

## **THE OBSERVER**

to

## **ON THE SPOT**

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### ***The Observer***

Thu 6:00-7:00 p.m., 3 Oct 1963-25 Jun 1964

Tue/Thu 6:30-7:00 p.m., 30 Jun 1964-30 Jun 1966

A weekly hour-long magazine program, broadcast at the dinner hour on stations in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal, The Observer included a range of features on arts, culture, and current events. The show's host was writer and broadcaster John David Hamilton, and its announcer was Al Hamel. They introduced features and interviews on such subjects as Quebec seaparatism, the popularity of French language instruction among Anglophones in Quebec (with journalist Peter Desbarats), credit buying, political cartoonists (with Toronto Star artist Duncan Macpherson), and the new turbine engine automobiles. They presented accounts of events in the past, such as Orson Welles's War of the Worlds broadcast, or the Springhill, Nova Scotia mine cave-in (with reporter J. Frank Willis), and the career of Ottawa mayor Charlotte Whitton. Book reviews and interviews with authors of new books were regular features of the program, as was an item called "Hansard Revisited," a review of incidents in the week's news, with cartoonist Peter Whalley.

The program aimed for immediacy and mobility, and employed producers in the three cities, initially Don MacPherson in Toronto, Betty Zimmerman in Ottawa, and Don Rice in Montreal. Subsequent producers included Jim Reed in Toronto, and Gary Plaxton and Rod Chaisson in Montreal.

In addition to hosts Hamilton and Hamel, the program employed a "cover girl," a different young woman each week, who would introduce the show and provide viewers with notes on what was coming up in the broadcast.

Starting June 1964, the program contracted to a half-hour, but multiplied into a twice-weekly broadcast for a summer series, called The Observer: Summer Edition, with Lloyd Robertson as Toronto host and Sandi Fruman in Montreal. In October, it was absorbed as part of Across Canada (q.v.), the series of public affairs programs that originated in different production centres each day. In 1965,

the final season for the series, Michael Magee and Daisy de Bellefeuille were added to the list of hosts.

The executive producer for the show was Harry J. Boyle, broadcaster, radio producer, writer, and cultural bureaucrat. The Observer was his first regular contribution to television programming for the CBC.

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## ***Odyssey***

Thu 4:30-5:00 p.m., 13 Feb-27 Mar 1969

Fri 4:30-5:00 p.m., 3 Oct-31 Oct 1969

Wed 4:30-5:00 p.m., 19 Jun-4 Sep 1974

Odyssey is the title of a series of films, programmed by the CBC in a half-hour, after-school time slot for young viewers. The five week series in 1969 included Orientation; Victory Over The Nahanni; Sculpt-In; Through A Child Lightly; and Great Barrier Reef. Programs in 1970 each included two features: Autumn Salmon and A Glimpse Of Spring; Taming The Rocky Mountain Trench and Sights And Sounds Of Jerusalem; Big Jasper Country and Rocky Mountain Rainbow; and Banff Country and Bonjour Montreal.

A similar series returned to the air in 1974, with films of the National Film Board. They included Juggernaut, by Eugene Boyko; Kainai, by Raoul Fox; Trail Ride, by Ernest Reid; Carousels, by Bernard Longpre; Roughnecks, by Guy Cote; My Financial Career, animated by Grant Munro, from Stephen Leacock's story; Northwest Passage, by Bernard Gosselin; Northern Fisherman, by Martin Defalco; Saskatchewan, 45 Degrees Below, by Larry Kent; The Ride, by Gerald Potterton; 60 Cycles, by Jean-claude Labrecque; What On Earth, by Les Drew and Kaj Pindal; Ville Marie, by Denys Arcand; Summer's Nearly Over, by Michael Rubbo; The Railrodder, Gerald Potterton's film, with Buster Keaton; and Guy Glover's abstract animation, Marching The Colours.

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## ***Of All People***

Mon 10:00-10:30 p.m., 12 Jun-21 Aug 1972

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 27 May-19 Aug 1973

Mon 10:00-10:30 p.m., 3 Jun-2 sep 1974

Executive producer Ross McLean was responsible for assembling this series of half-hour programs, which ran over three summer seasons. It presented profiles of ordinary Canadians whose work and lives were nonetheless important, or of people who were typically overlooked by the conventional press and media. They included Anne Barrett, a mother of three, who was also the dogcatcher of Uxbridge township, Leonard Evans, a Newfoundland man with fourteen children, Vinnie Green, an eighty year old stamp and coin collector, poet Al Purdy, and Fred and Mary Allison, a couple who had recently celebrated fifty years of marriage. The typical program included more than one such profile.

