

***Canada, Culture & Broadcasting: An Examination of the Cultural Components of Canada's
Broadcasting Policies***

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Introduction

The distribution and popular appeal of U.S.-based television programs and films abroad drives an American cultural juggernaut that spans the globe. However, this American cultural permeation has raised a number of concerns in the affected countries. Indeed, some nations argue that sustained American cultural exposure will ultimately render their indigenous cultures extinct. Moreover, these concerns, although culturally-based, may also have significant economic, political and societal implications.

In response to these perceived cultural threats, a number of countries have taken steps via content quotas and other regulatory actions to curb the exposure of their citizenry to American film and television. In addition, many countries also utilize government subsidies and other sundry methods to encourage production of works spotlighting their own indigenous cultures. The first section of the paper offers a brief overview of Canadian cultural policies associated with television programming, specifically drama.

Statement of the Problem

Canada is one of the more activist countries in both the area of cultural protection and the subsidization of indigenous film and television production. This is hardly surprising considering that Canada and the United States not only share a several thousand mile long border but also share a number of historical and sociological similarities, all factors conducive to American cultural permeation.

Nonetheless, many Canadians are quick to point out that despite the commonalities between the two countries, Canada enjoys a culture distinct from its U.S. neighbor. Furthermore, Canada's proximity to the United States reinforces the belief that maintenance of a unique

cultural identity is necessary to insure national sovereignty.

The old adage, "fences make good neighbors" may offer a justification for the Canadian government's attempts to limit its citizen's exposure to American culture conveyed via television and film. Unfortunately, the 49th parallel, the *fence* dividing Canada and the United States, is largely invisible and easily breached by satellite dishes, the spill over of American broadcast signals, and more recently the Internet. Moreover, Canadian government efforts to promote and support Canadian made and themed television programming have historically been beset by funding problems and, more importantly, by lack of interest among Canadian audiences.

Questions to be Addressed by the Paper

This paper will briefly outline the Canadian government's current policies to protect Canadian culture in the area of television programming. It will also examine the the major stakeholders in the Canadian broadcasting policy arena and what positions they hold regarding the cultural aspects of programming policy. The paper will conclude with a discussion about the continued viability of cultural protection measures given the availability of non-regulated, non-Canadian content via new and emerging technologies such as the Internet.

Geographically speaking, Canada is a 3,851,800 square mile colossus with a relatively small population of approximately 35 million people within its territory. The populace, the majority of whom live within 200 miles of the United States border, are linguistically divided between francophone Quebec and its predominantly anglophone provincial counterparts. This, coupled with a history of British colonial rule has led some Canadians to argue that the resulting nation and particularly English Canada exists as "... a strictly political expression with few uniting forces of geography, economic interests, ethnicity, or experience to

hold together its four distinct regions -- the Pacific, the Prairies, the Atlantic provinces, and central Canada" (Collins, 1990, p. 125). Moreover, this perceived fragile nation has to contend with a southern neighbor ten times its size in population who is a cultural and economic dynamo exporting "America" throughout the world via its businesses, movies, and television programming just to name a few.

Some theorists, notably Dallas Smythe in Dependency road: Communications, capitalism, consciousness, and Canada, view Canada's contemporary relationship vis-a-vis the United States as one of dependency and quasi-colonialism (Smythe, 1981; Collins, 1990). Therefore, it is not surprising that Canada has historically feared the constant exposure to American culture as not only threatening its cultural sovereignty but indeed its continued existence as a nation (McDowell & Maitland, 1997).

Canadian Culture: A Definitional Dilemma

Over the years, scholars and policy makers have struggled unsuccessfully to arrive at a generally agreed upon definition of culture. The definitions offered range from broad-based such as Larrea's 'knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and practices of a society' (Larrea, 1997, p. 112) to those of a narrower focus. The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology defines culture as "... the accumulated store of symbols, ideas, and material products associated with a social system, whether it be an entire society or a family." This definition also specifies two discrete aspects of culture, namely "material" and "nonmaterial".

In Blackwell's definition, "material culture" comprises "... everything that is made, fashioned, or transformed as part of collective social life" while "'nonmaterial culture' includes symbols -- from words to musical notation -- as well as ideas that shape and inform the lives of humans in relation to one another and the social systems in which they participate" (Johnson, 1995, p. 68).

