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Book Review

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BOOK REVIEW

Cultures in Collision: The Interaction of Canadian and U.S. Television Broadcast Policies. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984. Pp. xii, 207.

The vast similarities between the United States and Canada mask the minor differences which may, if unchecked, cause irreparable damage to the normally cooperative relations between the two countries. One such difference has been the issue of U.S. television broadcasting received by Canadian audiences. Increasing tensions in this area led to the Canadian-U.S. Conference on Communications Policy in New York in March 1983. The presentations made at the conference are the subject of *Cultures in Collision: The Interaction of Canadian and U.S. Television Broadcast Policies*. The conference addressed four principle areas: "a historical comparison of Canadian and American approaches to broadcast policy; sovereignty and television—who can or should control what is broadcast; the impact of new technologies on Canadian-U.S. broadcasting relationships; and the border broadcasting dispute itself" (p. xii). In preserving the matters discussed in the conference, Praeger Publishers has bound between two covers those forces that have interacted over the years to create the trade dispute as it exists today.

Although the authors have opposing views and varying emphases, each relies on legislative history to depict the tensions between the two countries. For example, "[i]n 1976 the Canadian Income Tax Act was amended to discourage Canadian firms from advertising on U.S. stations and thus to enhance the use of Canadian television outlets. U.S. television firms filed a complaint with the U.S. Trade Representative in 1979, imputing injury to commerce. Canada has accused U.S. broadcasters of commercial and cultural overreach, while U.S. interests have charged Canada with supporting unfair competition and interference with what should be a legitimate and open market" (p. ix). As the articles show, however, this stone-throwing is but symptomatic of a much deeper philosophical difference between the United States and Canada. The linguistic and geographic similarities can lead one to forget that each country has a distinct

cultural and historical development that both sides must learn to respect.

Cultures in Collision succeeds because the book achieves that which it has set out to do. In its structural form, the book reflects the goals of the conference itself—to achieve a balance of policies which will be beneficial to both the United States and Canada. There are eight sections which present eight different views of the border broadcast dispute. Most of the articles are followed by comments written by opposing critics. The articles and the comments complement each other, bringing extreme views into perspective. The work can also be divided into three, more subtle components: (1) the general historical overview as presented by relatively moderate positions; (2) the conflict in action, using the article/comment structure as an arena for debate; and (3) a more scientific approach to this issue and a look to the future. The effect is to give the reader a sense of background, a sense of the intensity of the issue, and a sense of what to expect for the future.

The historical analyses are written by the Hon. Allan E. Gotlieb, Canadian Ambassador to the United States, Frank W. Peers, Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto, Theodore Hagelin, an American professor of communications law at Syracuse University and Hudson Janisch, a South African educated at Cambridge and the University of Chicago, who teaches communications, public and administrative law at the University of Toronto.

As Canadian Ambassador to the United States, Gotlieb stresses the grave importance of the broader broadcasting dispute as it affects Canada's ability to preserve and nurture its cultural identity. This introductory view provides the reader with Canada's overall perspective on the issue: where it stands in relation to the U.S.; how geography, language, demography, economics and philosophy influence each country's behavior; and what these factors have to do with Canada's ability to use television as a means of cultural expression. The article also provides general goals that were set out by studies done under the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission. These goals include: (1) the maintaining and strengthening of the Canadian Broadcasting System; (2) increased and better programming; and, (3) an increase in the choice of programming (p. 5). Gotlieb's presentation is well-chosen as the first article because it clearly sets out the Canadian objectives and provides a solid foundation from which the remainder of the book can progress.

The second article, written by Prof. Peers, addresses this question: "What accounts for the divergence of the two countries in theory and practice, and how true to the model supposedly adopted is each system in reality?" (p. 11). Peers' presentation is complemented by a comment from Barry Cole, a former advisor to the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC). While Peers provides a comprehensive comparison of the development of the border broadcasting dispute between the United

States and Canada from early radio days through the early 1980's, Cole notes Peers' tendency to give America's development more credit than it is due. Although Peers is Canadian, his attempts to attribute America's technological and legislative advances to conscientious organization, rather than to a substantial degree of chance, illustrates the strong presence of the American bias with which Gotlieb's essay is concerned.

The third historical analysis reveals the differences of opinion that can arise between those who teach communications and those who actually engage in communications. The authors of the article, Hagelin and Janisch, both teach communications law. The comment, on the other hand, is written by Ernest Krasnow, the Senior Vice President and General Counsel of the National Association of Broadcasters. Hagelin and Janisch provide a three-pronged analysis which includes: (1) a chronological development of the dispute; (2) a study of the tensions within U.S. and Canadian domestic policies; and, (3) a model for analysis based on the breakdown of interests at stake into distinct concerns. They focus their analysis on the view that American broadcasters should appreciate the threat that U.S. border services pose to localism in Canada. In contrast to the authors' conceptual view, Krasnow's view is much more practical and American-oriented; the issue is whether Canada can "fairly seek the benefit (and invite the competition) of foreign services without permitting them to earn reasonable compensation" (p. 101). He has no objection to Canada's efforts to protect her own identity as long as the means chosen is "fair and rational." Thus, the third article depicts some significant tension between those who study the dispute and those who are more directly involved with it.

