

‘A SENSE OF REGION’?

INDEPENDENT TELEVISION IN THE MIDLANDS, 1950 – 2000

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ABSTRACT

‘A SENSE OF REGION’?

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A PhD THESIS BY JOHN WALLACE

This project has been undertaken with the intention of discussing two closely related themes, the first of which is to provide a general history of ITV's performance in the Midlands in the twentieth century, in which the most significant events to have occurred during this period have been analysed, and various assessments on these events have emerged as a result. The second, and most important, of these themes, concerns the concept of 'regional identity', leading to the question of the extent to which the companies that have represented ITV in the Midlands since the mid-1950s (ATV, ABC, Central, and Carlton) have attempted to create or reflect feelings of regionalism in general, and regional identity in particular, through their programmes and other activities. The information included in this study has come from a variety of sources, including reports and other relevant material from the companies themselves, and from the various broadcasting authorities, whose responsibility has been to administer the work of the companies. In addition, this project contains extracts from a series of interviews with some of the most important people connected with ITV in the Midlands, including presenters, producers, and senior executives from the various companies, and other interested parties, including representatives from the broadcasting authorities. This study concludes with an examination of Carlton's record in the Midlands following its takeover of Central in 1994, and considers the future prospects for ITV in the Midlands under Carlton or any other company that assumes control of the broadcasting licence for the commercial channel in this region.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Associated Broadcasting Company (1955 only – later ATV) Associated British Corporation (1956-68 – see also ABPC) American Broadcasting Company (United States TV network)
ABDC	Associated Broadcasting Development Company (forerunner of ATV)
ABPC	Associated British Picture Corporation (parent company of ABC)
ACC	Associated Communications Corporation (parent company of ATV)
Advantage	Advantage West Midlands (Development Agency)
AOL	America Online (part of AOL Time Warner)
ATV	Associated Television Ltd (1955-68 in London/1956-81 in Midlands)
BARB	Broadcasters' Audience Research Board Limited
BBC	British Broadcasting Company (from 1922-26) British Broadcasting Corporation (from 1927 onwards)
BET	British Electric Traction (parent company of Associated-Rediffusion)
BPCC	British Printing & Communications Corporation (Central shareholder)
BRMB	Birmingham Broadcasting (local commercial radio station)
BskyB	British Sky Broadcasting (also known as Sky)
Carlton	Carlton Television (also known in Midlands as Carlton Central)
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System (United States TV network)
Central	Central Independent Television plc (ITV in Midlands from 1982-94)
CMCR	Centre for Mass Communication Research (University of Leicester)
Company	British Broadcasting Company (see also BBC)
Corporation	British Broadcasting Corporation (see also BBC)
CRE	Campaign for Racial Equality
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions

DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
Ed./Eds	Editor/Editors
ELO	Electric Light Orchestra (Midlands-based pop/rock supergroup)
Emda	East Midlands Development Agency
EMI	Electric and Musical Industries Limited (later known as Thorn EMI)
EU	European Union
Five	Channel 5 Television
FM	Frequency Modulation
GAC	General Advisory Council (see also IBA)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEC	General Electric Company (helped to form original BBC in 1922)
GFP	General Forces Programme (forerunner of BBC Light Programme)
GMTV	Good Morning Television (ITV breakfast station from 1993 onwards)
GOWM	Government Office West Midlands
Granada	Granada (TV Network) Ltd (ITV in north-west from 1956 onwards)
GUS	Great Universal Stores (part of ‘Kemsley-Winnick’ group)
HDF	High Definition Films (forerunner of ABDC/ATV in early 1950s)
HMSO	Her Majesty’s Stationery Office
Hrs	Hours (of broadcasting)
HTV	Harlech Television (ITV in Wales and West from 1968 onwards)
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority (from 1972-90)
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IIPA	Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising

ITA	Independent Television Authority (from 1954-72)
ITC	Incorporated Television Company (merged with ABDC to form ATV)
	Independent Television Commission (from 1991-2003)
ITN	Independent Television News (from 1955 onwards)
ITV	Independent Television (generic term for network as a whole)
LCU	Licence Campaign Unit (Central's plan to retain ITV Midlands licence)
LWT	London Weekend Television (from 1968 onwards)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
Mins	Minutes (of broadcasting)
MP	Member of Parliament (in UK House of Commons)
MTV	Midlands Television (applied for ITV Midlands franchise in 1980)
NBC	National Broadcasting Company (United States TV network)
NTC	National Television Council (opposed commercial television in 1950s)
NUJ	National Union of Journalists
OBA	Open Broadcasting Authority (proposed by Annan Committee)
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
Ofcom	Office of Communications (replaced ITC in late 2003)
PTA	Popular Television Association (backed commercial TV in 1950s)
RDAs	Regional Development Agencies (established in 1999)
RECs	Regional Emergencies Committees
Rediffusion	Associated-Rediffusion (ITV in London on weekdays from 1955-68)
RSLs	Restricted Service Licences
RTD	Research and technological development cooperation (in Europe)
RTS	Royal Television Society
SMG	Scottish Media Group (owners of Scottish and Grampian in 1990s)

SSPs	Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships
TAM	Television Audience Measurement (formed by ITV companies)
Thames	Thames Television (ITV in London on weekdays from 1968-92)
TSW	Television South-West (ITV in south-west England from 1982-92)
TV-AM	Television AM (ITV breakfast station from 1983-92)
TVS	Television South (ITV in southern England from 1982-92)
TWW	Television, Wales and the West (ITV in Wales/West from 1958-68)
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UK	United Kingdom
United	United News and Media (owners of ITV licences in 1990s)
UTV	Ulster Television (ITV in Northern Ireland from 1962 onwards)
VHF	Very High Frequency
WMLGA	West Midlands Local Government Association
WWN	Wales (West and North) Television (early 1960s only)
YTV	Yorkshire Television (ITV in Yorkshire from 1968 onwards)

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dedicate this project to both Jill Dando and Terry Lloyd, who would have understood the issues involved far better than anyone else.

INTRODUCTION: 'SETTING THE SCENE': AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS THESIS

(i) Introduction

The principal aim of this project is to provide a critical analysis on the concept of regional identity and its relevance to Independent Television (ITV)'s output in the Midlands in the second half of the twentieth century. In contrast to the other main terrestrial channels that broadcast to the United Kingdom (BBC1, BBC2, Channel 4 and [Channel] Five), ITV was deliberately created by Sir Robert Fraser in the 1950s on a 'federal' basis, with separate companies based around the country having responsibility for their own regions, and these companies coming together to form the ITV network. It must also be remembered that since it first started broadcasting to London in 1955, ITV has been financed on a 'free-to-air' basis, with the channel being funded only by the revenues received from the advertisements shown both between and within the programmes, a system that has been adopted by both Channel 4 and Five. This model of financing contrasts with both the BBC, which has been funded throughout its history by a 'licence fee' system, in which all viewers pay a particular fee that is set by the British Government, and with cable and satellite channels such as British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB or Sky), which are funded by subscriptions that viewers are required to pay on either a monthly or an annual basis.