McLean collected material from a number of notable young producers: Martyn Burke, Martin Lavut, Jo Davis, Barbara Greene, Lyman Gifford, Don Newlands, William Fruet, and Don Shebib.

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### ***O'Keefe Centre Presents***

Mon 8:00-9:00 p.m., 16 Oct 1967

Thu 8:00-9:00 p.m., 23 Nov 1967

Sun 8:00-9:00 p.m., 10 Dec 1967

Tue 8:00-9:00 p.m., 16 Jan 1968

Tue 8:00-9:00 p.m., 13 Feb 1968

Sun 8:00-9:00 p.m., 24 Mar 1968

Television's closer view perhaps provided the best way of seeing and hearing a performance in the wide open spaces of Toronto's main performance venue, the O'Keefe Centre. Over the 1967 and 1968 season, the CBC produced six, one hour variety programs in the O'Keefe Centre, which featured foreign headliners and Canadian supporting acts. Most of the productions were middle of the road, but the premiere broadcast (16 October 1967) spotlighted rock and top forty music, with appearances by the Jefferson Airplane, the Doors, Dionne Warwick, Sergio Mendes and Brasil 66, Eric Andersen, and a twenty-five piece band led by Don Thompson. The show was written by Chris Beard, and the host was Noel Harrison.

The 23 November 1967 segment of the series presented a concert by Harry Belafonte and Miriam Makeba, and was produced by Paddy Sampson. New Orleans trumpet player Al Hirt, British singer Shirley Bassey, and impressionist Rich Little headlined the program broadcast on 10 December 1967. The fourth show in the series, which aired 16 January 1968, starred George Burns, with a battery of young Canadian female performers: singers Monique Leyrac and Mary Lou Collins, National Ballet star Martine Van Hamel, violin duo the Hansen Sisters, harpist Donna Hossack, singing group Les Miladies, dancer Sandra O'Neill, and soprano Teresa Stratas. Alex Barris wrote the December and January editions of the show.

The 13 February 1968 show departed from the concert performance format, and presented a book show, a musical version of Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, with music and lyrics by Ruth Batchelor and Bob Roberts, and starring Robin Ward and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

The final show of the series, broadcast on 24 March 1968, returned to the concert stage for a country music show, starring Johnny Cash.

Except for the Belafonte program, the series was staged by veteran CBC variety producers Bob Jarvis and Drew Crossan.

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### ***Old Testament Tales***

Thu 5:15-5:30 p.m., 3 Jan-28 Mar 1957

Produced by Basil Coleman, this fifteen minute live broadcast was Canada's first religious television program for children. It presented stories from the Old Testament, adapted by Clare Slater, and performed by puppets manipulated by John Keogh, Linda Keogh, and John Botterel. The music was composed and arranged by Frank Haworth.

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### ***The Oldtimers***

Mon 10:00-10:30 p.m., 11 Nov-30 Dec 1974

Tue 6:00-6:30 p.m., 7 Jan 1975

Sun 2:00-2:30 p.m., 13 Apr-29 Jun 1975 (R)

A special, called *The Time Of My Life*, produced by Donnalu Wigmore and aired on the CBC in September 1973, was the root of this series of eight programs about Canadian pioneers who are still living to tell their stories. The subjects were in their seventies, eighties, or nineties, and recounted experiences from across the country. They included a woman who, as a child in 1899, travelled west in a covered wagon, and a man who arrived in the western country to homestead in 1909. Two native women talked about their lives, including one who had registered in an 1877 treaty. Each program gathered the recollections of people around a subject or area. One show, for example, was on the Northwest Mounted Police, another on residents of the north, another on women in Manitoba, on Quebec, on Newfoundland, on Saskatchewan, on British Columbia, and on Christmas Memories. Executive producer Wigmore assigned the profiles to producers from various regions, including Mike Poole of Vancouver, Jack Emack of Edmonton, Bill Ryan of Saskatoon, Norm Botnick of Winnipeg, Barbara Emo of Montreal, and Jack Kellum, Hal Andrews, and Dave Quinton of St. John's.