Trying to define "Canadian culture" has proven to be an equally arduous task for the Canadian government. Cultural policy documents include statements avowing that the "framework for the support of culture ...[is] based on a broad definition of culture" (Government of Canada, 1998, p. 2) yet hesitate to offer further explication of the term.

Sociologist Gordon Fearn posits that a absolute definition of culture is unobtainable due to its fluid nature. According to Fearn's thesis:

"... culture—a kind of transparent storage system containing information of constantly changing content and meaning – primarily is a shifting record of important symbols. Communications is both the means whereby symbols attain their initial meanings and the means whereby changes in these meanings are negotiated. Culture therefore is not a structure but a *process*. Culture *per se* cannot be defined because it always is being negotiated and renegotiated" (Fearn, 1993, p. 120).

Fearn's proposition bolsters the argument often raised by Canadian nationalists that the inability to precisely define Canadian culture "... is not evidence of any lack of a distinct Canadian culture, but rather the inherent difficulties in defining culture itself" (MacMillan, 1999).

The Importance of Culture to Canada

For successive Canadian governments, the constant fear of cultural annexation by the United States has generated numerous initiatives intended to defend and foster indigenous Canadian culture and preserve national unity. These policies are based upon the belief of mutual dependence between cultural sovereignty and political sovereignty. Former Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy expressed this fundamental relationship stating that it is "essential to our identity, to our pride, to our unity and to our independence in international society" (quoted in Lehmann, Spring 1997, p. 188). Moreover as Paul Rutherford points out, "This mission was especially

crucial for English Canada because it lacked that strong tradition of popular history and literature, a vibrant sense of a collective identity, evident in French Quebec” (Rutherford, 1998, p. 187).

For the Canadian government, broadcasting, and television in particular, has held the promise of creating "... common symbols, shared fictions, and celebrated performances that reflected the Canadian imagination” (Rutherford, 1998, p. 187). In a landmark report issued in 1951, The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (commonly called the Massey Commission) predicted that television would be the principal mode of communication for the 2nd half of the 20th century. Canada's leaders envisioned broadcasting as “an engine of Canadian culture” with its development controlled by the state. This view of broadcasting as a "strategic industry", central to Canada's continuing process of nation-building and self-assertion has remained in the forefront of Canada's domestic policy to the present day (e.g., CRTC, 1999).

Canadian Broadcasting

The mandate for Canadian broadcasting is set forth in the Broadcasting Act (1991), section 3 which states:

"The Canadian broadcasting system, operating primarily in the English and French languages and comprising public, private, and community elements, makes use of radio frequencies that are public property and provides, through its programming, a public service essential to the maintenance and enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty."

The Canadian broadcasting system is a mix of public (e.g., the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation--the CBC) and private broadcasters (e.g., CTV, Global) with the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) serving as the statutory authority over

broadcasting and telecommunications (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 248).

The first public Canadian television stations were launched by the CBC in 1952, four years after US networks began regular broadcasting into Canada.¹ CTV, the first privately-owned television network began broadcasting in 1961. CTV reaches a Canadian TV audience rivaling that of CBC and in 1993 was the most watched station in every market across Canada except Manitoba (Toronto – BCE Inc., 2/26/2000; Jeffrey, 1996, p. 229). Ian Morrison, spokesperson for the industry lobby group, Friends of Canadian Broadcasting stated that CTV is currently regarded as "the darling" by the CRTC for its efforts at promoting Canadian content and further that "Other than the CBC, it is the jewel in the English Canadian broadcasting system" (Morrison quoted in Toronto – BCE Inc., February 26, 2000).

The Canadian government also plays a major role in financing Canadian television program production via various agencies and investment programs. One such agency, The Canadian Film Development Corporation (CFDC) formed in 1967 and later renamed Telefilm Canada is "dedicated to the development and promotion of the Canadian television, film and new media industry." Telefilm's stated mission is

... to provide financial assistance and strategic leverage to the industry in producing high-quality works that reflect Canadian society, including its linguistic duality and cultural diversity, while ensuring their widest possible distribution in Canada and abroad (Telefilm Canada, [2000]).