This study is divided into three main parts and a concluding chapter, most of which focus on various aspects of ITV's record in the Midlands from the mid-1950s to date. The first part of this thesis consists of a general history of regional broadcasting in Britain, with the first chapter discussing the origins of regional broadcasting, including the reasons behind the BBC's decision to create a regional system to accompany its national services for radio in the 1930s and television in the 1950s.

This first chapter therefore provides a comparison between the BBC's regional model and ITV's system, which sees the latter being set in a definite historical context rather than being treated in isolation, whilst also setting the scene for the next two chapters. The second chapter concentrates on ITV's history in general from the 1950s to date, including the circumstances that led to this channel being organised on a regional basis, rather than adopting the BBC's centralised structure. The third chapter discusses the history of ITV in the Midlands from its launch in the region in 1956 to date, featuring a full account of all the major events to have occurred throughout this period, and including the decision to move away from a station based in Birmingham and attempt to serve the whole of the Midlands instead, with special emphasis on the 'sub-regions' of the East, West, and South Midlands from the late 1970s onwards.

Having discussed the historical aspects of this subject in the first part of the thesis, the second part analyses the concept of the region in general, with the fourth chapter defining the concepts of the region, the Midlands, and the East and West Midlands, with reference to both ITV and the BBC's regional systems of broadcasting, and a comparison between the ITV system and other regional models that have emerged in the twentieth century. This theoretical background is accompanied by a practical approach that dominates both the fifth and sixth chapters, which concentrate on the programmes made in, by, and for ITV in the Midlands. In chapter five, a general history of the programmes made by the companies representing ITV in the region (ATV, ABC, Central, and Carlton) is presented, including an examination of the process by which the companies' coverage of the region changed from an emphasis on 'leisure and lifestyle' to 'multi-cultural' programmes, whose brief attempted to combine the concepts of regional identity and cultural diversity. For chapter six, an assessment is made on the extent to which the ITV companies serving the Midlands

were able to create or reflect feelings of regional identity through ‘factual’ programming, a concept dominated by the daily evening regional news magazines, but also including current affairs and sports programmes.

The third part of the thesis, which comprises the seventh chapter of this project, concentrates on attempts made by various groups to explore the concept of regional identity in connection with ITV in the Midlands, including areas such as advertising and the promotional devices created by the companies, such as the ‘roadshows’ and related concepts, as well as the views of the various regulatory bodies. This chapter concludes with an account of ITV in the Midlands as part of a system of local and regional media in the region, including the extent to which media groups ranging from local commercial radio to the BBC in Birmingham have regarded it. The project as a whole concludes by bringing various themes together, including the main events that have occurred regarding ITV in the Midlands since the mid-1990s, when Carlton took control of Central, a general review of ITV’s performance in the region throughout the period in question, and various assessments on the prospects for regional broadcasting in general, and for ITV in the Midlands in particular. In conclusion, although all the various interested parties have been confronted with the problem of dealing with a region that is extremely diverse in cultural, economic, and geographical terms, the ITV system in general is undoubtedly the best example of English regional identity in the twentieth century, and ITV in the Midlands has played a large part in contributing towards this system.

(ii) Details on methodologies used

The concept of regional broadcasting in the United Kingdom is one that has been largely ignored over the years by many commentators, something that applies to

works such as Crisell's *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, in which the regional dimension plays a minor part (although one notable exception to this rule is Franklin and Murphy's *Making The Local News: Regional Journalism In Context*, in which the role of British local and regional media is analysed in various aspects). It was therefore my initial intention to produce a study that would 'redress the balance' in discussing regional broadcasting in the context of one of the most important English regions, with my choice in this regard being that of the Midlands, where I have lived for most of my life. As Independent Television (ITV) was originally created in the 1950s by Sir Robert Fraser on a regional basis, it became inevitable that this project would be primarily concerned with ITV's progress in the Midlands from its launch in 1956 to the present day, with special emphasis on the concept of regional identity, and the extent to which the various companies that have broadcast to the Midlands since the mid-1950s (ATV, ABC, Central, and Carlton) have attempted to create or reflect feelings of regionalism through their programmes and other activities.

My interest in creating a project of this nature dates back to the period from 1992-94, when I was a member of two courses based in the city of Leicester, these being the MA in English Local History at the University of Leicester (which included a dissertation on 'Newspapers In Leicester, 1850-1900'), and a media studies course run by the Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce (known as the 'Media Project'). It was on this latter course that I obtained a City and Guilds Certificate in Video Techniques, with one of the elements of this qualification being to write an essay on the history of British television. It was my desire to further develop some of the themes that I encountered on both courses, including the history of ITV in general, and in the Midlands in particular, which formed a crucial part of my media qualification, and the concept of the region, which played an important role on my

MA course, that led me to this research degree, in which I examined the relationship between regional media and the concept of the region through ITV's efforts in this regard.

By the time my research degree began at the University of Leicester in September 1996, ITV was very much in the process of change, from the original 'network of regions' to a channel that was far more 'national' in its character, and this trend has continued into the new millennium to the extent that, in effect, ITV is to be controlled by one company as a result of the imminent 'merger' between the two main players in Carlton and Granada. Given this change in emphasis from regional to national concerns, some critics might argue that this study should have been produced 10 or 15 years ago to fully reflect ITV's regional commitments to the Midlands, but of course if it had appeared in the period from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s, it would not have been possible to have told the whole story of ITV's time in the Midlands, as no account of Carlton's record in the region would have emerged, and had a work of this nature appeared in or before the early 1990s, Carlton would not have been featured at all. In the light of this matter, it became clear to me that it was essential that the thesis should cover the whole of ITV's period in the Midlands from 1956 to date, with representatives from all of the companies that have served the commercial channel in the region being featured as a result.

The other advantage of discussing the period from the 1950s onwards is that it is possible to draw conclusions that are far more accurate than would have been the case if only one period had been analysed; for instance, if this study had concentrated on ITV in the Midlands in the 1970s, it would only have discussed ATV's record in the region, to the total exclusion of all the other companies. By discussing the period as a

whole, it is possible to draw the appropriate conclusions, with special reference to the factor that many of the decisions that were taken in the 1950s were to have serious consequences for ITV in the Midlands in later years. One example of this is the ways in which certain people living in the East Midlands believed that the ITV companies in general, and ATV in particular, favoured Birmingham and the West Midlands at the expense of the East, something that can be attributed, at least in part, to the ITA's decision to start broadcasting to the West Midlands in 1956 using a 'full-power' transmitter, but to broadcast to the East Midlands at the same time on a 'reduced power' transmitter, a practice that continued well into the 1960s, and fuelled feelings of injustice amongst people in the east of the region.¹

Although I have no first-hand experience of working in the media as such, including local and regional media in the Midlands, this was a situation that I was able to turn to my advantage, in that I approached this project with a completely open mind and no preconceived ideas whatever, which enabled me to follow my research and draw the appropriate conclusions as a consequence. This inevitably led to my desire to create a study that would be 'multi-disciplinary' in its nature, and that would include information that would be of interest to people in a wide variety of disciplines, ranging from English local history to business administration, so there would truly be 'something for everybody'. As a result of this approach, it also became clear that this study would by its nature be completely different to other projects of its kind, such as Cottle's work on regional television's treatment of ethnic minority groups in the Midlands, which has a strong sociological base, but might only be of limited interest to people operating in other areas, so my project was deliberately created with the intention of attracting the widest possible readership.