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### ***Ombudsman***

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 6 Jan-12 May 1974

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 6 Oct 1974-10 Apr 1975

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 5 Oct 1975-4 Apr 1976

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 17 Oct 1976-13 Mar 1977

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 2 Oct 1977-7 May 1978

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 24 Sep 1978-15 Apr 1979

Sun 10:30-11:00 p.m., 23 sep 1979-20 Apr 1980

In the late 1960s, the CBC had used the idea of a newspaper "action line" reporter as a basis for its comedy/drama, *McQueen*. By the middle of the 1970s, however, in an period of increased sensitivity toward consumers' and citizens' rights, the network introduced several interventionist programs, most notably *Marketplace* (q.v.), devoted to consumer information, and *Ombudsman*, which concerned public advocacy for citizens' rights in disputes with government or corporate bureaucracy. At the time the show was introduced for its mid-season

premiere, four provinces had appointed ombudsmen, most recently and most notably Ontario's Arthur Malloney, a high profile lawyer.

The CBC's ombudsman was also a lawyer, thirty-three year old Robert Cooper, an unassuming, bookish-looking man whose ordinariness probably aided him in gaining the trust of Canadian viewers. For the winter of 1974, the first ten Ombudsman shows ran every second week, alternating with In The Present Tense. When the show returned in the autumn, it aired for three weeks out of every four, with a feature documentary on the fourth week. Cooper invited viewers to inform him of run-ins with institutions and with government and corporate bureaucracy. Under the direction of lawyer Peter Gilchrist, a staff of fifteen researchers investigated legitimate complaints of personal injustice and attempted to settle matters. From these cases, a number were selected for on-air presentation. Typically, the program's film unit travelled to the plaintiff and interviewed him or her about the problem. Then, Cooper interviewed and tried to wrest a satisfactory resolution from a responsible official. Starting in the autumn 1974 season, every second show was devoted to in-depth investigations of major incidences of widespread social injustice, instead of individual cases.

Succeeding seasons attempted to expand the breadth of the show's concerns, and to deal with Canadians' search for justice in a comprehensive way. In particular, regular programs concerned issues of government accessibility and secrecy.

Understandably, the show attracted a considerable volume of mail. After its first partial season run, the network announced that the show had received 7,350 letters and still collected about a hundred per week. At the same time, it announced that the staff had settled 2,137 cases, only nineteen of which had been presented on the air. By the summer of 1975, seven Canadian provinces employed ombudsmen, but grievances continued to collect at the CBC. By 1978, they numbered a reported forty thousand. The staff had managed to confront some twelve thousand cases, of which thirty- six per cent (approximately 4,300) had been resolved. At the same time, the CBC gauged the show's audience at around one and a half million viewers.

In 1979, Cooper left the program to pursue a career as a motion picture producer. His replacement was Kathleen Ruff. Ombudsman was cancelled after the 1979-1980 season. Understandably, for a show of this type, the question of whether the cancellation was politically motivated arose. CBC executive Mike Daignault noted that by 1980, every province except Prince Edward Island had its own ombudsman, which perhaps resulted in a declining audience for the program. In addition, he noted that the programming decision was part of the plan to put other

forms of information programming into prime time, and specifically noted the upcoming change in time slot for the national news.

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### ***On Camera***

Sat 9:00-9:30 p.m., 16 Oct 1954-2 Jul 1955

Sat 9:00-9:30 p.m., 1 Oct 1955-23 Jun 1956

Mon 8:30-9:00 p.m., 29 Oct 1956-22 Sep 1958

On Camera succeeded CBC Playbill as the principal series for half-hour drama and comedy on the network. The series aimed to encourage Canadian writers, and did provide an outlet for domestic television plays. (Frank Rasky offered a dissenting view, and judged that On Camera, along with General Motors Theatre and Folio, "have specialized largely in either slick formula pap or adaptations [sic] of British and American classics." "Canada's TV Writers: Timid But Slick," Saturday Night [27 October 1956], p. 10)

The production was supervised by Sydney Newman, and many CBC staff producers were responsible for mounting individual episodes of the series, notably Ted Kotcheff, Arthur Hiller, Charles Jarrott, Melwyn Breen, Ronald Weyman, and Paul Almond.

Plays in the series included: Blind Date, written by Jacqueline Rosenfeld; Waltz, by Stanley Mann; Who Destroyed The Earth, by Len Peterson; Gold Mine In The House, adapted by Sidney Furie from a story by J.N. Harris; The Last Long Crusade, by Doris French; The President's Ghost, by Michael Sheldon; The Guests, by Jack Benthover; Mr. Gidding Attacks, by Henry Feisen, Two From King Street, by Jack Kuper; Thank You, Edmondo, by Mac Shoub; and Stagecoach Bride, written by Elsie Park Gowan. Other writers for the series included Hugh Garner, Joseph Schull, Leslie Macfarlane, and Charles Templeton, who contributed a play called Absentee Murder.