With an annual budget of nearly \$200 million (CDN)², Telefilm administers 17 funds and programs that contribute to the development and production of approximately 600 wide array of feature films, television programs and other multimedia products. Telefilm's financial support comes in various forms including investments, advances, loans, loan guarantees and grants³. In

addition to financing, Telefilm is also involved in "distribution, export, versioning, marketing and promotion at Canadian and foreign festivals and markets." (Telefilm Canada, [2000]).

Since CRTC rules currently prohibit broadcasters from producing original programming for the TV stations they own, programming is purchased from private production companies (Adilman, April 21, 1999).

Audiences & Canadian Programming

Since the enactment of the Broadcasting Act of 1968, television drama has played a central role in the Canadian government's cultural policies since it believed viewing of non-Canadian television drama was "a deeply destabilizing political force". This concern was underscored by the fact that "English Canada (but not French Canada) is the only known broadcast market in the world where local dramatic production is not necessarily preferred over foreign content of comparable quality" (Tracey and Redal, 1995, p. 361). According to Richard Jeffrey's 1993 research on Canadian television viewing habits "among Anglophiles, three-quarters of all television viewing -- whether from US or Canadian stations -- is of foreign (i.e., overwhelmingly US) programs". Moreover, for fall 1993, drama programming made up 31.8 percent of programming on all television stations (domestic and foreign) available in Canada. Of this amount, 2.3% was Canadian programming while 29.5% was foreign programming (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 222). News, public affairs, and sporting events are the only programming categories that Canadian viewers favor the domestic product (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 227; Collins, 1990, p. 29).

According to the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB), "The numbers for viewing to Canadian drama, the CRTC's main policy focus in the past, are much worse. In the last five years, there's been a .2 per cent increase in viewing to Canadian drama, from 3.7 to 3.9 per

cent" (CAB, September 1998). A 1986 Canadian television audience study by Harrison, Young, Pesonen, and Newell concluded that "English language Canadian drama tend to be unpopular. There are of course dramatic exceptions but generally when non-Canadian drama is scheduled against Canadian drama, the viewer moves to the popular -- non Canadian" (quoted in Collins, 1990, p. 30). Citing fall 1993 statistics, Jeffrey points out that "... both viewing and availability of Canadian content are very low in the category most popular with English-language viewers, dramatic fictional entertainment" (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 229).

A number of explanations have been offered by academics and policy makers for the Canadian television viewing audience's general aversion to their own dramatic programming. One explanation blames the lack of availability of Canadian dramatic programming due to the proliferation of American alternatives although this determination is far from conclusive (e.g., Audley, 1993).

Another explanation proffers that English Canada's acceptance of American programming is due to the "... deep similarity between English Canadian and American values and cultural preferences" (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 212) while others maintain that Canadians simply do not like Canadian culture (e.g., Rutherford, 1993).

Economic Value of Entertainment-related Industries in Canada

Television production and its sister cultural industries not only help to define and develop culture; they also play an important role in the Canadian economy (Macmillan, March 1999). Although the cultural benefits derived from the production of indigenous Canadian drama programming are difficult to quantify the economic impact of television production and other cultural industries are less so.

In 1991, the cultural industries represented 2.44 percent or nearly \$15 billion (CDN) of

Canada's GDP and the industries enjoy "growth rates well above those for the rest of the economy" (Macmillan, 1999). Canadians employed in the cultural industries, which span from book publishing to film and television production number in the hundreds of thousands with 72,000 of them employed in the film and TV sectors alone (Onstad, June 1997). In 1994, Toronto was expected to earn an estimated \$292 million (US) from movie and TV production compared to \$24 million (US) in 1983 and ranked as the third largest film production center in North America, following Los Angeles and New York City (Zoglin, November 1994).