¹ See Chapter Three (pp.104-105) for further details.

In addition to the above, I was determined that ITV in the Midlands should not be discussed 'in isolation', but should instead be discussed in a variety of contexts, the first of which is to provide a thorough historical analysis of regional broadcasting in Britain. It is for that reason that this project not only covers ITV's efforts in serving its regions from the 1950s onwards, but also discusses the BBC's attempts at local and regional broadcasting from the 1920s to date, and for television since the 1950s, so ITV's regional system should be seen as part of a phenomenon that has existed in some form for over 80 years. This historical framework also needs to be accompanied by other factors, including the geographical dimension, with a full account provided on the arguments over the Midlands as a region in broadcasting and other terms; and the importance of ITV in the Midlands as part of a system of local and regional media in the region, including local radio and newspapers, has been emphasised, and in so doing has illustrated the business principles under which the companies that have represented ITV in the region over the years have operated.

The final, and arguably the most important element, is that of the political climates that the companies have had to contend with, and this study has provided a full account of the approaches adopted by successive governments, leading to the Broadcasting Act 1990, in which the licences awarded to the ITV companies from January 1993 onwards were to be awarded to the highest bidders, provided a 'quality threshold' was passed. From this time onwards, the regional aspect to ITV in general was replaced by a system that was primarily run on business lines, ultimately leading to Carlton's takeover of Central in early 1994. This project concludes with an examination of ITV's future prospects in an age of increasing cable and satellite

channels, and considers the extent to which such competition will affect ITV in the Midlands.

One of the most important aspects of any PhD thesis is that it should, where possible, contain information that has never been made available in any form, and to this end I was able to obtain interviews with many of the most important figures associated with ITV in the Midlands throughout the period in question, including presenters, producers, senior executives, and representatives from the various broadcasting authorities involved (the ITA, the IBA, and the ITC); obviously, I am most grateful to the interviewees for replying to the letters I sent to them requesting interviews. I was also aware that much of the information I acquired from these interviews had not previously been in the public domain, and that many of the interviewees had never been questioned on the subject of regional identity, and the extent to which the companies had attempted to create or reflect such an identity in both their 'on-screen' and 'off-screen' activities. It is to the credit of all the interviewees concerned that they understood my project and its intentions, and the answers I received to my questions were so thorough that I received a great deal of information from the interviews, which all proved to be highly successful as a result. I have also attempted to provide written evidence to support the claims made in the interviews, with this information coming from weekly trade magazines such as *Broadcast*, as well as from the annual reports produced by the companies and the regulatory bodies, and also from other relevant sources, such as the volumes of *Independent Television In Britain*, which deal with ITV's history in full.

In respect of the information I acquired for the thesis, I was fortunate to have found various resource centres to locate the material I required for my research,

ranging from the Main Library at the University of Leicester to the British Film Institute (BFI) National Library in London, and the members of staff in these centres gave me all the assistance I needed. However, by far the most important of these locations from my perspective was the former Independent Television Commission (ITC) Library, which provided me with material that I could never have obtained elsewhere, including its collection of regional press cuttings, which gave me the background information I required, together with material from the companies, the broadcasting authorities, and other sources, much of which was held under the '30-year' rule. I was very lucky to work on my thesis at the time I did, as had this study been attempted in the early 1990s, much of the material from the ITC Library would not have been available, as it would have been less than 30 years old; and if I had not started the thesis until after the year 2000, my visits to this location would have been severely restricted. There can be no doubt that the ITC Library's closure was an enormous blow for researchers on British regional media such as myself, who will be deprived of its unique facilities in the future.

Although I was afforded the opportunity to make use of a number of resource centres for my research, there were other areas of research that were unavailable to me, including the Carlton Film Library in Nottingham, which stated that only employees of Carlton were allowed to use this facility, so I could not watch the regional programmes made by the ITV companies representing the Midlands over the years, and was therefore unable to determine the extent to which issues of regional identity existed in these programmes.² In addition, it was not possible for me to obtain information on viewing figures for ITV's regional programmes in the

² It is rumoured that there are very few examples of ITV's regional programmes for the Midlands held at Carlton's Film Library in Nottingham, so my failure to be allowed into this facility might well have been a blessing in disguise.

Midlands, with Carlton refusing to provide this information for reasons of confidentiality, and the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB) informing me that the only way I could acquire this information was if I became a member of BARB, which would have cost me around £4000 to join. Needless to say, if these research opportunities had been available to me, the information I would have acquired would have formed a crucial part of my thesis.

Having acquired a large amount of material that could be seen as 'qualitative' in nature, I considered the possibility of undertaking an element of 'quantitative' research, in the form of some kind of survey in which members of the public would be asked about their views on regional television in the Midlands. However, having had access to the survey conducted by the Centre for Mass Communication Research (CMCR) at the University of Leicester (*Communication and Change*) under the direction of Professor James Halloran in the 1980s, it became clear to me that this research was so thorough and wide-ranging that any work I might have undertaken in this field would have been a pale imitation by comparison, as well as being of a far lower standard than the rest of this project. Given these problems, it was a comparatively easy decision for me to abandon any plans to include a quantitative element into the thesis, and with ITV in general being much more of a national network than was the case 20 years ago, it would have been very difficult to have produced a survey that would have concentrated on the regional element to ITV's output in the Midlands.

Although there is no quantitative element to this project as such, this does not mean to say that there is no contribution to be made from members of the public, as some of the interviewees, such as the broadcasting experts Phillip Whitehead and Simon

Cottle, have spoken about ITV in the Midlands in an individual capacity, and have raised some important issues in this study as a result. It would certainly be most interesting if someone produced an updated version of the work undertaken by Halloran and his team, as it would make an excellent PhD thesis in its own right, whilst also accompanying my own project, which can be interpreted as an example of an 'oral history' approach to the subject matter. Finally, I consider myself very fortunate to have started my project in the late 1990s, at a time when the maximum length of a PhD thesis at the University of Leicester was 100,000 words, before it was reduced to 80,000 words in the autumn of 2000. If this study had been cut back to the latter figure, the chances are that I might have either had to remove two chapters to meet the word limit, or I could have been forced to choose another subject for my thesis, or I might not have studied for a PhD at all. In writing a project of 100,000 words in length, I have successfully included all the information that I wanted and intended to discuss.

