



NEWS LETTER

town talk

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

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This newsletter is the first of a regular series which will be distributed to members of Town Talk and to other interested people. Town Talk activities have been extensive over the past few months, and a newsletter is essential in order to keep everyone up to date. This first issue can't cover all of our recent involvements, but includes two articles of general introduction to the organization's most important current activities, and some summary notes on the Town Talk television programme ACTION/REACTION. More detailed reports on these major projects, and descriptions of Town Talk's other activities, will be included in succeeding newsletters.

COMMUNITY TELEVISION FOR THUNDER BAY — A TOWN TALK PROPOSAL

This is a crucial year for Canadian cable television companies. Stricter regulations concerning community programming, educational television, American content, and whatnot have been proposed by the CRTC, and the cable companies are scurrying about in varying degrees of apoplexy and despair. The dust has not settled completely, but when it does Thunder Bay will have a community television channel.

The question of who will control that community television channel will begin to be decided when the City Council meets on August 10th to hear the proposal put forth by Town Talk.

When Town Talk meets with the Council, its report will be the culmination of many months of research and preparation. It takes into account all of the relevant factors and ends with concrete, specific, reasoned and reasonable guidelines as to the use of the new channel. We are, after all, presented

with the basic fact that according to the Canadian Radio and Television Commission, Lakehead Videon must provide a channel for community television. So far so good. The cruch comes with the matter of control - and with the definition of what constitutes a true community channel.

The basic idea is classically simple: a community channel that is not controlled by the community is a farce.

What we want, and have every possibility of obtaining, is a channel to which members of the community have free and non-exclusive access. A large number of individuals and groups have read our proposal (Community Television and You) and have already indicated to us ways in which they would like to use the channel. That's the way it should be -- the community making its own programs, instead of being shaped by programs designed by somebody else, somewhere else.

The proposal calls for a Charter Board widely representative of the community, which would hire a professional production company on a yearly basis. In this way individuals and groups (YOU, if you're interested) provide the material for programming, while the production company will ensure that the programs are of professional quality. Funds for this channel will come from the money Lakehead Videon would otherwise have to spend doing its own programming. Our proposal will probably not mean an increase in Videon's fees, since they are already very high for the service available.

All a dream? Not so. Town Talk has not been developing these ideas in a vacuum. We have a great deal of support, both locally and nationally.

Because of its interest in our proposal, the National Film Board has a large investment of equipment and teaching personnel in Thunder Bay this summer to train local people in the techniques of film and video-taping. The Film Board feels that its contribution here, to quote a senior executive, is "the most significant thing the Film Board is doing in Canada right now."

Two Cabinet ministers - Robert Andras and Robert Stanbury - have stated very emphatically their whole-hearted support for the proposal. At a conference on telecommunications earlier this year, David Hughes, the author of the original proposal, presented the ideas contained in it to the participants. He received enthusiastic support from, among others, Eric Kierans and Stanley Burke. Mr. Burke has twice been in Thunder Bay in connection with the proposal, and has become a member of our Advisory Board.

Locally, upwards of 4,000 copies of Community Television and You have been circulated in English, Finnish, French, Italian, Polish and Ukrainian. They have been well received. His Worship Mayor Laskin has personally endorsed the objectives contained in our proposal. Alderman Bert Badanai has been attending meetings of our Steering Committee, and several other aldermen have indicated their support.

So this is where we stand now. By mid-September, the cable company's agreement with the city comes up for renewal. If the City Council endorses our proposal, they will write it into the conditions of Videon's new licence. If this happens, a very significant bit of history will have been made, and this community will be the richer.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the eyes of the cable-casters of Canada will be on Thunder Bay and the decision reached by its City Council after our presentation on August 10th. If you

feel strongly about the possibilities of community television, you could add your voice to ours by phoning your "favourite alderman" to indicate your support.

by Lindsay Morgan

COMMUNITY FILM-MAKING -- AN EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT SPONSORED BY TOWN TALK AND CHALLENGE FOR CHANGE

Challenge for Change is the name of a programme of film and community development projects backed by the National Film Board of Canada and other departments and agencies of the federal government. When Town Talk approached the Film Board for assistance with the realization of its plans for a community television service, it was natural, given the potential of such a proposal for exciting community progress and participation, that Challenge for Change should be the programme under which the experiment was undertaken.