Culture, Economics & Broadcasting

Canada's two official languages and a television market size of approximately ten percent of the United States (where most production costs can be recovered domestically) combined with easy transborder reception of US stations by much of the populace have traditionally been impediments to the growth of indigenous programming in Canada. Unlike Canada, most US companies enjoy "synergies with the Hollywood movie industry" offering an infrastructure of skilled technicians and actors, a worldwide distribution system, and the Hollywood star system (Hoskins, Finn, and McFadyen, 1996; Jeffrey, 1996; McDowell & Maitland, 1998). Robert Lantos, assessing the situation from a Canadian producer's perspective states "By virtue of not operating within the Hollywood system, one has much less access to money, much less access to the major creative talent -- whether stars, directors or writers' (R. Lantos as quoted in the Vancouver Sun, December 30, 1994).

Due to the inherent economic problems discussed above, attainment of Canada's cultural goals have always required significant government intervention. Throughout the years, government intervention has taken various forms including: restriction (e.g., tariffs, censorship bureaus, foreign ownership restrictions), promotion (e.g., exemptions from postal charges,

subsidies and tax incentives), ownership (e.g., CBC, National Film Board) and direction (e.g., establishment of the Board of Broadcast Governors--later the CRTC, license control) (Rutherford, 1998, p. 189).

Arguably two of the most controversial yet enduring cultural policies implemented over the years have been simulcasting and Canadian content quotas. Simulcasting (aka simultaneous program substitution)" ... directs cable companies to replace the program feeds carried on US networks and distributed in Canada with the program feeds of the Canadian networks that have purchased broadcasting rights for those programs. While the programming is the same, Canadian advertisements will then be shown. Over the past 20 years this policy has increased advertising revenues available to Canadian broadcasters and indirectly for Canadian program production" (McDowell & Maitland, Fall 1998). Simulcasting is the key component of a "cross subsidization" process wherein the CRTC allows Canadian broadcasters to import foreign programming while requiring them to use a portion of the income derived from airing the programs to carry, produce, or purchase domestic programming. The economic reality for Canadian broadcasters has always been that it "is only possible to stay in business and run Canadian shows by making profits brokering US shows" (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 245). The cost of purchasing US television programming is often much less expensive for Canadian networks than producing their own (McDowell & Maitland, Fall 1998, p. 1145; Jeffrey, 1996, p. 208). In a 1996 CRTC-sponsored study the estimated cost of one hour of "high quality US television drama was \$1 million (CDN)" while a comparable hour of Canadian drama was \$750,000 (CDN). The US product could be acquired by Canadian broadcasters for \$50,000 (CDN). Even with a maximum Telefilm subsidy, Canadian broadcasters lost \$325,000 (CDN) if they defrayed the remaining costs only in the Canadian market. Jeffrey, citing unpublished CRTC data states

that "CTV estimated in 1991 that while a low-rated US series provided \$1.94 (CDN) in revenues for every \$1 (CDN) or cost, an hour of Canadian entertainment programming returned 62 cents on the dollar. CTV argued that broadcasting three hours of Canadian programming per week in prime time lost it more than \$15 million (CDN) a year (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 245). The Canadian Association of Broadcasters argued likewise, stating "Right now, broadcasters lose on average, 40 cents for every dollar spent on Canadian programming" (CAB, September 23, 1998).

An unintended consequence of simulcasting has been the mirroring of program schedules between Canadian and US stations which frequently translates into fewer Canadian shows airing in prime time (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 208) although other policies and incentives such as Canadian content quotas have been introduced to mitigate this situation.

Domestic Canadian Cultural Policies: Basic Theoretical Approaches

Acheson & Maule have identified two broad theoretical approaches to Canadian cultural policy—the nationalist and the open approaches. The nationalist approach is founded upon two basic premises: First, Canadian-made cultural products differ significantly from their foreign made counterparts, and without policy supports these distinctive Canadian products would not be available since their costs would exceed profits. As Acheson and Maule explain "such products are needed as they have special properties, such as promoting national identity, and sovereignty as well as creating employment in Canada". Second, Canadians should have the option of selecting these Canadian-made cultural products. Therefore, policy measures must be utilized to ensure that Canadian products are not "squeezed out by imports" (Acheson & Maule, 1997). The "market failure" theory is offered as support to the Nationalist view for government intervention in the cultural industries. According to Hoskins, Finn, and McFadyen:

“... where audiovisual goods do provide external benefits [e.g., non-economic benefits such

as bolstering cultural awareness], there is market failure because producers, distributors, and exhibitors do not receive any compensation for the provision of such benefits. Government intervention is thus justified to the extent that it provides this compensation or has an effect of equivalent value” (Hoskins, Finn, and McFadyen, 1996, p. 75).