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### ***On Guard For Thee***

Sun 10:00-11:00 p.m., 18 Oct-1 Nov 1981

The CBC and the National Film Board co-produced this series of three, one hour films on the evolution of national security problems in Canada from World War II to the present. Director/Writer Donald Brittain assembled new interview material, archival footage, segments of fiction films (notably William Wellman's 1948 version of the Igor Gouzenko case, *The Iron Curtain*), and reconstructions into an evocative, though highly problematic, fabric to inquire into the relations of national security and civil liberties.

The first part, *The Most Dangerous Spy*, revolves around the 1946 defection of Igor Gouzenko with documents that revealed Soviet espionage activities in Canada, and the ensuing investigation, arrests, and suspension of civil liberties. The second part, *A Blanket Of Ice*, outlines the Cold War, the witchhunts that penetrated the civil service and diplomatic circles, and the secret activities of the RCMP in the name of national security up to the October 1970 crisis. The final program, called *Shadows Of A Horseman*, traced the activities and problems of the national police force from 1969, when the McKenzie Commission recommended that the RCMP be relieved of responsibility for national security, through the time of the War Measures Act through the 1970s, to the revelation of covert and illicit practices by the RCMP at the end of the decade and the start of the McDonald Commission.

Although Canada has had an international reputation for order and peace, that image has been tarnished periodically over the past several decades, and recent revelations have made the quiet secrecy of this country's operations more and more suspect with relation to its citizens' rights.

The series was produced by Brittain, Roger Hart, and James Littleton, and the executive producers were Adam Symansky for the NFB and Paul Wright for the CBC.

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### ***On Location***

Wed 5:00-5:30 p.m., 30 Oct-27 Nov 1974

*On Location* was the title for a local CBLT series, which featured events of interest around the Toronto area, and which circulated to several stations across the network, including CBC outlets in Montreal, Ottawa, St. John's, and Moose Jaw. In 1970, the hosts were Bill Paul, Bill Bessey, and Rex Loring, and the executive producer Bill Bolt. The summer 1971 series, which was aired outside Toronto, featured Alan Millar in such locations as the African Lion Safari and



Game Park near Kitchener, in Toronto's Chinatown, at the Kiwanis Music Festival, and at Black Creek Pioneer Village.

The title returned in 1974, in a revival of the format of *On The Scene* (q.v.), for a series of five, half-hour documentaries, originating in Winnipeg and produced by Rudy Gijzen. Segments included visits to the M.S. Lord Selkirk II, the RCMP Barracks in Regina, the Rainbow Stage, the Canadian Forest Rescue Squad Base, and the Morris Stampede and Rodeo.

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### ***On Safari***

Mon 5:00-5:15 p.m., 6 Jul-28 Sep 1959

Tue 5:00-5:15 p.m., 6 Oct-29 Dec 1959

Mon 5:00-5:30 p.m., 4 Jul-

Mon/Wed 5:00-5:30 p.m., 2 Oct-12 Oct 1960

Designed for children, this series of quarter-hour programs, later expanded to a half-hour, presented film gathered by Armand and Michaela Denis, Belgian wildlife photographers. Programs took them to different areas of Africa or South America, and could involve searches for a particular beast, such as the manatee, or profiles of a park or district with distinctive animal life.

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### ***On Stage***

Wed 9:30-10:00 p.m., 6 Oct 1954-1 Jun 1955

Wed 9:30-10:00 p.m., 6 Jul-21 Sep 1955

Mon 9:30-10:00 p.m., 19 Sep 1955

Mon 8:30-9:00 p.m., 26 Sep-24 Oct 1955

Sponsored by Lever Brothers, and produced by Norman Jewison, *On Stage* was a half-hour version of *The Big Revue*. The musical variety show was hosted by singer George Murray, and featured as regular vocalists Terry Dale, Phyllis Marshall, and Wally Koster, with the Bill Brady Quintet and an orchestra

conducted by Jack Kane. John Aylesworth and Frank Peppiatt, the show's writers, provided comic sketches, along with Alfie Scopp, Reuben Ship, Al Bertram, and Jillian Foster.

