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Autore	Rutherford Paul
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Sommario/riassunto

A decade after the first Canadian telecasts in September 1952, TV had conquered the country. Why was the little screen so enthusiastically welcomed by Canadians? Was television in its early years more innovative, less commercial, and more Canadian than current than current offerings? In this study of what is often called the 'golden age' of television, Paul Rutherford has set out to dispel some cherished myths and to resurrect the memory of a noble experiment in the making of Canadian culture. He focuses on three key aspects of the story. The first is the development of the national service, including the critical acclaim won by Radio-Canada, the struggles of the CBC's English service to provide mass entertainment that could compete with the Hollywood product, and the effective challenge of private television to the whole dream of public broadcasting. The second deals with the wealth of made-in-Canada programming available to please and inform viewers - even commercials receive close attention. Altogether, Rutherford argues, Canadian programming reflected as well as enhanced the prevailing values and assumptions of the mainstream. The final focus is on McLuhan's Question: What happens to society when a new medium of communications enters the picture? Rutherford's findings cast doubt upon the common presumptions about the awesome power of television. Television in Canada, Rutherford concludes, amounts to a failed revolution. It never realized the ambitions of its masters or the fears of its critics. Its course was shaped not only by the will of the government, the power of commerce, and the empire of Hollywood, but also by the desires and habits of the viewers.