Proponents of the open approach assert that protections may have been appropriate during the infancy of cultural industries but they are “no longer justifiable” as “the Canadian industry is no longer an infant” (Acheson & Maule, 1997). “Consumer sovereignty” and free trade are the hallmarks of this viewpoint. Consumers should be afforded the freedom to choose their purchases, including their entertainment choices. Canadian cultural policies have been historically economically inefficient with broadcasters, cable companies, and a small culture cadre benefiting financially while Canadian taxpayers are left with the bill. From the open perspective, only deregulation and “unfettered competition” will ultimately result in lower prices for consumers (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 214).

Open view advocates also assert that the promotion of Canadian creativity and culture can be best achieved by building internationally competitive institutions and businesses. As Acheson & Maule state, “There is no reason why quality Canadian programming will not find an outlet in Canada and similar venues in other countries” since “... commercially driven firms will distribute any material in any market that is likely to make money”. They further argue that Canadian broadcasting regulations have had a detrimental effect on the growth of the production sector “... by encouraging firms to look inward rather than to international markets” although they also point out that this may be changing (Acheson & Maule, 1997).

In regard to the fear of cultural infiltration, the open view responds that foreign and native cultures are both equally valuable in educating and enhancing communication, and moreover

"consumers are competent to reject or at least recognize imported culture that is not congenial to their own convictions and social ideals. In respect to American culture, Canada should look at the US as a source that will enhance its own cultural identity, leaving to its own citizens the expertise of filtering and meshing the cultures into a stronger Canadian culture" (McDowell & Maitland, 1998, p. 1126-1127). Domestic policies have traditionally reflected the nationalist view, which has enjoyed wide political support in Canada through the 1990's (Acheson & Maule, 1997).

Canadian Content (CanCon) Quotas

One of the most prominent Nationalist-backed policies are the Canadian content quotas (CanCon) which have served as a primary regulatory instrument to ensure Canadian programming appears on Canada's television sets. Introduced by the Board of Broadcast Governors in 1959, CanCon quotas stipulate that overall, all private and public Canadian stations are required to devote 60% of their air time to "Canadian programming" with quotas based upon whether the station is public or private. Private broadcasters must devote 60% of their daily schedule and 50% of prime time (i.e., defined by the CRTC as 6 - 12 p.m.) to Canadian programming⁴ (Jeffery, 1996; Stanbury, 1999).

Definition of Canadian Television Programming

Under current CRTC regulations, a Canadian television program⁵ is defined via a points-based system determined solely by Canadian citizenship of the producers and others related to the show rather than upon the subject matter of the program. The following requirements must be met in order to be considered a "Canadian" television program: a) the producer must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada; b) the production must earn a minimum of six points, with points awarded based on Canadians' performing the following creative functions: director, 2 points; writer, 2 points; leading performer, 1 point; second leading performer, 1 point; head of art department, 1 point; director of photography, 1 point; music composer or editor, 1 point each; c) either the director or writer (or both) and at least one of the two leading performers must be Canadian; 4) a production will not qualify if the leading performers are not Canadian, even if Canadians have the minor roles (CRTC Public Notice 1984-94). In addition, at least 75 per cent of all labor and post-production costs (with the exception of monies paid to the functionaries named above) must be monies disbursed in Canada to Canadians. A 150% time credit may also be claimed by broadcasters for "Canadian dramas

which have a full Canadian complement in all key creative roles, and which are aired during the peak viewing hours of 7 p.m. to 11 p.m." (CRTC. Fact sheet: Canadian content on radio and TV, August 1999).

The CanCon quotas have been challenged on a number of points including the CRTC's definition of "prime time" as well as allowing news, sports and game shows to qualify as Canadian shows have proved controversial. Critics charge that these provisos allow networks such as Global and CTV to broadcast low cost in-house programs from 6 p.m. till 8 p.m. and after 11 p.m. to satisfy their required 50% CanCon quota. This permits the networks to simulcast American programming in the coveted 8 p.m. - 11 p.m. time period (Fraser, April 13, 1999).

