

ABSTRACT

Radio Days: British Broadcasting Policy and
The Development of Radio in Trinidad, 1935 - 1962

Richard Escalante

The history of colonial radio broadcasting has always been confined to the shadows of Caribbean history. This thesis expands the literature on radio broadcasting in the Trinidad colony by examining the contribution of British broadcasting policy to the development of local radio in the colony during the period 1935 – 1962. By examining how British broadcasting policy contributed to the development of local radio in the colony, the thesis aims to assess whether radio broadcasting extended British influence in the Trinidad colony during this period. Using a qualitative approach, both written primary sources (from Trinidad, Britain and America) and interviews were examined in order to construct the research foundations for the thesis. The significance of this study is that it is the first comprehensive study on the development of the radio medium in Trinidad's colonial society. As such, it contributes to an area of Caribbean media history where such research is minimal.

In examining whether British broadcasting policy contributed to the development of radio in the Trinidad colony, the findings show that the policy did contribute to the way radio developed in the colony. However, the attempts to use radio broadcasting to extend British culture could not successfully compete with the US radio stations, especially the US Armed Forces radio station Radio WVDI located in the colony, which influenced the general population toward American culture and entertainment. Furthermore, although local programming slowly developed over the years, there was never any attempt by the local radio stations to try to come to grips with a broadcasting policy for the country. With the emerging medium of television in the colony on the eve of independence, this indifference only served to accelerate this American influence and further diminish British cultural dominance.

Keywords: Richard Escalante; British broadcasting policy, radio broadcasting, Empire Service, Radio WVDI, American culture, local radio development.