The second group of articles more blatantly exposes the extreme views that make up the debate in the border broadcast dispute. The fourth article is written by Mark J. Freiman, a graduate of Stanford University, who now teaches in the Canadian Studies Department at the University of Toronto. The accompanying comment is written by Glen O. Robinson, the John C. Stennis Professor at the University of Virginia, who was a Commissioner of the FCC between 1974 and 1976 and led the U.S. delegation to the World Administrative Radio Conference in 1978-79. The article, *Consumer Sovereignty and National Sovereignty in Domestic and International Broadcasting Regulation*, asserts that the concept of consumer sovereignty as the governing force in broadcasting is a myth. The real force lies with the advertisers, for it is they who producers seek to attract and they who provide the money for programming. Robinson accuses Freiman of confusing the ideal consumer with real consumers: are not consumers' choices always influenced by something, if not by the advertiser? It is not only advertisements that cause a viewer to choose one station or another. The viewer ultimately decides whether to change the channel or turn off his television. While Frieman depicts the viewer as

being helplessly and artificially shaped by commercial interests, Robinson suggests an alternative view: the Canadian government's intervention indicates that the country's cultural heritage is too weak to support itself and that, therefore, the viewers' choice should have first priority.

The fifth and sixth articles demonstrate the dichotomy between Canadian and American interests. The articles explore the subtle but significant differences in the countries' philosophies which have been instrumental in the evolution of the broadcasting dispute. John Meisel was the Chairman of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission in 1976. Like Gotlieb, Meisel sets out a responsible Canadian view of the philosophies which make Canada feel it must regulate its broadcasting and which make the United States able to afford not to regulate. He writes from the point of view of a people trying to be heard amid the powerful voice of its neighbor. In contrast, Stephen A. Sharp, a Commissioner of the FCC, explains the role of the FCC in its support for deregulation as a "realistic response to the technological drive" (p. 138). This American view is premised on the idea that under certain circumstances, "economic self-interest can perform many regulatory functions, so that government need not do so" (p. 138). Sharp does not make any attempt to know Canada's position, and imposes his own economic approach onto Canada's more culturally-oriented one.

The final article in this section is written by Leslie G. Arries, Jr., representing the American border broadcasters. Arries provides a lucid account of the legislative history of the dispute. Like Sharp, however, his conclusions are distinctly American and ethnocentric. Rather than follow Sharp's economic justification of deregulation, Arries reduces his article to the basic conclusion that Canada is well aware of its inability to reconcile its desire for cultural identity and its need to keep open advertising opportunities to build up the industry; that Canadian legislation does not affect the predisposition of Canadians to watch the U.S. programming of U.S. stations; and, that Canada should be more sensitive to the values of the free flow of communications. Arries' point of view ignores the Canadian perspective as Sharp's did. From these three pieces we see the tension resulting from America's refusal to recognize Canada's position and Canada's inability "to reconcile the national cultural objective of strong indigenous programming with the desire of Canadian viewers for an ever-greater variety of programming" (pp. 135-36).

Articles seven and eight examine approaches being considered presently to solve the dispute as well as alternative future approaches. In article seven, Yale M. Braunstein, Professor of Economics at Brandeis University, draws an economic model of advertiser choice to illustrate the economic forces in dispute. Generally, his premise is that "an advertiser maximizes profits by setting the marginal revenue from advertising equal to the marginal cost of advertising as well as by setting the traditional

marginal revenue from sales equal to the marginal cost of production" (p. 156). In the two comments following the article, Ian Parker, Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Toronto, and Robert E. Babe, Associate Professor in the Department of Communications at the University of Ottawa, point out the shortcomings of theoretical models. Braunstein's model concludes that Canadian legislation is unlikely to obtain its goals because Canadians like to watch American shows. Parker notes that Braunstein omitted six additional economic factors which should have been included. He says the model is static, assumes its presumptions are correct and does not allow for change. He warns that pressure for achieving mathematical precision can lead the theoretician to neglect reality. In short, Parker believes that the Braunstein model is trapped within its own context and removed from reality. Babe's comment is similar. He questions the grounds Braunstein's model is based upon and doubts the value of pure logic as it relates to reality. The form may obscure the substance.

Article eight, *The Impact of New Techniques and Future Technologies on U.S. Canadian Broadcasting Relations*, is written by Thomas H. Martin, a faculty member of the School of Informations Studies at Syracuse University. While not claiming to be able to predict the future of broadcast relations, Martin explores three possible scenarios concerning: (1) the thwarting of Telidon (Canada's entry into the videotex mass media market); (2) the rebirth of border broadcasting; and, (3) the pirating of satellite signals. These scenarios portray possible future developments and their implications in the development of relations. Martin's conclusion predicts that both the U.S. and Canadian interests in free enterprise will lead to a decrease in governmental involvement and an increase in bilateral agreements between broadcasters. While he ends on a positive note, one that foresees eventual cooperation, Martin reminds the reader early in his article that there are too many variables involved to allow accurate predictions. Nevertheless, Martin's view of Canada's concern that cultural expression will take a backseat to its economic interest in the free market may suggest an American bias such as the ones discussed earlier.

Because each particular article presents problems and biases which have served to exacerbate the border broadcasting dispute, *Cultures in Collision* has made accessible to its readers the roots of the underlying issues. If the New York Conference did not arrive at any solid solutions, its preservation in book form keeps the debate alive, allowing input from interested parties. This reviewer does not hesitate to affirm the success of

Cultures in Collision in achieving its goal of articulating the border broadcasting issue and encouraging its resolution.

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