(iii) General definitions of the concept of the region

Having discussed the methodologies to be used in this project, it is now necessary to discuss the various theories that have developed concerning the concept of the region, with special emphasis on the fields of geography and English local history. The first of these theories was from Robert Dickinson, who conducted a comparative study of the regions of France, Germany, and the United States as well as Britain. Dickinson began by making a distinction between defining a region in general terms, consisting of an area with certain characteristics (mainly in relation to its size), which acts as a suitable unit for administrative or other purposes; and the definition of a region as understood by geographers to denote an area that has a number of common features,

including industry, farming, population distribution, commerce, or a city's general sphere of influence. It is therefore possible to construct a region either in terms of a single common factor or of interrelated factors peculiar to the area in general, with the aim of discovering both the areas and the degree to which selected phenomena can be considered either homogenous or 'regionalised' (Dickinson, 1964: 3).

Dickinson claimed that many of the problems confronting societies in the twentieth century arose from people's ideas of the functions that a region ought or was expected to perform, including the kind of area it was to be, the purpose it had to serve, and the ways in which it was to work. To support his views, Dickinson turned to other sources with similar ideas to his own, including Frank Pick, who devised the concept of a 'social unit' or a new social-geographical construct to replace the existing administrative entity. Pick's social unit had to be of a certain size to ensure that personal contact could not be destroyed on the one hand, whilst not being too small to prevent the emergence of variety and diversity on the other. In addition, the social unit had to ensure that all classes of society were fully involved, with no class distinctions allowed, and the unit had to develop naturally for the social structure to have a secure base. Pick concluded that the region would find itself as part of an overall structure of society, including towns and cities, with this structure leading to improvements in people's lives as a result, leading Dickinson to suggest that a region would act as an 'area of common living' (Dickinson, 1964: 4-5).

Not only did Dickinson consider the region in social terms, as he also proposed that it should also be assessed in relation to its role as a 'regional capital'. This idea was based on an urban centre that enjoyed a high level of natural development without any

intervention from central government, a favourable geographical position, and a high degree of enterprise shown by its people. Even though this location might not be considered as a capital due to its lack of political status, its position as a 'natural' leader dominating a large surrounding area with no regard to any administrative boundaries means that, in regional terms, the city would function as a capital. Not only did Dickinson consider the region in social terms, as he proposed that it should also be assessed in relation to its role as a 'regional capital'. This idea was based on an urban centre that enjoyed a high level of natural development without any intervention from central government, a favourable geographical position, and a high degree of enterprise shown by its people. Even though this location might not be considered as a capital due to its lack of political status, its position as a 'natural' leader dominating a large surrounding area with no regard to any administrative boundaries means that, in regional terms, the city would function as a capital. This idea was developed further by the French geographer Blanchard, who described a regional capital as a location that should fulfil a wide variety of roles, these being as a political capital, in which guise it could perform all the administrative and political functions required of it; in a military role, with the authority to implement the decisions taken by central government; in an intellectual capacity, with the creation of universities and other educational institutions; and in economic terms, as both a market in its own right and a supplier of food for the surrounding regions, as well as being an intermediary between the region's production and demands from outside the region (Dickinson, 1964: 8-10).

It was probably inevitable that in his examination of British regionalism in general, and of the English regions in particular, Dickinson concentrated on Birmingham,

which meets the above criteria as a location which is important enough to successfully dominate the West Midlands region. The city has undergone the natural growth that Pick claimed was essential to provide a base for its social structure, whilst also being able to meet its responsibilities in its role as a regional capital, with probably the most important factor being the city's industrial development, which led to Birmingham becoming England's 'second city' in the twentieth century. It must also be remembered that the city's geographical location has been of immense benefit, especially as it eventually provided a crucial link between the industrial North and London to the south, and was therefore important in national as well as regional terms (Dickinson, 1964: 404-405).

If this theory is applied to Nottingham, the findings that emerge are very similar to those that apply to Birmingham in that the former city is able to dominate the East Midlands (or 'Mid-Trent' as Dickinson prefers to call the region), but not to the extent that Birmingham has managed in the West Midlands. This can be attributed to a much slower rate of growth than its western rival, although in the twentieth century Nottingham enjoyed a significant expansion westwards that saw it moving closer to its neighbouring county town of Derby, along with further developments to the north bringing the city closer to the town of Mansfield. Dickinson argued that these extensions to the city's boundaries was sufficient to provide a suitable base for its social structure as Pick advocated, and it was also able to fulfil Blanchard's conditions to emerge as a regional capital in its own right. One advantage held by Nottingham over Birmingham was that the eastern city had a much longer history and took great pride in its heritage in general, dating back to the era of the Five Boroughs, which

enabled it to assume all the main political functions expected from a regional capital, this being achieved despite Leicester's constant presence (Dickinson, 1964: 407-408).

Many of Dickinson's views must have been strongly influenced by C.B. Fawcett, whose *Provinces of England* provided the starting point for studies on the English regions in general. Fawcett's plan was to divide England into twelve major local government areas or 'provinces' that were to be compatible with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in terms of both population and resources, and which were to be mainly based on geographical factors, instead of the French departments, which were created on a political basis, and were therefore artificial. In Fawcett's view, the primary functions of the English provincial parliaments were to be of an administrative rather than a legislative nature, as they would have taken over the various city and county councils and put an end to the alleged separation between town and county in local government. Fawcett proposed these provincial parliaments as a solution to the problems created by the system of local government that had emerged, whilst also stating that any changes would have had to have been accompanied by strategies that would have taken issues associated with planning into account, with special emphasis on population distribution, to create coherent areas of common living (Fawcett, 1960: 27-32).

In respect of this new system, Fawcett mentioned six principles that had to be adhered to if the provinces were to be successful. These were as follows: the provincial boundaries were to be selected to cause as little as possible with people's lives and activities, which would enable everyone to live and work in the same province; in each province, a definite capital was to be chosen, which would provide a

focal point for all the provinces, with the added recommendation that all the communication networks in these regions would have provided easy access to the various capitals; all the provinces had to be large enough in population terms to justify a form of self-government; none of the provinces were to have a population large enough that would have led to one of these dominating the provincial network as a whole; all these areas had to take local traditions and opinions into account; and the boundaries for the provinces were to be drawn near watersheds, which would have allowed for projects such as water supply, drainage, and the provision and maintenance of roads to have been fully undertaken, rather than across valleys, where most people lived and where the above facilities could have been located (Fawcett, 1960: 62-70).

It was with these principles in mind that Fawcett constructed his provincial network, which included provinces such as 'North England' (featuring Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland), Lancashire (including Cheshire and Stoke-on-Trent), 'Peakdon', which was based in Sheffield and south Yorkshire, but also included Chesterfield in north Derbyshire, Yorkshire itself, featuring the East, North and West Ridings of this county, Devon in the south-west (including Cornwall), 'Wessex' (featuring Dorset, Hampshire, Sussex, and Wiltshire), the 'Bristol Province' (including both Gloucestershire and Somerset), East Anglia (Norfolk, Suffolk, and the Fens), London itself, which was the largest of these areas and featured Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, and Surrey, and the 'Anglo-Welsh Boundary', with Herefordshire and Shropshire being the English counties joining forces with several Welsh counties (Fawcett, 1960: 71-74).

