

cer sans scrupules la mort de l'*artisan*, il y a une marge. D'abord le métier d'historien continuera pendant longtemps à être pratiqué principalement par des chercheurs isolés dont la contribution restera essentielle. Il faut dire que l'évolution vers l'histoire quantitative et globale a été accomplie par de bons artisans travaillant seuls sur de vastes sujets. Le travail d'équipe ne pourra être entrepris à notre avis que par de bons artisans, qu'ils soient historiens ou spécialistes des autres disciplines. La compétence, la largeur de vue, l'expérience et la capacité de travailler en groupe sont les qualités fondamentales. Autrement le contrôle sur ce type coûteux de recherche tombera entre les mains de néophytes opportunistes et amoureux du pouvoir. Il faudra éviter toute division du travail mettant l'intelligence d'un côté et le travail manuel de l'autre. C'est à ces conditions que le travail d'équipe sous toutes ses formes constituera une étape fructueuse.

Cet article des professeurs Wallot et Paquet est une invitation à la réflexion sur l'apport de l'historien canadien et son avenir. Il est aussi un effort pour situer un programme de recherches qui exprime une orientation nouvelle parmi les historiens néo-nationalistes. C'est peut-être à cet égard que le livre *Économie québécoise* est le plus significatif. Dans ce groupe, la parole n'est plus à ceux qui font l'éloge de Jacques Bainville ni à ceux qui proposent de contempler les grands faits de notre histoire.

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FRANK W. PEERS. — *The Politics of Canadian Broadcasting, 1920-1951.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969. 466 pp.

Radio broadcasting in Canada offers fascinating opportunities for the social historian. Bemused as we are with the potentialities of television, it is easy to forget that once upon a time radio was considered one of the formative media of a modern society. More than half a million Canadians owned radios by 1932; by the end of that depression decade the total had more than doubled. Fibber McGee and Charlie McCarthy were household words; listeners extended their narrow circle of friends by joining the Happy Gang. In Alberta, "Bible Bill" Aberhart used radio for a successful assault on political power. It seems probable that radio programs both mirrored and shaped Canadian social attitudes. For the historian radio thus offers the opportunity to study these attitudes and also to study the influence of a mass medium on them.

The Canadian experience provides special opportunities because of the rivalry between private and public radio. Private enterprise saw radio as part of the advertising industry. Sponsors wanted to hawk their wares to large and receptive audiences. Their choice of programs would be determined by their

analysis of what Canadians wanted — an analysis doubtless refined by studying the statistics on audiences and sales. Public enterprise, on the other hand, had a different commodity to sell. The advocates of public radio flourished a nationalist rhetoric — “the State or the United States”, “free from foreign interference or influence”, “the greatest single agency for national unity”. C.B.C. programs might therefore be expected to reveal somebody’s views of what the Canadian identity was or what it should be. Given the existence of private stations, however, the C.B.C. did not have a captive audience. Its programs might not be tested by the cash register but they had to be popular enough to attract listeners. For the historian, the selection of programs, on both private and public stations, reveals what some influential Canadians believed about the attitudes of their contemporaries. The existence of competing radio stations with different objectives adds a further dimension to the analysis.

Dr. Peers has not attempted to write a social history. He is concerned with politics. His primary interest is the creation and defence of a public broadcasting system. He makes no attempt to hide his own sentiments under the cloak of objectivity. Private broadcasters are grasping businessmen for whom only profits count, whereas the advocates of public broadcasting in Canada are men of high ideals, devoted to the public service. His personal opinion, however, does not invalidate his political narrative.

Nor does he interpret politics narrowly. His narrative is based largely on the documentation provided by Royal Commissions, Parliamentary Committees and parliamentary debates. His interest, however, is in political pressure groups. He describes the early competition for advertising between radio stations and newspapers, with the publishers supporting public broadcasting for their own ends, and then carefully traces the growing newspaper support for private broadcasting as publishers acquire financial interests in local radio stations. He also relies heavily on the *Plaunt* papers and interviews for his description of another and more unusual pressure group, the Canadian Radio League. It is not a success story as Dr. Peers tells it. His narrative does show how influential an appeal to Canadian nationalism can be; it also suggests that political influence is more likely to be sustained over a long period of time if it stems from material self-interest. The author encourages the reader to draw the analogy with the subsequent experience with public television in Canada.

Pressure groups, however, are only part of the political story. The tastes of the Canadian audiences are an essential element. Both the influence of the Canadian Radio League and of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters depended in the final analysis on public commitment to publicly owned radio. Listeners voted by turning the radio dial and politicians could not ignore public sentiment. The effectiveness of the Canadian Radio League as a pressure group cannot be explained solely in terms of the activities of Alan *Plaunt* and Graham *Spry*. Dr. Peers is less satisfactory at this level of political analysis.

What did Canadians want? At times Dr. Peers concludes that they had been seduced by vulgar commercialism. American advertisers, we are told, were creating a popular culture, continental in scope (157); the C.B.C. had come too late to wean Canadians from the pabulum (285). Elsewhere, however, we learn that the C.B.C. was establishing loyal audiences and its reputation was steadily growing (283) and that even high pressure campaigns by private broadcasters evoked little popular response (391). Such *obiter dicta* reveal more about Dr. Peers' bias than about the tastes of Canadian listeners.

To put it bluntly, the author does not know what Canadians wanted. The C.B.C. may have had only a limited appeal. Certainly private broadcasters accused it of offering cultural caviar for the few. Was the C.B.C. a middle-class institution, catering to middle-brow tastes and middle-class chauvinism? If so, this might explain the vocal support for the C.B.C. but it tells us nothing about the silent majority. It may be significant that in the competition for radio audiences the C.B.C. found it necessary to broadcast American programs at peak hours. It is no criticism of Dr. Peers to say that he does not analyse Canadian radio programming; he has chosen a different topic. It is unfortunate, however, that he yielded to the temptation to pass judgment on a topic he did not study. And it is here that his bias takes over. Convinced as he is that any man of good taste and any loyal Canadian would tune in to the C.B.C., he assumes either that they did or, that if they didn't, they were somehow seduced by nefarious advertisers who were unrefined and alien by definition. It must be comforting to have such faith but faith alone is an unreliable guide to historical analysis.

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