From the outset, the emphasis in Thunder Bay has been on relevance to this community. Local residents are being trained in their own community in making of films and video tapes about local subjects. As a result, the project is progressing very satisfactorily and generating a lot of momentum amongst the students and the community at large. By August 6th, shooting will be nearly completed, leaving a full month for editing and completion.

Community interest and support have been most gratifying. At the "open house" held on July 21st, messages of the warmest encouragement and promises of support were delivered by Mayor Laskin, federal cabinet ministers, Robert Andras and Robert Stanbury, and broadcaster Stanley Burke. Perhaps even more significant are the daily enquiries and suggestions received from the public at large.

Much of the public interest has been focused on the video tape recording aspects of the programme. Initially it was assumed that film training would be the central activity, but since the beginning, requests have come from a wide

variety of community groups asking for coverage of local events. These requests have been met as often as possible, with the resulting discovery that the training project is already serving a very real community need. By recording local events, giving people a voice through VTR, and encouraging playback of this material to other groups, the Thunder Bay Community Film Project is providing a service unavailable elsewhere. Typical of the requests received for VTR coverage are the following:

- Citizens meeting with Robert Stanbury
- A conference of ethnic groups
- An Indian reserve meeting
- A Sailing Regatta
- A tape for the YMCA on youth activities
- A tape on work with emotionally disturbed children
- A church conference

The most significant point about this is the fact that these requests are voluntary and unsolicited—coming from the community rather than being imposed on it by some external decision-making group. Inadvertently, then, the training project is responding to the community in much the way that the community channel proposed by Town Talk might operate. In this process, the students are receiving precisely the varied experiences which should make them capable of providing a high quality of programme production when the community channel is achieved.

To summarize briefly, the first five weeks of the project have seen the completion of a studio, the completion of initial training in film techniques, major progress on the production of three films, extensive VTR shooting and playback, and acceptance by the community of this new opportunity for public access to the media. If the next five weeks continue to be as productive, then the aims of the Film Board and of Town Talk in undertaking the Thunder Bay Community Film Project will have every hope of being achieved in full.

by Sandy Burnett

ACTION/REACTION WAS A SUCCESS, BUT
THE LAST PROGRAMME WAS CANCELLED—
BY CKPR

ACTION/REACTION, a weekly television presentation of Town Talk, appeared with the cooperation of CKPR for more than twenty weeks this year. The show dealt with many topics of local interest, and was designed to answer questions telephoned in by its viewers.

Early in February, after five weeks of programming, an audience survey was conducted to determine what success was being met in the attempt to provide the community with stimulating participatory television. The public response, a summary of which follows, was most encouraging. In addition to providing numerous constructive suggestions for the improvement of the programme, sufficient interest was aroused that from that time on, every topic dealt with on ACTION/REACTION has its origin with a request from the community.

Respondents were asked to watch at least the next two programmes following receipt of the questionnaire and then to answer the following questions:

What do you think about the

- a) time slot (11:45 p.m. Sunday)
- b) length of the programme (one-half hour)
- c) quality of the programme

Do you feel that the programme should be continued? If so, what subjects would you like to see discussed, filmed, etc., in the future?

Response was as follows:

Time slot:	agreeable	- 17
	too late	- 73
	no opinion	- 4

Length:	good	- 64
	too long	- 2
	too short	- 15
	no opinion	- 13

Quality: fair-good - 76
poor - 2
no opinion - 16

Continuance of programme:
positive - 80
negative - 1
no opinion - 13

The last programme of the series was planned for May 31, 1970, but two days before it was scheduled to appear the management of CKPR informed us that the programme would not be broadcast. CKPR's decision was particularly disappointing, and inconvenient, because our preparations for this last show were more extensive than usual. Arrangements had been made for the programme to run more than its customary length. Mr. Stanley Burke well-known news commentator, had agreed to appear as a special guest, and the topic for discussion, "The Media and the Community", was of great interest. Every effort was made to assemble a qualified panel for the discussion, and this panel included two senior local broadcasters, a former professional journalist, a senior librarian, and a university student official, as well as Mr. Burke. Senior management from the local daily newspapers would not join the panel, and they forbade junior personnel from doing so.

We view this arbitrary action by CKPR as an example of why a community controlled television service must be made available in Thunder Bay.

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