From a Midlands perspective, Fawcett identified three distinct areas to bring into his plan, these being the West Midland or 'Severn' province, featuring Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and the west of Leicestershire (including Hinckley), with Birmingham as its capital; the East Midland or 'Trent' province, featuring the whole of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, together with the majority of Derbyshire and Leicestershire, with Nottingham as its capital; and what he described as 'Central England' (in effect the South Midlands) consisting of Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, and Oxfordshire, with Oxford itself as the provincial capital. Fawcett saw Birmingham as an ideal provincial capital as it was considered to be both different from and independent of London and Manchester, as well as leading and formulating regional views and opinions, whilst Nottingham was seen to be much smaller and weaker by comparison. In addition, Fawcett was the first to propose the theory that the further a region or province was from London, the more chance there was of some form of regional identity emerging as a result. This assumption has been used to explain the strong feelings of regionalism in such geographically diverse regions as the south-west (including Devon and Cornwall) and the north-east (featuring Newcastle and Sunderland). (Fawcett, 1960: 106-115, 141-164, 169-172).

The last of these theories on the role of the region in England comes from Charles Phythian-Adams, who created the concept of the 'cultural provinces'. Whilst he broadly accepted Fawcett's ideas on the importance of a provincial network, with the watersheds used as the boundaries for the provinces, Phythian-Adams went further by claiming that all of these provinces contained special cultural characteristics that

could only be found in these areas, including customs and other local traditions. These features therefore arose as a result not only of the patterns of trade emerging in these provinces, but also due to the position of these areas that left them open to particular cultural influences both from outside England and the various combinations of the neighbouring provinces. In devising his own provinces, Phythian-Adams argued that the cultural element was much more important than geographical factors, as a result of which he divided England into 14 cultural provinces. In the north, the following provinces were identified as 'Solway' (Cumbria), North ('Scandinavian') Sea (Durham and Northumberland), 'Irish' Sea (Lancashire and Cheshire), Yorkshire 'Ouse' (the East, North, and West Ridings), and 'Witham' (Lincolnshire). In the west were the 'Severn estuary' (including Herefordshire and Somerset) and the South 'British' Sea (Devon and Cornwall), whilst in the south were the 'French' Channel (featuring Dorset, Hampshire, Sussex, and Wiltshire), 'Thames' (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, and Oxfordshire), and 'Thames estuary' (Essex and Kent), and in the east were the 'Dutch' Sea (Norfolk and Suffolk) and 'Wash/Ouse' (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire). For the Midlands, the two cultural provinces noted were 'Severn/Avon' (West Midlands), featuring Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, and 'Trent' (East Midlands), including Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Staffordshire. It is therefore possible to detect a high degree of similarity between these 'cultural provinces' and the ITV regions, especially in respect of their geographical locations, and this applies to the Midlands as much as it does to the rest of England, with only Staffordshire and the 'Central South' counties not sharing the same cultural province and ITV Midlands sub-region (Phythian-Adams, 1993: 1-23).

In addition to the theories that have already been discussed concerning the concept of the region, it is also necessary to discuss this idea in the concept of broader approaches, with special reference to the phenomenon of European integration and its relationship to institutions such as the European Union (EU). Under Cappellin's system, the European continent can be subdivided into various types of regions, these being real administrative regions, which define a framework of regional powers of self-government; historical regions based on the 'city-region' states of the eighteenth century, which share a common regional identity and cultural values, and may therefore have a 'common' image to be promoted at the European level; and new 'meso-regions' based on network relationships among various urban centres, and which indicate new development trends in that they can comprise regions that are several hundred kilometres apart from each other, and are based on a common sense of belonging (Cappellin, 1993: 2).

Unlike the English regions, the boundaries for which have been rigidly defined over the years, the European approach is characterised by a patchwork pattern of overlapping regions, in which a nation-state can belong to several regions, or form part of one particular region. Cappellin has identified a number of areas which can be incorporated into an overall 'Europe of regions', which extend from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, and which include regions within the United Kingdom that are linked to other European nations. Those 'pan-regions' which have a British element to them are the 'North Atlantic basin', which in addition to northern England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, also includes Norway and Iceland; the 'North Atlantic arc', which includes Wales and western England, as well as north-west France and the Republic of Ireland; and the 'Northwestern Europe metropolis', featuring East Anglia

and south-east England, together with north-east France, north-west Germany, and the 'Benelux' nations (Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands). (Cappellin, 1993: 3-4.)

Hingel, who saw regional cooperation as a central component in European integration, has created an alternative regional model in a European context. In Hingel's model, the cooperations started by regional authorities share the following characteristics: they are often agreements of 'widespread cooperation' in a variety of areas, ranging from economic and cultural factors to education and training; they are agreements where RTD (research and technological development) cooperation often plays a major role; and they are what the various parties involved in this process call 'agreements between friends' or between 'regions of affinity'. Hingel has identified nine of these regional cooperations, and the two regions that have been connected with the United Kingdom are the 'North Sea', which features coastal regions in the UK, Denmark, and the Netherlands; and the 'Atlantic Arc', comprising a collection of 22 regions in the 'Atlantic coast' to be found in the UK, France, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland (Hingel, 1993: 27).

It is at this point that links need to be made between the European regions and the cultural aspects to be found within these regions, and the Council of Europe's *Culture and Regions Project*, led by Bassand, attempted this. This report emphasised the importance of developing cultural diversity in the regions through a process of decentralisation at the level of local and regional authorities, who had to receive the necessary financial resources to enable them to promote and retain cultural facilities, especially with regard to education, recreation, and sport (Bassand, 1993: 12). The

concept of culture itself is one of four sub-systems, the others being the economy, politics, and sociogenetics (where actors and structures are reproduced biologically, socially, and culturally), amongst the multiple elements that comprise a society, and is the location for the creation of values, signs, symbols, and knowledge facilitating communication, guidance, and the legitimacy of social action (Bassand, 1993: 89).

With regard to issues of communication, the media is identified as one of three main types, the others being the relations between persons and groups, such as members of amateur dramatic groups, and 'collective' communication to be found in fairs, markets, or religious services (Bassand, 1993: 135). This report discussed the regionalisation of television in Europe, and noted that this phenomenon had not been successful due to the proliferation of American television programmes and the cultural factors found within these programmes, which discouraged European regional identities. It was therefore recommended that all the European regions should invest in the production and distribution of regional programmes, with the goal of promoting an authentic European regional television system (Bassand, 1993: 136-137).

