

Section 2.—Government Control Over Agencies of Communication

The Development and Control of Radiocommunication in Canada.—

The first radiocommunication (or "wireless", as it was known in those days) in Canada took the form of radiotelegraphy and was established in 1901 between Chateau Bay, Que., the terminus of the Government north shore telegraph line on the north side of Belle Isle Straits, and Belle Isle, Newfoundland. The stations were erected by the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of London, England, for the Telegraph Division of the Department of Public Works. Their purpose was to replace the existing cable service between the island and the mainland, which was continually being interrupted by ice. The first transatlantic radio message was transmitted from Glace Bay, N.S., to Clifden, Ireland, in 1903. The rapidity with which this new science expanded soon called for some kind of control, both domestic and international.

The first legislation under which radiocommunication was controlled in Canada was the Wireless Telegraph Act of 1905 (c. 49, Edw. VII). In the Revised Statutes of Canada, 1906, this Act became "Part IV—Wireless Telegraphy" of the Telegraphs Act, being c. 126, R.S.C. 1906. In June, 1913, Parliament passed the Radiotelegraph Act, and radiocommunication in Canada and in ships registered in Canada, was thereafter administered under the provisions of this Act and of the Regulations that were issued thereunder from time to time. The administration of the Act was vested in the Minister of the Naval Service at that time and subsequently in the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, and still later in the Minister of Transport. Owing to the rapid development in radiocommunication during the years that followed its passage, this Act was eventually repealed and replaced by the Radio Act, 1938, which became effective on July 1, 1938. In the interim, however, the Canada Shipping Act had already been revised (see 1936 Year Book, pp. 1107-1108), and those sections of the former Radiotelegraph Act pertaining to radio equipment in ships had been deleted from the latter and embodied in the revised Canada Shipping Act, 1934.

The first measures to govern radiocommunication having international scope were embodied in the "Radiotelegraphic Convention" which was drawn up at Berlin in 1906, and which was adhered to by the Dominion Government in 1907. Keeping pace with development, a revised International Radiotelegraph Convention was signed at London, in 1912, by nearly all the principal countries of the world, including Canada. The War of 1914-18 contributed to the delay in another international conference being held and it was not until 1927 that the International Radiotelegraph Convention of Washington was signed replacing the London Convention of 1912. Again, with a view to consolidating international control of the various types of communication services, the International Telecommunication Convention of Madrid, 1932, was drawn up and regulations governing all classes of communications were annexed thereto.

Up to this time, international telegraph and telephone communication services had been governed by the International Telegraph Convention of St. Petersburg, 1875. Although this Convention had never been revised until its fusion with the Radiotelegraph Convention at Madrid, the service regulations issued in accordance with its provisions had been amended at frequent intervals in order to keep pace with the development of the art.