

In 1936, one stumbling block in the way of a national radio system for Canada was lack of agreement among the nations of North and South America as to the use of radio wavelengths, or channels. While the network taken over by the CBC in 1936 served about 60 p.c. of the population in the daytime, this coverage was reduced to about 49 p.c. at night by interference from high-power stations in the United States and Mexico using some of the same channels in use by Canadian stations. As one of its first acts, the CBC asked the Canadian Government to initiate steps which, ultimately, resulted in the Havana Regional Radio Conference held in March, 1937, and the Inter-American Radio Conference of November, 1937, at which the North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement was signed. Wavelengths were allocated to the various countries on a basis providing protection from interference for stations on the same channels, according to the territory they were to serve. The agreement provided Canada with a sufficient number of "clear" channels (on which the signal of a high-power station is protected from interference up to long distances or to the borders of the country in which it is situated) to carry out the plan of national coverage.

When the new 50,000-watt stations CBL and CBF, at Toronto and Montreal, were put into operation during the fiscal year 1937-38, the day-and-night coverage of the Corporation's network was increased to about 80 p.c. of the population. Network broadcasting was increased first to 12 hours, and then to 16 hours a day, on both the English-language and French-language networks.

While technical improvements continued, the Corporation was steadily expanding its program service. During the 1937-38 season, the CBC broadcast a series of radio symphonic concerts from Montreal. These concerts were presented as an addition to the regular schedule of concerts by existing symphonies in other large centres. The Corporation adopted a policy of obtaining the best programs, both commercial and sustaining, available in the United States and Great Britain, in addition to increasing its own Canadian productions.

In the autumn of 1938, the Corporation undertook what was then its most ambitious project: a series of 11 Shakespearean plays, in which leading Shakespearean actors were featured. Among the guest artists were such well known personalities as Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Margaret Anglin, Charles Warburton, Walter Huston, Eva LeGallienne, Walter Hampden, and Dennis King. The CBC held 500 auditions while selecting the supporting casts, and unearthed much new talent.

The summer of 1939 brought the CBC what was probably the greatest task ever undertaken in broadcasting up to that time—the visit of the King and Queen to Canada. Many months before the Royal Visit, preparations were going on within the CBC engineering division so that adequate facilities and equipment would be available to cover the visit. Complete new broadcasting facilities were designed by CBC engineers, and equipment built to rigid specifications was distributed across Canada well ahead of time. CBC commentators were able, by this means, to keep Canadians completely informed of Their Majesties' progress over a period of six weeks and a distance of 7,000 miles. A total of 91 special broadcasts was devoted to the Royal Visit.

In late August, 1939, as the International situation became acute and events moved with ever-increasing momentum toward war, the whole program pattern of the CBC was changed almost overnight to meet the public demand for an extended service of news bulletins, analyses and informed comment. A CBC Program Unit of one commentator and one engineer accompanied the First Canadian Division