means that the working out of the general policy agreed by the Board is to be taken out of the hands of the CBC and placed in those of Mr. Walter Thompson. From information I have received, this is precisely how Mr. Thompson interprets his commission. C.B.C. officials and members of the Board may be consulted but the decisions are to be made by Mr. Thompson.<sup>138</sup>

Plaunt questioned the intervention of Howe and saw the CBC board losing its autonomy in wartime:

If this reading of Mr. Howe's statement, and this information regarding Mr. Thompson's understanding of his role are correct, the conclusion must be that the Board of Governors as the constituted authority to be responsible for the direction of broadcasting no longer in fact exists. One appreciates, of course,

that the Government and Parliament have in war-time a special interest in how news is to be disseminated. So long as the Broadcasting Act remains unmodified however, the Board is in law still responsible and I doubt if the Minister has, consequently, any legal right to intervene in this way.<sup>139</sup>

Howe's behaviour would, in Plaunt's view, lead to further problems:

Certainly, from a practical point of view, his intervention is entirely unjustified and will lead to no end of dissatisfaction from all parties concerned. The matter was being handled in a most business-like and satisfactory way and if the Corporation had been left to work the enunciated policy out, the minimum of disagreement would have resulted.<sup>140</sup>

Plaunt informed Morin that it appeared the board was "merely to be a rubber stamp in the matter."<sup>141</sup> The CBC had been contemplating setting up its own news service and preparing its own news bulletins without relying on the Canadian Press. As it turned out, the suspension of the Trans-Radio news service on June 1st, 1940, had been one of the last major actions taken by the board which now had seen its authority eroded greatly.<sup>142</sup>

The inevitable happened on August 30, 1940.<sup>143</sup> Plaunt resigned from the board of governors in protest over internal conditions, the board's loss of its constitutional power, and the fact that the White Paper had not been introduced properly. While he wanted to force matters out into the open, there is no doubt that Plaunt was extremely bitter at what he saw happening to the board of governors. In a letter to Andrew Brewin in December, 1940, Plaunt came down hard on Murray:

If Mr. Murray had any genuine enthusiasm for public ownership or for liberal principles, I should never have found myself obliged to take the drastic steps I have taken as a last hope of rescuing this institution from tendencies of a really alarming character.<sup>144</sup>

"As you probably know, I have been deeply interested in this project for

over ten years," wrote Plaunt, "I am doing my best to see that what has been very labouriously built up is not now going to be completely destroyed because an unscrupulous, dishonest and alcoholic individual wishes to maintain his power and income at all costs."<sup>145</sup> In this same month, Norman Lambert suggested to Plaunt that "he should forget about radio for a time and tackle something else with a fresh mind."<sup>146</sup> But early in 1941, Plaunt was obviously still concerned over what was happening to his grand design for Canadian broadcasting. He told Lambert, in March, about "the juggling of wave lengths" which was intended "to suit the private stations."<sup>147</sup> In April, just six months before his death and when his cancer was growing worse, he wrote to Brooke Claxton alarmed at what had happened to the board:

Whether it be formally stated or not, the Executive Committee has already assumed some of the functions of management, as previously conceived, reserving itself the right, for example, of veto in all appointments, salaries, increases of salaries and the like.<sup>148</sup>

Plaunt saw the Corporation falling into the constitutional trap that had hindered the operation of its predecessor the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission:

In other words, we are practically back to the defects which wrecked the Radio Commission and which you and I in particular, and the Parliamentary Committee of 1936 and the Act in general, set out to avoid, viz, divided managerial control; and no clear demarcation between policy and management.<sup>149</sup>

To the end, Plaunt maintained a genuine concern for the future of the Corporation:

For my own part, of course, I care not in the slightest what goddam fools of themselves Nate, Morin and Co. make. But I do care about this enterprise a) for its own sake and b) because I believe that our Act provided a model framework for a publicly-owned business, which surely

is of some importance to the future of democratic government in this bloody country. And I cannot help feel that once they have formally altered the set-up we so carefully contrived it will be almost impossible to get it restored.<sup>150</sup>

