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NEWS LETTER

town talk

P.O. BOX 692 THUNDER BAY "P" ONTARIO TELEPHONE (807) 34-5-2518



AUGUST 19, 1970

This is the second Town Talk newsletter, and again there is more to report than there is time and space to report it. Consequently, this issue will concentrate on the community television proposal, a matter of great current importance and one on which Town Talk has collected a great deal of information.

CITY COUNCIL REACTS TO EXCITING NEW PROPOSAL

An exciting evening in the history of Thunder Bay occurred Monday, August 10th, when Town Talk proposed to City Council that a community television channel be started here.

The event was augmented by a video-tape presentation, intensive questioning from council members, extensive coverage by all local news media and a large layman audience. Toronto's newspaper, The Globe and Mail, also carried the story.

David Hughes and Lindsay Morgan spoke on behalf of Town Talk.

The proposal was called "The most exciting and significant thing to happen in broadcasting in Canada and, I believe, in North America," by Noel Moore programme director of Cable-casting Ltd., a cable company operating in Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto.

In reply to a question from Alderman Bert Badanai, Mr. Moore said he thought Town Talk's proposal would contribute significantly to any regulations proposed by the Canadian Radio-Television Commission for cable systems throughout Canada.

The presentation took an hour, extended by the interest of the aldermen, as shown in their questions. They particularly wanted information on financing, and how access to and programming on the channel would be controlled.

Mr. Hughes replied that it was Town Talk's opinion that the existing rate structure of Lakehead Videon was sufficient to finance a proposed annual operating budget of \$240,000.

The final decisions on financing, he pointed out, rest with the CRTC in Ottawa.

Mr. Hughes welcomed Alderman Don Aedy's suggestion that subscribers to the service have a voice in the operation of the channel.

The possibility of the channel coming under the influence and abuse of a minority group concerned Alderman Charles Johnston, M.D.

Mr. Hughes replied that since the question of controlling such a potentially powerful medium was paramount, that function would rest with the charter board representing the whole community.

One highlight of the presentation was a twelve-minute video-tape showing of some of the work done by trainees of the National Film Board's summer project.

The efforts of those completing the tape were certainly worthwhile and appreciated.

Town Talk is grateful to city council for the attention given the proposal, and looks forward to a favourable decision in the near future.

-by Paul Inksetter

COMMUNITY RESPONSE FAVOURABLE TO TELEVISION SERVICE

On March 25, 1970, Town Talk released a draft proposal outlining a community service television idea which it felt would best meet Thunder Bay and region's community concerns and identity needs.

The report, prepared by David B. Hughes, related the technology of cable television to local needs and stressed public access to the medium. It showed how the Canadian Radio-Television Commission's guidelines for cable programming could be applied locally in new, exciting ways.

Copies were circulated to citizens and elected officials, and to local organizations in an attempt to measure the reaction to and need for such a service.

Of the 103 groups canvassed, 48 replied. All indicated approval, and some programming suggestions were included. Letters of encouragement were also received from individuals who had not been specifically solicited.

The following organizations responded: art, hobby groups: Thunder Bay Naturalists' Club, Thunder Bay Historical Society, Lakehead Symphony Orchestra Board, Cambrian Players; church groups: Thunder Bay Council of Clergy, Religious Broadcasting Committee, Salvation Army, Wayside Church Centre; Citizens' action groups: Single Parents' Action Corps, Single Parents' Group, Lakehead Anti-Pollution Committee, Operation Employment, Happy Handicap Club, Consumers' Action Committee; correctional agencies: Industrial Farm and Training Centre; educational organizations: Association for Early Childhood Education, Ontario Dept. of Education; Youth and Recreation Branch; Lakehead University and Confederation College Extension