The summer version of the show starred Denny Vaughan and Joan Fairfax, and the next season, the program mutated into The Denny Vaughan Show (q.v.).

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### ***On The Evidence***

Sat 10:00-11:00 p.m., 21 Jun-30 Aug 1975

Tue 8:00-9:00 p.m., 25 May-17 Aug 1976

Thu 10:00-11:00 p.m., 28 Jul-15 Sep 1977

Mon-Fri 1:00-2:00 p.m., 2 Jul-6 Aug 1979 (R)

Fri 11:45-12:45 a.m., 28 Apr-12 Sep 1980 (R)

The CBC attempted to revive the formula of A Case For The Court (q.v.) and the spontaneity of live television in this basically unscripted summer series. The start of each program provided a brief outline of a crime, and the show then proceeded to a courtroom set for the trial of a suspect. The suspect and witnesses were actors, the lawyers, judge, and clerk of the court were supplied by the Ontario branch of the Canadian Bar Association, and the jury members were selected from the studio audience. The cases were tried for a taping session that lasted approximately two hours, and the tape was edited down to a one hour show. (The only regular personage in the series was CBC announcer Ken Haslam, who narrated the show, and filled in gaps in the story and provided details for viewers.)

The series outlined criminal cases based on actual events, as well as totally fictional cases, which nevertheless had been well researched. The program aimed to be more of a courtroom drama, an entertainment, rather than an educational or public affairs broadcast.

The writer for the series was Barry Morgan. The director responsible for following the unplanned action was Bryn Matthews, and the producer was David Pears.

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### ***On The Frontier Of Space***

Sat 6:00-6:30 p.m., 21 Mar/4 Apr/18 Apr 1959

Producer Norman Caton prepared this series of three, half-hour broadcasts on the evolution of missiles and rockets from the weapons of World War II to the launch of Sputnik, and beyond. The first program concerned the actual machines and hardware, from the development of the V-1 by Germany and its use in the 1940s, and progressed to the evolution of space vehicles. The second part explored the relations between rocket technology and humans who develop and use it for space exploration. The concluding program speculated on the problems and possibilities for human exploration in outer space.

The program gathered film material from the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., and Canada, as well as interviews with authorities, such as Wernher Von Braun. Hosts for the show included Caton, Alexander Webster, and Jack Alexander. *On The Frontier Of Space* ran every other week, alternating with the U.S. drama series, *Panic - No Warning*.

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### ***On The Scene***

Sat 1:00-1:30 p.m., 29 Apr-24 Jun 1967

*On The Scene* was the title of a local CBLT live broadcast of interviews and events from the Toronto area, which ran from 1960 to 1964, and featured Joyce Davidson and Alan Millar, then Al Boliska and Alan Millar. The program was produced by Bill Bolt and written by Norman Klenman.

The title was used for a network series of documentaries, originating in Vancouver (and formerly a local broadcast) and produced by Keith Christie, in the spring of 1967. Host Bob Switzer led viewers through events and sights in the Vancouver area, such as the Centennial Train during its stay on the west coast, the Vernon Winter Carnival, or the Vancouver Public Aquarium.

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### ***On The Spot***

Tue 7:45-8:00 p.m., 6 Oct 1953-30 Jun 1954

Sun 10:00-10:30 p.m., 10 Oct-12 Dec 1954

The first attempt by the National Film Board at film production for television, *On The Spot* was a series of documentaries on aspects of life in Canada. The series was originated by Bernard Devlin, who produced a parallel series, called *Sur le vif*, for the French language service. For the first season, the programs ran fifteen minutes on Tuesday evening, but the show expanded to fill a half-hour slot on Sunday nights. The on-camera hosts were Fred Davis and Lloyd Bochner.

Titles in the series included *Survival In The Bush*; *It's Raining Soldiers*; *The Mounties' Crime Lab*; *Laurentian Skiing*; *Forest Wardens*; *Police Club For Boys*; *Better Business Bureau*; *Judo Jinks*; *Montreal Historique*; *Alcoholism*; *Career College*; *Camera Men*; *Aviation Medicine*; *Javanese Dancing*; *Bureau Of Missing Persons*; *Artist in Montreal*; *Korea*; *After The War*; *Vancouver's Chinatown*; *Football Story*; *Gold Rush Land*; *Harness Racing*; *Chinese Canadians*; *Dresden Story*; *Hidden Power*; *The Zoo In Stanley Park*; *Winnipeg Ballet*; *Winnipeg City*; and *Workshop For Science*.