By June, Plaunt was aware that his life was just about at an end after doctors had informed him that his cancer had spread. Norman Lambert described a meeting he held with Plaunt on June 15th:

He told me that the doctor had given him a final and irreversible diagnosis regarding his internal trouble and that his period of life might be six months or at most 2 years. He said he would get his affairs in order right away and asked me to sign as witness a temporary will until he could get a new one drafted by Claxton and after that he intended to enjoy what life he had left without worrying about the future.<sup>151</sup>

Plaunt's wife whose nickname was "Bobby", was "expecting a child which he hoped to see before he passed out."<sup>152</sup> As Lambert explained, "he asked me if I would stand by to help Bobby in any way she wanted and I assured him that was the least I could do."<sup>153</sup>

But Plaunt was not to get his wish. He died in the Ottawa Civic Hospital on September 12, 1941 at 5:30 a.m.<sup>154</sup> On that same day, his father, F. X. Plaunt, wrote to Mrs. Jean Machell, Alan's sister, explaining the circumstances preceding his death:

I hope my letter addressed to you at Mrs. Machell's house Toronto reached you there on Tuesday last. Because in that letter I warned you of Alan's condition - and on this date you will receive a telegram from Ottawa that he passed away this morning at 5:30. We were not (your mother and I) told about how serious his illness was until the last of August and since then we have spent a great deal of our time in Ottawa. His illness took a distressing turn a few days ago and the Doctors sent him to Civic Hospital and put him in charge of nurses. His breathing became very laboured and the slightest exertion made it worse - at the



hospital he was fed with oxygen through a mask but his condition was hopeless. - His lungs filled up and failed to function.<sup>155</sup>

His father explained how Plaunt had hoped to live to see the birth of his child:

I am sure you know that Bobby expects a child in 2 or 3 months. Alan was very anxious to live to see the child - it is tragic - This is the first break in our happy family - I hope it will be the last while your parents live. This is our grief but the world is full of suffering, death and worse because of the brutality of man. God help pity us.<sup>156</sup>

This letter to Plaunt's sister also contained a message from Mackenzie King:

I am just in receipt of a telegram from the Prime Minister - 'I cannot express too deeply the sympathy I feel for you in the passing of your son Alan, few young men have left to our country by their lives a finer example of public spirit and service,' W. L. Mackenzie King.' This is a fine tribute to Alan and deserving.<sup>157</sup>

Plaunt's final days had been anything but happy as personal rivalries, and attempts to rescue the Corporation, consumed most of his energy. But he never relented in his attempts to preserve the kind of broadcasting structure he felt Canada should have as the nation grew to maturity. It might be said that although Alan Plaunt died, at a crucial time in the development of Canadian broadcasting, his philosophy on public broadcasting survived. The 1942 Parliamentary Committee on broadcasting was to vindicate the public stance he took toward the CBC, and future Royal Commission enquiries into broadcasting were to reiterate his fundamental idea that the public sector in Canadian broadcasting must be dominant.<sup>158</sup> Unlike the Parliamentary Committees of 1938 and 1939, the 1942 Committee was quite critical of the board of governors and management of the CBC. The tone of

the Committee's report reflected many of the concerns that Plaunt had included in his study of the Corporation's organization and personnel. The CBC board was quick to respond to these developments. Murray was demoted to a position in Toronto and eventually resigned from the CBC in February, 1943. His successor was Dr. James S. Thomson, President of the University of Saskatchewan, who held the post for a year before being succeeded by Augustin Frigon. Plaunt's allies in the CBC and on the 1942 Committee, including Brooke Claxton, were naturally pleased with the report. "He returned to Canada from Oxford with a determination to serve his fellow citizens", said Leonard Brockington at the time of this death, "the building of the chain of radio stations which the Canadian people today take for granted was his work. His was the original idea of a great public service ministering to Canadian unity and the happiness of the Canadian people."<sup>159</sup>

## CHAPTER IX

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Edgar McInnis, Canada: A Political and Social History, 3rd ed. rev. (Toronto, 1969), 543.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Creighton, The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957 (Toronto, 1976), 36.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>4</sup> Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Leonard Brockington, October 12, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Plaunt to René Morin, July 3, 1940.