Departments; Lakehead Board of Education; ethnic groups: Indian Youth Friendship Centre, Le Club Canadien-Francais de Thunder Bay; government agencies: Parks and Recreation Department, City of Thunder Bay, Ontario Human Rights Commission Canada Manpower Centre, National Film Board of Canada; Department of the Secretary of State, Citizenship Branch; health services: Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital; Addiction Research Foundation; professional associations: Thunder Bay Medical Society; Chamber of Commerce; Lakehead Labour Council, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation service clubs: Rotary Club; Thunder Bay South Jaycettes; Canadian Club; social welfare and assistance: Thunder Bay United Appeal; Thunder Bay Branch, Canadian Red Cross; Credit Counselling Service; Lakehead Family Counselling Agency; Lakehead Social Planning Council; Department of Social and Family Services; youth agencies: Big Brother Association; Northwestern Regional Council, Boy Scouts of Canada.

Many new responses have been received since the results of the questionnaire were compiled. There has been no negative response to date.

ON THE FRONT PAGE

Left: Editing film at the Thunder Bay Community Film Project Headquarters. The project is being sponsored by the Challenge for Change programme of the National Film Board in cooperation with Town Talk.

Top: Robert Stanbury (left) and RK Andras (right), members of the Federal Cabinet, discuss the community television proposal with David Hughes of the Town Talk steering committee. Both Mr. Andras and Mr. Stanbury are enthusiastic supporters of the proposal.

Bottom: Hans Oomes, a location sound mixer with the National Film Board. Mr. Oomes has been in Thunder Bay since June advising the film project in the techniques of sound and videotape recording.

INTERIM REPORT ON PERSONAL INTERVIEW SURVEY

This interim report presents a brief summary of some of the data derived through personal interviews concerning the Community TV proposal. It is also possible at this time to see several trends beginning to appear throughout the data, outlining needs of the community which could be met through the medium of a community channel.

It is logical that the community channel, if it is to operate in Thunder Bay and region, must reflect the needs of the many facets of this and surrounding communities. For this reason, the sample of people interviewed must also represent these various factions.

SAMPLE BREAKDOWN

Total number interviewed to date

Sex	Males	44
	Females	24
Occupation	Professional & Agency people	16
	Non professional (blue collar, housewives, students, etc.)	52
Community	From Thunder Bay	58
	District	10
Age range	84 years - 14 years	

This sample represents only the initial, exploratory attempt at the study, and more interviews are needed to balance the sample and be more representative of the community -i.e. concentration on various ethnic and racial groups business organizations and internal neighbourhoods.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DATA

Number of people basically for the proposal	65
Number of people basically against the proposal	3

Information gathered in interviews, however, goes much deeper than the initial for, or against reaction; it also offers qualitative material. The following represents some constructive opinions given by various members of this community.

- the educational exposure could be fantastic; the concept has local and regional implications; it could be used to tackle community affairs and a meaningful understanding; try not to duplicate facilities now present in TV.
- investigate human resources and spread into the community; you must not be too rigid because change is a reality; maximize results, search out what people want; don't necessarily shove it at them.
- it could supply motivation to kids seeing themselves on TV, especially in local sports; it could also ease the class struggle so prevalent in this city; people could be tied together through knowledge - right now decisions are made here by a few.
- it can be used to get feedback to organizations about their programs it can also be used to publicize their programs and educate the community on what is going on.
- could assist community awareness and community understanding concerning ethnic groups (This point is very important in a pluralistic community such as Thunder Bay)
- A community channel can be used to bring people together and provide a meaningful dialogue, presenting both sides of issues so

people can make up their own minds; there are also citizen's groups which need support from the public.

The above comments are selected from interviews with people in social agencies and other professions. The following responses are excerpts from interviews with others and one can see what the professional people suggest corresponds closely to the needs expressed by members of the community at large.