To complete this discussion on the subject of the region, it will be necessary to compare it to the related concepts in English local history of locality and nation. In the cases of both the latter terms, they are united by having definite boundaries that cannot be disputed in any way, with signs existing to denote these boundaries such as 'Welcome to the city of Leicester', 'Welcome to Scotland', and so on. Given that a consensus exists on the boundaries of villages, towns, cities, countries, and even continents, it is a relatively easy task for people to talk about the above subjects, safe in the knowledge that other people will accept and understand the issues involved. No such assurances can be given with regard to discussions on the topic of the region,

however, mainly because the lack of any identifiable boundaries leads to there being no consensus regarding where these boundaries should be. In the case of England, whereas there are signs to denote where the county of Leicestershire ends and that of Northamptonshire begins, there have not been and currently are no signs such as 'Welcome to the Midlands' or 'Welcome to the East Midlands' to provide people with the information they would require in respect of the boundaries for these regions. In the absence of such information, it would be possible to make a case for the county of Bedfordshire being part of the 'South Midlands' as a result of its geographical location, and therefore part of the Midlands in general, even though this county is not included in either the BBC or ITV Midlands regions, belonging instead to the BBC East and ITV Anglia regions for the purposes of broadcasting.

(iv) Conclusion

Having discussed a wide range of explanations for the concept of the region, I would like to explain my approach to regionalism in the context of the broader approaches that have already been outlined. Although the cultural aspect to regionalism is one that is very important in a wider context, the nature of my research ensured that I would place most emphasis on issues of geography and political economy, which increasingly dominated this project and which were crucial in developing a full understanding of the issues involved as a result. The political aspects of this study are particularly relevant in view of the increasing politicisation of the British media by successive governments since the early 1980s, and it is only by referring to this political background that it is possible to make sense of the main events to have occurred during ITV's period in the Midlands, and how and why these events happened, because without both the geographical and political economy dimensions,

this project would have completely failed in its task of creating an accurate account of the sequence of events and their consequences.

PART ONE: HISTORY OF REGIONAL BROADCASTING IN BRITAIN

CHAPTER ONE: 'IN THE BEGINNING': THE ORIGINS OF REGIONAL BROADCASTING

(i) Introduction

In any discussion of the history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom, there can be no doubt that by far the best-known and most successful example of 'regional' broadcasting can be found in the system that was adopted by Independent Television (ITV) of a collection of separate companies that were given exclusive rights to broadcast to the various regions throughout the country, with these companies joining forces to form a national network that was funded by the advertisements that were shown. Although this model of regional broadcasting has achieved popular acceptance and a high degree of credibility since it was first created in the 1950s, this has meant that most people have ignored earlier attempts to create a regional dimension for British broadcasting, and in particular the efforts made by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to devise a regional system that would complement the 'national' services that it operated with regard to radio in the 1930s and television in the 1950s. It will therefore be necessary to examine in detail the BBC's regional system of broadcasting, and the ways in which it differed from the model that was adopted by ITV when it created its own regional framework. This will result in the ITV system being set in a definite historical context rather than being discussed in isolation, and will hopefully lead to a greater understanding of the reasons behind ITV's decision to create a regional framework as a result.

(ii) The early years: 1920-39

Before any of the above issues can be raised, however, it will be necessary to examine the factors that resulted in the creation of the BBC, which therefore leads to a

brief account of the beginning of British broadcasting itself. It was not until after the First World War that the desire of interested parties such as radio manufacturers to use the medium of radio was satisfied, with the failure to develop this outlet before this time being attributed to the determination of successive governments to exert a high level of control over the broadcasting process in general, which helped establish a pattern whereby politicians made it their business to ensure that British broadcasting would be subject to the wishes of the government of the day (Briggs, 1985: 5-14). The most important event to occur at this time came in 1920, when Marconi broadcast a concert given by the singer Dame Nellie Melba, which attracted both a national and international audience. However, the Post Office (the department of government that took responsibility for all forms of telecommunications in Britain) decided to ban these transmissions following protests from groups such as the armed forces, instead of allowing further experimental broadcasts of a similar nature (Briggs, 1985: 15-16).¹

It was not until 1922 that the above ban was lifted, when Marconi was allowed to resume its programmes from Writtle in Essex (which was near Marconi's original studio at Chelmsford), with this station given the 'call sign' (a combination of numbers and letters) of '2MT'. Marconi was also responsible for the first radio station to be based in London under the call sign of 2LO, with the first transmissions occurring in May 1922, and reception levels reaching out to most of the country. The success of 2LO ensured that other companies would be keen to follow Marconi's lead, with the two successful applicants for licences to broadcast being Metropolitan-Vickers ('Metrovick' for short), which started transmitting programmes from Manchester at the same time as 2LO, and the Western Electric company, which began

¹ It would appear that these transmissions were suspended because of concerns over national security, although no evidence has been found to support these claims.

broadcasting in Birmingham from 15 November 1922 as 5IT (Briggs, 1985: 20-25). This latter station therefore became the first to broadcast from the Midlands itself, with Western Electric operating a 'studio' (consisting of a small room in a warehouse) based at the General Electric Company (GEC)'s works in the Witton suburb of Birmingham (Tiptaft, 1947: 114).

By the time 5IT started broadcasting, it had become part of the British Broadcasting Company (the original BBC), with the idea for this new venture coming from the Post Office, which started discussions with the main groups involved, and Marconi, which did not want to operate a system of broadcasting in which it would find itself in a monopoly position to the exclusion of its rivals. It was as a consequence of these developments that the name 'British Broadcasting Company' was agreed to by representatives from the leading radio manufacturers (or the 'Big Six' as they were known), these companies being Marconi, Metrovick, GEC and Western Electric, along with the Radio Communication Company and the British Thomson-Houston Company (Briggs, 1985: 26-30). At a meeting held in May 1922, various recommendations were adopted concerning the new company, which included the question of financing, with the introduction of a 'licence fee' of ten shillings (£0.50) for owners of radio sets, and a royalty on the sale of all sets made by the BBC's member companies, which were the only ones to be approved by the Post Office (Briggs, 1985: 30-31). In October 1922, the British Broadcasting Company Limited was officially formed by the 'Big Six' and some other smaller companies, with Lord Gainford as its first Chairman, followed by the introduction of the first licence fee set at ten shillings, with half of the fee being received by the BBC, which also received royalties for the sale of radio sets mentioned above (Briggs, 1985: 363). On 14 November 1922, the first BBC broadcasts originated from 2LO in London, followed

the day after by the first transmissions from both Birmingham (5IT) and Manchester (2ZY). This led to a network of local stations based around the country, with programmes taken from the main stations, mostly from London. From late 1923 onwards, a series of relay stations were opened around the country, one of these being in Nottingham on 16 September 1924 (5NG), which was therefore the first radio station to be based in the East Midlands (Briggs, 1985: 364-366).

In organisational terms, the BBC was also making rapid progress, with the formal registration of the British Broadcasting Company Limited in December 1922, followed in January 1923 by the first licence issued to the Company by the Postmaster General (and future Prime Minister) Neville Chamberlain. By far the most significant development in the BBC's early history, however, came on 14 December 1922, with the appointment of John Reith (later Sir John and finally Lord Reith) as the company's first General Manager (Briggs, 1985: 364). As one of the BBC's original staff of four people, it was Reith's responsibility to ensure that the Company developed its own identity with regard to aspects such as administration and programme making, with the General Manager's engineering background also proving to be significant. Such was the impact made by the BBC in a relatively short period that in 1923 the Sykes Committee was created to examine broadcasting, with its main recommendation being to abolish the system of financing the Company through royalties on the sale of radio sets, leaving one licence fee of ten shillings, of which three-quarters (instead of half) was to be given to the BBC. Amongst the other suggestions made by this Committee was the need to develop an 'impartial' approach towards the most important political and social issues that emerged, which would prevent criticisms from various sectors of society that the BBC was 'partisan' in its output, as well as ensuring that its licence would be renewed; and the rejection of

financing the Company through advertising, which it was assumed would have led to a fall in broadcasting standards (Briggs, 1985: 43-51).