<sup>6</sup> Interviews, Elizabeth Gratias, May 30, 1980 and Alan Gibbons, August 23, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942 (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 1980), 195 and David Lewis, The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958 (Toronto, 1981), 276.

<sup>8</sup> Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Mackenzie King, August 25, 1939.

<sup>9</sup> T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 171-172.

<sup>10</sup> Gladstone Murray Papers, PAC, CBC 1936 Appointment, "Major Gladstone Murray Here to Assume Duties," Ottawa Journal, October 10, 1936.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Plaunt resigned on August 30, 1940.

<sup>15</sup> Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 306 and Peter Stursberg, Mister Broadcasting: The Ernie Bushnell Story (Toronto, 1971), 102. Stursberg has noted that Plaunt "protested at BBC programs being carried by the CBC."

- 16 David Lewis, The Good Fight: Political Memoirs 1909-1958 (Toronto, 1981), 132.
- 17 Norman Lambert Diary, Queen's University, September 19, 1938.
- 18 Interview, Alan Gibbons, August 23, 1981.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Winnipeg Free Press, March 8, 1939, and Alan Gibbons Papers, List those approving the publication of the Statement "Canadian Unity in War and Peace." In an undated letter to Gibbons, Plaunt suggested gathering support for the neutrality league by "trying people of the centre or even a teensy weensy left of centre. There are surely three big shots who aren't frightened by their shadow."
- 21 Brooke Claxton Papers, PAC, George Smith to Claxton, October 22, 1941.
- 22 Norman Lambert Diary, September 19, 1938.
- 23 Ibid., September 30, 1938.
- 24 Ibid., October 14, 1938.
- 25 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Brooke Claxton, September 10, 1938.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Gladstone Murray Papers, PAC, CBC Memoranda and Notes, "The CBC 1936 and Today," June 11, 1961.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Globe and Mail, August 23, 1938.
- 32 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Gladstone Murray, January 2, 1939.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.

- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid. This was the first time Plaunt had written Murray at length about a CBC program.
- 37 Edwin Lieuwen, U.S. Policy in Latin America (New York, 1965), 73.
- 38 Ibid., 74.
- 39 Thomas Parish and S. L. A. Marshall, eds., The Simon and Schuster Encyclopedia of World War II (New York, 1938), 368.
- 40 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Plaunt to Murray, January 2, 1939.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid., Murray to Plaunt, January 11, 1939.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid., Donald Buchanan to Murray, undated.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Frank W. Peers, The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting 1920-1951 (Toronto, 1969), 268.
- 47 Ibid., 269. For a discussion of the circumstances surrounding the McCullagh broadcasts, see 268-273.
- 48 T. J. Allard, Straight Up: Private Broadcasting in Canada 1918-1958 (Ottawa, 1979), 170.
- 49 PAC, Sound Section, Interview between Elspeth Chisholm and Orville Shugg, August 5, 1981.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Alan B. Plaunt Papers, Orville Shugg to Art Haas, December 21, 1941.
- 53 Michiel Horn, The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada 1930-1942 (Toronto, 1980), 191.

- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid., 192.
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## CHAPTER X

### Conclusion

"Though a man be young in years", it has been written, "he may be old in hours, if he has lost no time."<sup>1</sup> This observation might well be applied to the career of Alan Plaunt who offers an interesting counter-point to the widely held view that only holders of public office are in positions to effect social change. Plaunt was born in 1904 when the Laurier boom was at its zenith, a year, according to J. W. Dafoe, when "there was hardly a cloud in the sky."<sup>2</sup> During his boyhood days, Canada had experienced a remarkable economic growth. In Plaunt's later years, he was to play a central role in the country's cultural expansion, particularly through the medium of radio whose origin and development closely paralleled his life. It is hardly surprising that Plaunt should have seen, in this electronic medium, a suitable vehicle whereby Canada could show the world a distinctive national identity.