- Like to see programs explaining drugs and why people take them; maybe use a panel where people can ask questions from the audience.
- Like to know the difference between the different political parties; I like information programs as long as they are easy to understand - they can't be too dignified.
- Community has to keep pace with what is going on; this community has to wake up; interested in sports such as high school football and peewee hockey; also would like to see the symphony; channel would give people the opportunity to find out more about other sections of the community.
- need for programs that present both sides of issues; need information programs about income tax unemployment, welfare and other agencies - how they function, and how one goes about approaching an agency.
- need more civic affairs programs local plays, local candid camera, why isn't it a fact now? local talent is just going to waste.
- would provide time for public views; force politicians to take a stand, knowing the public has

a chance to express its views in public also.

- it is about time people spoke out, telling sponsors, etc., what we want to watch, rather than what the powers want to feed us.
- fear of control by management; need to know about young people; should get them more involved in the community; also involve the senior citizen; like to see more on schools; if education programs are used they shouldn't be too technical; should get people together to decide what is put on; can't always stress bad things.
- the average guy is passive because life is too complicated: there is too much conflict now - people feel the stress; family life is getting weaker; most average people have no solutions which makes them feel worse; some don't feel alive any more; they need controversy to shock them out of it.
- some way of airing public views is needed which cannot be pressured give the average guy a chance; interested in stock car racing and sports; news perhaps will not be biased; the channel cannot be controlled by any minority.

The above comments give the reader some indication of needs, and transmit feelings of various people in this community towards the community television concept. The responses illustrate what could be provided by various community institutions and organizations to meet some of these needs. Constructive content of the above opinions also indicates the feasibility of a citizens' Charter Board, as indicated in the original proposal.

This report may appear to be too one-sided to some, but the fact remains that many agree with the concept, understandable since the proposal represents an added ser-

vice and a new experience requiring community involvement and active participation. Many expect that the proposal will not go through because those in power will try to stop it. Many feel that this channel will end up like everything else - in the hands of a select few. Added cost and duplication of facilities are also mentioned as matters which require co-ordination. Those interviewed have also stressed the need for presentation of both sides of any issue and seem to be searching for unbiased presentations. These concerns will definitely have to be taken into consideration in the final plans for establishing the channel, its financing, supervision and programming.

Data received is much too incomplete yet to provide an adequate analysis of a working theory of community television. The other part of the social research, which will not be described at this time, includes an analysis of several local studies which pertain to local needs. Also, information is being compiled through participant observation of local meetings and events, as well as those in surrounding areas. Several interesting projects are being videotaped and will provide information on community application to the television. We hope to present at a later date a fairly comprehensive description of some of the needs of this community and the surrounding district, and how some of these needs may be met through the medium of a community channel.

- report by J. Hyder

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT COMMUNITY TELEVISION

1. How will the "Charter Board" work?

Town Talk does not wish to impose a structure upon an organization which must be democratic from the word go and for that reason no concrete proposals have been made. Many suggestions have been received and lawyers are presently preparing a report on the various alternatives. Certain points, however, seem self-evident at this time. For example - representatives from important organizations and institutions such as the Board of Education, the University and College, City Council, The Chamber of Commerce, etc. must be included. In addition, some formula of representation for the "average citizen" must be determined, and suggestions in this area are especially needed. It is expected that Town Talk will have a report with recommendations for the constitution of the Charter Board by August 21st. A period of review by the appropriate authorities and at public meetings should follow, before a draft charter is completed.

2. What about the people of Northwestern Ontario outside Thunder Bay?

Videon has repeatedly made assurances that every section of Thunder Bay will be served by cable within the near future. Most of the major towns in Northwestern Ontario have cable service, and the companies in those towns are generally not large enough to produce significantly quantitative community programming. If community television were in the future organized on a regional basis, and the CRTC might require that this be done, then communications among the people of Northwestern Ontario would be greatly facilitated. Even simple program

exchanges would be a contribution.