Critics such as Acheson and Maule cite the problematic nature of "... branding a product as Canadian or not Canadian" and assert that "Measuring content by the nationality of inputs does not assure that Canadian stories get told, merely that stories get told by Canadians and Canadians get the jobs" (Acheson & Maule, 1997). Other critics such as Matthew Fraser assert "It would be churlish to suggest that quotas have never produced any benefits in the cultural sphere. They can, to some degree, help stimulate artificial demand for domestic products, and this affords local producers an opportunity to increase their competitiveness. On the whole, however, content quotas – as amply demonstrated by CanCon quotas on Canadian television – have failed abysmally to achieve their stated objectives." (Fraser, April 13, 1999).

Licensing Restrictions

The CRTC also frequently supplements CanCon quotas by placing conditions on networks and individual stations licenses "over and above minimum regulatory requirement, to stimulate improvements in Canadian television programming" (Public Notice CRTC 1985-82).

Attaching conditions to licenses provides the CRTC with additional means to induce commercial broadcasters' to focus upon Canadian drama other "underdeveloped program genres" including children's programming.

Since the 1980's, economic goals have played a more prominent role in Canada's cultural policies by emphasizing the private sector and subsidy rather than the public sector and regulation. (Collins, 1990; Stanbury, 1999). This transition is evident in the goals set forth by the CRTC for its 1998 Canadian television policy review:

The Commission's goals for this review of its regulatory and policy framework for television are straightforward - further the development of a strong and viable programming industry; ensure that Canadians receive a wide range of attractive and distinctive Canadian program choices; facilitate the growth of strong broadcasting undertakings; ensure that the Canadian broadcasting system meets the needs of Canadian viewers and reflects their values; and, implement the public interest objectives of the Broadcasting Act (the Act). In particular, the Commission wishes to explore how all participants in the system can work effectively to strengthen the Canadian presence on our television screens, and to support a healthy broadcasting and production industry capable of competing successfully at home and abroad. At the same time, the Commission will wish to be assured that the public interest objectives of the Act are well served.

The Commission recognizes that a strong and competitive private sector is essential to fulfilling the goals of the Act, as is the public broadcasting sector and an effective regulatory framework (CRTC. 1998 Canadian Television Policy Review).

Cross-Subsidization

Even with government monetary infusions, many Canadian producers have been traditionally

unable to match funds available to American companies and production values as well as distribution and promotion are affected by the shortfall. Given these economic realities, the CRTC has permitted Canadian broadcasters to import American programming in the hope that profits earned from airing American shows would be used subsidize Canadian programs.

However, critics argue that although this cross-subsidization process works in theory, the benefits "... have been marginal" (Fraser, 1999; Jeffrey, 1996). English-language private broadcasters derived their profits as Jeffrey explains "by selling audiences for imported US shows to advertisers, not by producing or purchasing shows of comparable quality in Canada, nor by promoting homegrown stars" (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 207).

"Industrial dramas"

Exporting drama programming to foreign markets is one of the primary methods used by Canadian production companies to recoup production costs for drama programming that the domestic market alone can not make up for. Both Canadian broadcasters and producers have traditionally viewed "identifiably Canadian elements" as detrimental to economic and popular success as evidenced by a Globe and Mail article which stated "It is a truism that you don't try to sell them [i.e., the United States] a TV show or film with a Canadian setting. As a result, producers often attempt to minimize or completely eradicate identifiably Canadian elements and instead strive to produce programs that are almost indistinguishable from American ones in the hopes that these so-called "industrial dramas" will gain favor in the international market.

Market realities combined with the need for Canadian broadcasters and producers to remain economically viable have encouraged cross-subsidization and the production of industrial dramas. Nonetheless, these often prove incompatible with the government's cultural objectives as Richard Collins points out "The project of creating a national television drama that

engages with Canadian life and experience, and proceeds from a Canadian agenda and set of national priorities, conflicts with that of creating an economically viable Canadian television-drama industry" (Collins, 1990, p. 12).