Plaunt was very much a product of the 1920s and shared, with many of his middle class Anglo-Canadian associates, an enthusiasm for the post war nationalism that swept the country. As Brooke Claxton later observed about this period, "every kind of organization, national and local, cultural and religious, political and commercial was at a peak of activity hardly equalled since .... All these were manifestations of the growth of national feeling - it was nationwide, spontaneous, inevitable. It cut across political, racial and social lines; indeed, it was curiously a-political."<sup>3</sup> In Plaunt's case, an educational furlough in Oxford appeared to have intensified his sense of duty and, when he returned to Canada, he seemed to have acquired a burning desire to serve his country. As a result, he spent a

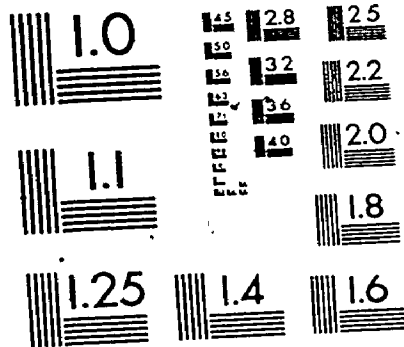
number of years, when his career options were extensive, working on behalf of the Canadian Radio League, which was founded in 1930. At this juncture, in the history of Canadian broadcasting, character probably became as significant an element as circumstance. The Radio League's counterpart, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, represented the private operators who had taken an adventuresome, entrepreneurial approach to the burgeoning industry throughout the 1920s. Many of these private owners hoped to see broadcasting remain relatively free of government interference and envisaged a system somewhat comparable to the one that had developed in the United States. But other individuals had a different design for Canadian broadcasting. Thus Plaunt emerged as the leading actor around whom the movement for public broadcasting could focus.

Other studies, including the works of Frank Peers and E. Austin Weir, have dealt extensively with the evolution of the broadcasting legislation, during this period, without offering a detailed account of the motives and objectives of those Canadians who saw radio as something more than a vehicle for commercial exploitation.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, these authors have tended to pay scant attention to the private radio stations which operated in Canada, for more than a decade, before the first broadcasting regulatory agency, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, was established in 1932. Indeed just prior to the birth of public broadcasting, private operators had established some seventy stations, and were beginning to challenge the newspaper chains for advertising revenue. But these advantages enjoyed by private interests, which included the Canadian Pacific Railway, were dramatically altered, in the next half dozen years, largely through Plaunt's unrelenting efforts.

While he gave his full energies to the campaign for public broadcasting after returning from Oxford, Plaunt was not without important allies and

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occasional good fortune. In Graham Spry and Brooke Claxton, he had colleagues who possessed both a persuasive manner, a high level of intelligence and considerable commitment to the cause of public broadcasting. Even though the Radio League could be seen as a somewhat amorphous organization, yet, as a pressure group, it suited the Canada of the early 1930s. Plaunt was also indebted to the Privy Councillors who ruled in favour of the federal government when the question of radio jurisdiction was decided ultimately in 1932. This historic legal decision provided him with a broad field of action, in his radio campaign, whereby radio could be promoted as a vital, national instrument.

While the lobbying activities of the Radio League and the support of various public figures and the 1932 judicial decision, were of great importance in creating the CBC, it is still evident that Plaunt was the catalyst, at a number of crucial periods, when the broadcasting system in Canada might well have become the exclusive domain of private owners. His financial resources were all important during the life of the Radio League especially in the early days of its existence when it struggled from day to day. Plaunt's representations before the Parliamentary Committees of 1934 and 1936; his revival of the Radio League after most of his colleagues had pursued other interests; and his unremitting, backstage lobbying of parliamentarians and political leaders such as Mackenzie King, during this period, eventually found expression in the 1936 Broadcasting Act which created the present day Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. According to Plaunt, this piece of legislation stood "as a workable framework, providing as it does for an independent and non-partisan direction of policy, business management, and the ultimate control of Parliament."<sup>5</sup> Broadcasting for Alan Plaunt was seemingly part of something larger - his vision of what today is known as Canadian cultural independence. He saw a distinctive Canada emerging in



the artistic work of the Group of Seven, in the poetry of Frank Scott and Dorothy Livesay, and, most important of all, in Canadian broadcasting.<sup>6</sup> That Canada did not adopt the American broadcasting model, a system dominated by private owners, owes much to his devoted advocacy.