3. How important is Community Television?

In a recent period, total television viewing in the Thunder Bay urban area was 2,210,400 hours a week, or 22.9 hours on the average for every person over the age of two. It is obvious that television is a vital force in this community, and that any addition to the amount of locally-originated programming, and the provision of access to programming for large numbers of citizens, would be important to the community. Many people are concerned about the high proportion of American television in Canada, and in Thunder Bay it has been shown that teenagers as a group watch more American television than do other groups. A service should be available which will "win back" these viewers, and the community television might accomplish this.

4. What effect would community television have on CKPR, Lakehead Videon, and the public institutions which have television facilities?

There is no question that cable television cuts into CKPR's audience. Recent figures show that when homes subscribe to Videon, the percentage of time spent watching CKPR instead of other stations drops from about 95% to about 42%. But Videon is a prosperous local enterprise and it cannot be put out of business. The ideal compromise is for CKPR to keep all of the local television advertising business, which it needs, and for the cable subscription fees to pay for the community television service, which would not carry any advertising.

As for co-operation between CKPR and community television, this could probably be worked out very easily because there would be no competition for the advertising dollar. CKPR, being a network affiliate, has only so much time each day for local programs. It cannot, for example, broadcast entire hockey games. The community channel, however, could cover such events and pass on the highlights to CKPR. CKPR, in turn, might co-operate with the community service in news gathering.

The studio facilities at Hammar-skjold High School, Confederation College, and Lakehead University could, with community television, be used for broadcasting, as well as for training. The present situation, where three educational institutions provide training in television, and there is only one television broadcaster in town, would come to an end.

5. What is the role of Town Talk?

Town Talk, as a non-profit community service organization, is simply trying to get community television off the ground. Since its formation in 1967, Town Talk has supported and participated in many worthwhile projects, and community television might be the biggest and best yet.

6. Should City Council make a decision about community television, or should it be left entirely up to the government in Ottawa?

It would be unfortunate if community television didn't grow from the community itself, and Council should be a principle local body contributing to the formation of this community service. Furthermore, Council has considered matters dealing with local communications in the past, and it is City Council which must

approve agreements between Videon and the city-owned PUC and telephone utility. Council has had reason in past years to include a number of restrictions and requirements on Lakehead Videon and with the possibility of genuine community television as proposed by Town Talk, there is no reason why Council should not participate in its formation.

7. Would community television mean interference with private enterprise?

Cable television companies are privately owned, but because they are given monopoly privileges, because they make use of the public airways, because television service in Canada must develop in an orderly way, and because all owners of mass media have a great responsibility to the people of Canada, they are regulated by the Federal government. As far as community television is concerned, only the CRTC has the power to decide whether it will be established. At the local level, Videon has a monopoly to serve all those who want a choice of television programs other than those offered by CKPR. Thus Lakehead Videon, although privately owned, provides a service which is public in character and which is regulated by the public authorities.

In addition, many of the facilities used by Lakehead Videon are publicly owned. These include the actual cable in the former city of Port Arthur, the poles to which the cable is attached throughout the city, and the service personnel of the PUC who install and service the cable; thus Lakehead Videon is a service somewhere between a public utility and a private enterprise, and the

public has every right under the law to request certain special services of it.

8. Who will be legally responsible for the programming on the community channel?

Under law, the owner of a broadcasting service is responsible for the programs carried by his facilities. But if a community television service were established in Thunder Bay, Videon's liability would be protected in a number of ways. First of all, it is possible that the laws will be changed. Minister of Communications Eric Kierans said in a recent speech that the close association in law between the ownership of broadcasting facilities and the production of programmes might soon have to come to an end. He went on: "I feel that we must consider carefully the relationship between the owners of hardware and the users. The question is how can you assure equal access to all potential production units if the owner of the hardware also wants to compete in the creative field?" For Thunder Bay, this means that just because Videon owns the hardware doesn't mean that Videon should do the programming. After all, the city owns much of the hardware, and the city itself wouldn't think of insisting on doing programming, except in cooperation with experienced production personnel. Lakehead Videon has no production experience, and has made little or no efforts to involve the community in its proposed "community" programming. In fact, it would seem that Videon's pre-occupation at this time is to let all of the ownership control of the company pass out of the hands of local citizens.