In the two years since Due South went off the air, Canadian broadcasting and the policies guiding it have changed significantly. In September 1998, CTV and its competitors Global and WIC made a request to the CRTC to end a 20-year embargo forbidding broadcasters from producing their own Canadian entertainment shows rather than buying them.

According to television critic Sid Adilman, this request is based upon a number of factors including the fact that "broadcasters now run recognizable Canadian series that are popular with viewers and advertisers – among them Due South ... but don't share in foreign sales", increased costs of US programming, desire for parity with Canadian producers such as Alliance Atlantis (who are permitted to produce programming for specialty channels they own) and finally "the proliferation of specialty channels makes it more important for CTV, Global and WIC to stand out – which they figure real Canadian series will help them do" (Adilman, April 17, 1998).

Canadian drama programming sustained a substantial setback in January/February 2000 when Canadian networks canceled four prime time Canadian-made series. These included CBC's Riverdale (canceled after 3 seasons); two CTV series Power Play and The City (both canceled after 2 seasons) and Global's Traders. Power Play holds the distinction of being the second Canadian-produced series (another Lantos product) to be aired on a US network (UPN) during prime time, although the show fared so poorly in the ratings that it was canceled after two episodes. Most if not all of the canceled series were identifiably Canadian although their failure may not have been so much attributable to their Canadianess than to the current Canadian production process which John Allemang details below:

... Filming doesn't start until government money is found, which makes the crucial element of a series almost an afterthought." "That hurried approach is the essential problem with Canadian dramas. Two of the canceled series, Riverdale and The City, had to be fundamentally altered after they went to air, with much bigger doses of what the producers prayed would be audience-grabbing sex. Power Play never did establish whether it was a show about hockey or relationships, and tried to please all comers in typical Canadian style by mixing action with romance, and crass jokes with heartfelt sentimentality. Even CTV's surviving Canadian drama Cold Squad has had to remake itself by gutting the original cast and reinventing sober star Julie Stewart as more of a babe. To a less-than-loyal TV audience, it all looks so desperate and insincere. With twitchy fingers on the remote, viewers no longer feel any compulsion to watch dramas just because they're made in Canada and can make obscure jokes ... This stereotyped vision of patriotism in the Canadian works-in-progress no longer counts for much when measured against such polished all-American shows as The West Wing and The Sopranos. (Allemang, 2000, p. R2).

Announced replacements for CTV's canceled series include Steelstring¹¹ "a rock 'n' roll private-eye drama" produced by and starring Paul Gross and The Associates, a series depicting "... a quintet of young lawyers at a Toronto law firm". From the brief descriptions of the replacement series, it appears that they follow popular themes in American dramas and beyond the Toronto-setting of The Associates it is difficult to discern how distinctively Canadian they will be until they begin airing.

Significant transitions in Canadian broadcasting policy are also imminent. Beginning in September 2000, new broadcasting regulations will be enacted. In an effort to help build a Canadian star system that mirrors the one in Hollywood, the CRTC has deemed the

"entertainment magazine" format to be "priority programming" alongside drama and children's programming. This means that Canadian networks can use any qualifying entertainment magazine programs which are far less cheaper to produce than drama to meet their CanCon quotas even in prime time.

Perhaps the most difficult question to be answered is what impact Due South, or any Canadian television program for that matter, has upon culture. Most, if not all of Canada's cultural policies are based upon subjective beliefs with little concrete evidence to bolster them. Moreover, economics play an increasingly important role in culture-related areas. As a democratic nation, it is ultimately up to Canada's populace to decide whether the benefits of viewing indigenous Canadian drama is great enough to continue supporting its production.

Footnotes

¹“... 146,000 Canadian households already had televisions as early as 1951. Those living near the US border were able to receive signals from US broadcasters (Lehmann, Spring 1997, p. 193).

²All amounts are given in the denomination quoted in the original source material.

³The guidelines for Telefilm Funding require an independent producer to secure a commitment from a conventional broadcaster to pay a license fee for a show which must be scheduled during prime time (Jeffrey, 1996, p. 209).

⁴Film and radio are covered by separate sets of CanCon guidelines.

⁵Local programs are automatically considered “Canadian”. In addition, the definition for sports programming differs somewhat from the one provided.

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