The eleven years between 1930 and 1941 had given Plaunt an unusual opportunity, to leave his imprint on Canadian culture. Part of his success was his ability to align himself with individuals and groups on both sides of the political spectrum. On the one hand, he encountered wealthy Canadians and prominent 'establishment' politicians such as C. D. Howe, Vincent Massey, Victor Sifton and Norman Lambert. At the same time, he counted, among his closest friends, several members of the League for Social Reconstruction, most notably, Frank Underhill, Frank Scott, David Lewis and George Grube. While he was very much at ease in the urbane environment of London, Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, he also spent much time visiting his friends on Ontario farms and founded the New Canada Movement to enlighten rural youth. Perhaps most important of all, he "accepted fully the concept of equal partnership between French and English-speaking Canadians."<sup>7</sup> It was this fact that undoubtedly helped him see the potential for public broadcasting in a country where there were two official language groups. The various facets of Plaunt's life were captured by the Canadian Forum in this way:

He trusted in the common people, and welcomed every movement that enlarged their opportunities and organized their strength. His interest in international affairs, as well as his dislike of imperialism, sprang from the same source. He combined an appreciation of music and painting with his social outlook. In contemporary Canadian painting he was particularly interested, for he saw in it the finest expression of our national sentiment. His love of art, and his recognition of the creative power of the individual was the counterpart of his love of social planning and his belief in the creative power

of the group. In him a social vision and a social imagination were developed to a high degree.<sup>8</sup>

After four years of serving on the board of governors of the Corporation, he resigned because of his opposition to the board's performance and to the direction "this most effective instrument in nation building" seemed to be taking.<sup>9</sup> Plaunt was particularly upset when he saw the CBC coming under government control during war time: in his view, democratic principles being undermined. Indeed a number of the misgivings Plaunt had about the CBC, which were contained in his 1939 Report on Organization and Personnel, are reflected in the 1982 Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee. The federal study underlined the lack of "creative initiative and intellectual leadership" among the personnel in CBC television and singled out the CBC's "tradition of secretiveness" and problems of "bureaucratic inertia."<sup>10</sup> Moreover the report stressed the need to shield the CBC "from political control."<sup>11</sup> Both notions are reiterations of Plaunt's concern about "the deteriorating morale" in the Corporation, the need for "new ideas and vitality" and his fear that the CBC was merely becoming an adjunct of the state.<sup>12</sup>

Not long after his resignation, Plaunt died "with his best ideas unrealized, but not, fortunately, uncommunicated."<sup>13</sup> As Leonard Brockington remarked following his death, "when the history of national broadcasting is written, Alan Plaunt's name will be honoured above all others. It was he who, in spite of many obstacles, much criticism and many discouragements, did more than any other to chart the course of national control."<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

## Footnotes

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- <sup>6</sup> Interview, Edward Pickering, July 16, 1979.
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- c) Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada, Ottawa/Hull.

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- d) Douglas Library, Queen's University.

The Norman Lambert Diaries have useful information on Alan Plaunt's organizing of the Neutrality League and on party uses of radio during the Second World War.

- e) Public Archives of Canada

The Kenneth Bambrick Collection, Sound Section. These interviews with the private broadcasting pioneers gathered by Kenneth Bambrick during 1976 are a useful source of information on the period before the introduction of public broadcasting.

R. B. Bennett Papers. Contain helpful material on the Canadian Radio League, the CRBC and the political circumstances surrounding the 1932 broadcasting legislation.

C. A. Bowman Papers. A small collection containing the commissioners' initial drafts of the Aird Report in 1929 and correspondence between Bowman and noted figures including the Southams and Donald Manson.

Brooke Claxton Papers. A voluminous collection relating to the many facets of Claxton's life as a legal counselor and federal cabinet minister. The Radio League files contain his presentations before the Supreme Court and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council when the question of radio jurisdiction was answered.

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Privy Council Office Files. These are useful chiefly for the information provided on radio censorship and how it was applied in wartime.

f) University of British Columbia Archives, Special Collections Division.

Norman Mackenzie Papers. These have a small amount of information relating to Mackenzie's assistance given to the Canadian Radio League.

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