The BBC maintained its startling development throughout 1923, with its staff levels rising from four at the start of the year to almost 400 by its end, and in this year it also moved its London headquarters from its original location at Marconi House to a new studio at Savoy Hill, which became a true headquarters with equipment, offices, and studios all located in the same building (Briggs, 1985: 47-57). The Company's growing activities were not confined to the capital, however, as both Birmingham and Manchester moved their studios to sites nearer to their city centres (Briggs, 1985: 75). In Birmingham's case, the staff of five led by Percy Edgar remained at their original location of Witton until August 1923, when they moved to offices above a cinema in the city centre, followed in January 1926 by a further switch to studios based at Broad Street in the city (Tiptaft, 1947: 115).

In technical terms, the BBC was also expanding significantly, this being achieved to a great extent by Reith's decision to appoint Peter Eckersley as Chief Engineer (Briggs, 1985: 57). Whilst there can be no doubt that Reith was by far the most dominant figure within the BBC in both the 1920s and the 1930s, especially regarding the organisation's transformation from the Company to the Corporation (which still survives today), the part played by Eckersley in its development during the 1920s cannot be ignored, with many of his own ideas on broadcasting being of great importance. Eckersley first made his name as a result of his work in Writtle, where he was responsible for developing the station from scratch along with a team of engineers, and the progress made by this team in technical terms led to the BBC's

decision to appoint Eckersley to his position, with the other engineers soon following his lead (Eckersley, 1941: 38-47).

Eckersley's first contribution towards broadcasting in general and the BBC's early development in particular, however, was connected with the concept of 'simultaneous broadcasting', which was based on the premise that one programme could be heard throughout the country, as opposed to the already existing stations (both main and relay) that could not be heard beyond a radius of 25 miles, including London. With nine main and eleven relay stations in operation by the mid-1920s, the case for linking all of these into one unified structure became inevitable in both financial and technical terms, and the latter dimension was especially important in that the BBC received several telephone lines at a base in London, and sent programmes directly to the provincial stations. Having created a simultaneous broadcasting system, Eckersley's next idea was to attempt to reach Britain's rural areas to bring them into line with their urban counterparts, who were served by both the main and relay stations. As these existing stations broadcast using medium length waves (or 'medium wave'), Eckersley decided to base rural broadcasting through one 'long wave' station based in the geographical heart of England, with the location chosen for this station being Daventry in Northamptonshire (later relocated to Droitwich, near Worcester), so by 1925, four-fifths of the British people could listen to one programme broadcast on either main, relay, or long wave stations (Eckersley, 1941: 70-79).

The last of Eckersley's broadcasting ideas concerned what he referred to as a 'Regional Scheme', based on the desire to give listeners a choice of programmes from which they could select what was of interest to them, this scheme being the proposed first step towards a system in which any number of programmes could be heard. In

order that his new regional service could be successfully established, it would have been necessary for the twenty main and relay stations and their wavelengths to have been replaced by ten new transmitters located outside the main cities, and in addition this service required two high power transmitters located together to provide separate programmes. When Eckersley first devised this scheme in 1924, the five regions he chose were London and the south-east, the Midlands, the north of England, Scotland, and Wales and the west of England, with two wavelengths allocated to each of these regions (Eckersley, 1941: 115-118).

Whilst Eckersley was creating his various ideas on broadcasting, the BBC under Reith's direction continued to prosper, and one of the most important events to occur in the mid-1920s was the opening of the Daventry station (which was given the call sign of 5XX) in 1925. However, the most significant event of this year in broadcasting terms came with the creation of the Crawford Committee to look into the funding of the BBC by the Post Office and other related matters, including whether the organisation's status as a Company should be maintained, or if an alternative could be found to replace it, which was Reith's own position. In his *Memorandum of Information on the Scope and Conduct of the Broadcasting Service*, Reith argued for broadcasting as a whole to be brought into the sphere of the public sector, something that the Post Office itself agreed to, with its position being that a corporation could be established that would not be subject to direct control from the Government. In March 1926, the Crawford Committee published its Report, which recommended the retention of a monopoly for broadcasting in Britain under the control of one body, as opposed to the deregulated system to be found in the United States, which was considered unsuitable in a British context. Following the acceptance of the Crawford Committee's ideas by the Government, it was announced that the British Broadcasting

Company would disappear at the end of 1926, to be replaced from 1 January 1927 by the British Broadcasting Corporation under a Royal Charter, with its first Licence to run for ten years, and Reith himself receiving a knighthood and becoming the new Corporation's first Director-General (Briggs, 1985: 82-93).

It was not only in organisational terms that 1926 proved to be a pivotal year in the BBC's history, but it was also significant with regard to the political direction to be taken by the Corporation in general, and its commitment concerning an impartial approach towards industrial and party political disputes in particular. This 'non-political' approach was put to the test in May 1926 with the outbreak of the General Strike, in which Reith played a crucial part through his determination to continue broadcasting for the duration of the Strike, something that the main national newspapers of the day could not do. Whilst the BBC predictably came under fire from leading figures within the labour movement for allowing itself to be manipulated by the Government into promoting the 'official' line at the expense of opposing views, there was also criticism from within Government circles, and especially from the Chancellor of the Exchequer (and another future Prime Minister) Winston Churchill, who accused Reith of not giving the Government enough support and failing to explain the situation in an effective manner. Reith rejected both of the above criticisms, and insisted on pursuing what he considered to be a 'middle course' that would not favour either side, and this policy of objectivity and impartiality soon became one of the most important features of the new BBC² (Briggs, 1985: 96-105).

² Reith has been accused of using impartiality as a 'principle' that could be suspended in times of crisis, as he wrote many of Prime Minister Baldwin's speeches during the General Strike and broadcast them on the BBC (Pilger, 2002, via Carlton website).

By the late 1920s, therefore, the BBC found itself in a position where its future was assured in the short term through its change in status from a private Company to a public Corporation that could not be directly controlled by the state as a result of its independent structure of management, which closely corresponded with Reith's own blueprint for the BBC. Having been established in broadcasting terms since 1922, the time had come for the Corporation to expand its activities, and it chose to do this by adopting a regional system based on Peter Eckersley's concept of a choice of programmes for listeners, an idea that Reith himself was keen to promote (Eckersley, 1941: 116). This system of regional broadcasting differed from the existing local stations in that, whereas the importance of the localities played a vital part in establishing a genuine identity for all the main and relay stations throughout the United Kingdom, the BBC's 'Regional Scheme' was mainly concerned with creating a service based on the English regions, with the rest of the country following the lead first developed in England. As the next chapter will reveal, the similarities between this structure and that adopted by Independent Television when its system of regional broadcasting began in the 1950s were striking, especially with regard to the policy of concentrating on the English regions, rather than observing the nation as a whole. Following on from this was the question of the boundaries chosen by the BBC for the English regions, with these being decided on the grounds of engineering matters in general, and the location of transmitters in particular, leading to a situation in which other elements that could have played a part in deciding the boundaries, including geographical, cultural, and demographical factors, were completely ignored (Briggs, 1995: 623).