(continued page ten)

For the past several months, Town Talk has been investigating the possibility of establishing a community television service in Thunder Bay. The purpose of our presentation today is to acquaint the members of Council with our findings, and to request their endorsement and active support in achieving this goal.

Community television is programming that is produced and controlled by people who are potentially both participants and audience. Whereas commercial network television has provided external pre-packaged entertainment interspersed with news and national commentary, there are five important functions at the local level which have until now not been possible. These are:

- a. Communication of common concerns
- b. Understanding between groups which have hitherto lacked opportunity for dialogue
- c. Participation in the daily life of the community
- d. Information about the many services and activities available, but frequently unknown to the citizens
- e. Establishment of a sense of community which can contribute to the on-going process of amalgamation.

The mobility and simplicity of portable videotape equipment make it possible to provide access to television for these functions to all our citizens. This accessibility can permit the people to shape the programmes where in the past the programmes have shaped the people.

Along with portable low-cost equipment, the existence of a cable transmission system makes community television technically possible. Thunder Bay is one of the most completely wired cities in North America. Thus the service can be available to virtually all citizens who choose to subscribe. Finally, the capability of cable to deliver a large number of channels, the majority of which are presently unused, makes community programming possible without depriving the viewer of access to existing programmes.

Clearly a charter must be drawn up to provide guidelines for the service. As the goal is a community service, it must be directed by a broadly based community board to ensure that no group or individual shall have a monopoly on programming. This non-profit "Charter Board" would be the community's safeguard to see that the charter is adhered to by those persons responsible for the actual co-ordination and production of programmes.

On the basis of these considerations it is our request:

1. That the Council of the City of Thunder Bay approve in principle the following propositions:-
 - a. Thunder Bay needs a community television channel,
 - b. The facilities of Lakehead Videon Ltd. are those through which the community channel shall be cablecast,
 - c. The Community channel shall be financed through subscription revenues from the cable service,
 - d. The community channel shall be directed and controlled by an independent body drawing representation from all segments of the community.
2. That the Council request Town Talk to draw up a feasible charter for the directing body.

In order that sufficient flexibility be retained to permit adjustments consistent with such community cable regulations as may be established by the Canadian Radio-Television Commission, and given that it is the intention of Town Talk to make the strongest possible representation to the C.R.T.C. in support of our proposal for community television, we would further recommend that the present contract with Lakehead Videon Ltd. not be renewed for a period longer than six months.

TOWN TALK

Box 692 — Postal Station P
THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO



When Town Talk takes its proposal before the CRTC it will be requested that special permission be given to Lakehead Videon, and to any other cable companies which wish to cooperate with a genuine community service television organization, to consider itself exempt from liability for material broadcast over community television. The CRTC has power to make this decision.

Mr. A. Phillips,
Northwestern Ont. Development
Council,
201 News Chronicle Bldg.
THUNDER BAY P, Ont.

Locally, in its agreements with Videon the city has always protected itself against all forms of liability. The current agreement between the old city of Fort William and Lakehead Videon, for example, has three separate clauses protecting the city against legal obligations arising out of Videon's use of city facilities. If the community channel were formed, Videon would be able to protect itself in much the same way as the city protects itself now. In addition, the Charter Board for the community channel could post a substantial bond guaranteeing its responsibility. Town Talk's lawyers advise that there has only been one recent action against television broadcasters, that such actions are extremely rare, and that there is no reason whatever to believe that this is a significant difficulty in the formation of a community controlled television service.

On the preceeding page is a reproduction of page one of the brief concerning community television which Town Talk presented to City Council on August 10. A limited number of complete copies are available at the Town Talk office at the south end of the CPR station in Port Arthur Ward.

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