Editorial: “Let’s Talk TV” and the Future of Television Policy in Canada

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) launched Let’s Talk TV: A Conversation with Canadians (LTTV) in October 2013. In some respects, it was but the latest round in a long history of government study and public consultation on Canada’s broadcasting system. In other respects, the heavily social mediatized consultation process, the focus on commercial imperatives and export markets, as well as the charismatic ubiquity of Jean-Pierre Blais—the would-be-iconoclast who was the chairperson of the CRTC at the time—hinted that the LTTV would at least attempt to do broadcasting politics differently. Did it? What, ultimately, were its impacts on and its significance to the study of broadcasting in Canada? In the first outing of the Policy Portal of the Canadian Journal of Communication, two articles reflect on these and other questions.

In “The LTTV Consultations: Mapping Old and New Interests in Television Today,” Mary Elizabeth Luka and Catherine Middleton assess the LTTV consultation process and the implementation of its results in the years that followed. In “Jean-Pierre Blais’ Magic Items: Over-the-Air Digital Television Delivery as Canadian Regulatory Revelation,” Steven James May and Catherine Middleton explore the place of old media in the discourses that surrounded LTTV, focusing in particular on the substance and tone of the process’ return to over-the-air broadcasting as a solution. Taken together, these two articles provide a snapshot of the issues, actors, and discourses that were prominent throughout the LTTV process. They map some of the enduring politics and key concepts of studying broadcasting onto a policy moment that seemed, at the time, to be defined entirely by newness. Was the LTTV an aberration, or a watershed moment in the history of Canada’s broadcasting system? These articles offer context around that time and place and preserve the moment for posterity.

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