The origins of regional broadcasting system for Britain can be traced back to the BBC's first year as a Corporation in 1927, in which a second station started

broadcasting from Daventry under the name of 5GB, and this new service took a different approach to Daventry's already existing station (5XX) in that it provided the alternative programming that Eckersley intended. When 5GB officially started in August 1927, it soon became clear that Birmingham's own radio station (5IT) would have to be closed down, not only to reduce costs, but also to avoid any potential problems regarding the two wavelengths. It was on 21 August 1927 that the changeover from 5IT to 5GB occurred, but despite initial complaints about reception from listeners in the Birmingham area, the existence of 5GB and 5XX with their 'contrasting' programmes was used as an example of how regional broadcasting could work in practice if it was extended to the rest of the country. The start of the 'Regional Scheme', as it became known, also led to the closure of the local relay stations that had accompanied the original main stations, and the first of the relay stations to be closed down was in 1927 at Nottingham, which therefore meant that 5GB would cover the whole of the Midlands to replace the old stations based in Birmingham and Nottingham (Briggs, 1965: 304-305).

The Regional Scheme first took shape as a result of two meetings held in November 1926, in which the BBC's Control Board decided to close down all the relay stations and replace the main stations in London, Manchester, Cardiff, and Glasgow with the high-power regional stations that had been introduced in Birmingham. The most important aspect of the Regional Scheme, however, was associated with an emphasis on securing a financial basis within which it could operate, which led to the inevitable conclusion that London would hold a position of domination over the rest of the country, which was deemed to be 'inferior' in cultural terms. As a result of this approach, the various Regional Directors found themselves in a situation whereby they lacked the necessary finance to operate their stations in the ways they wanted to,

whilst being subjected to the concept of 'universal culture' that London adopted. The strategy that was eventually adopted for the regions was based on the views of Peter Eckersley's brother, Roger, who in 1928 argued for provincial programmes to carry local material only, with programmes similar to those being made in London being eliminated as far as possible. By 1929, this policy had become associated with the idea of 'centralisation' that Reith vigorously promoted, and which led to London's supremacy being further reinforced at the expense of the concept of 'provincialism' that dominated the nineteenth century (Briggs, 1965: 305-308).

It came as no surprise that the most prominent opponent of the move towards a 'metropolitan' approach for British broadcasting in general and the regions in particular was Peter Eckersley, who voiced his concerns at what he saw as the failure to develop a coherent 'cultural' dimension for the Regional Scheme, whilst also supporting the idea that the regional programmes would serve a special purpose in reflecting a region's life and character. In 1929, Eckersley produced a *Report on the Proposed Regional Scheme*, in which he called for a division between 'National' and 'Regional' programmes to be created through the public and private sectors. Whilst the national service would have been run on similar lines to those that already existed, the regions would have had the chance to develop on an independent basis under a private enterprise system, which would have resulted in more money becoming available to the national station (Briggs, 1965: 308). Eckersley's ideas were never implemented in any way, however, as he resigned from the BBC in 1929, with the official reason for his departure being due to his involvement in a divorce case, although the real reason might well have had more to do with his dissatisfaction at the way in which the Corporation was being run at the time, and in particular with the frustration he felt over the Regional Scheme. This led Eckersley to attempt to

organise the Regional Directors in a revolt against London's control over regional broadcasting in general, an argument that he lost (Eckersley, 1941: 128, 152).

Peter Eckersley's departure from the BBC coincided with the Corporation's decision to start the Regional Scheme on an official basis, and on terms that did not meet with Eckersley's approval, but which suited the aims and objectives of the Corporation's management perfectly. This attitude towards the regions can best be explained by the special emphasis placed on London within the system, with the first twin-wave station being built at Brookmans Park to the north of the capital, and the opening of this new station in October 1929 led to the closure of the old 2LO station based in central London (Briggs, 1965: 309-310). It was the opening of the second of the twin medium-wave transmitters at Brookmans Park that led to the official start of the Regional Scheme on 9 March 1930, with listeners in London and the Midlands being able to listen to the stations for their own regions (known as 'London Regional' and 'Midland Regional' respectively), and the whole of the country being able to hear 5XX from Coventry, which was renamed the 'National Programme' (the term 'programme' referring to the network as a whole). (Briggs, 1985: 369.) The Regional Scheme's expansion continued throughout the 1930s, starting with the opening of the North Regional station at Moorside Edge near Huddersfield in 1931, and followed by the Scottish Regional station in 1932 (the first of the 'national' regions), the West and Wales station in 1933 (these two regions were not separated until 1937), and the Northern Ireland station in 1936. The National Programme's profile was further enhanced in October 1934 when the Droitwich transmitter was opened, which therefore led to the closure of 5XX from Daventry (Briggs, 1965: 311-314).

With all internal opposition to the concept of centralisation having been removed, Reith was faced with the task of putting his policy into practice, and in a memorandum on *Centralisation* in 1929, he stated that, although the Regional Directors were expected to accept the policy, they could still carry it out in whatever way they felt was most appropriate for their regions. Reith developed this argument further in 1930, when he stressed the differences between centralisation of control on one hand and content on the other, in which Regional transmissions would provide more variety and a distinctive approach in contrast to the National programmes, which would be standardised and metropolitan in their nature. From the perspective of the Regional Directors, they were required to operate not only within the boundaries that Reith had decreed, but also with regard to the technical limitations within which the BBC had to operate, given that there were ten medium wave frequencies and only one long wave frequency available in the 1930s. Whilst some of the Directors were keen to follow Reith's lead over the policy of centralisation, there were some dissenting voices, including Percy Edgar in Birmingham, who favoured Eckersley's approach of a 'private enterprise' system for regional broadcasting (Briggs, 1965: 315-316).

Probably the most difficult problem that the BBC was forced to confront in respect of the Regional Scheme was that of finding suitable transmitters that would be accepted by most people, with the solution to this problem being the location of the various transmitters around the country. The difficulties of regional broadcasting in practice can be found in the experiences of the BBC's North Region, which was generally regarded as the most popular and successful of all the regional stations. However, this 'region', which was based in Manchester, enjoyed a high degree of diversity in cultural terms, with the traditional local rivalries between industrial areas

such as Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, and communities within the same area, including the differences between Liverpool and Manchester, being reflected through many 'outside broadcast' programmes. This cultural diversity was reinforced on a geographical level in that the North Region initially covered an area stretching from Newcastle and north-east England in the north to Stoke-on-Trent and the Potteries in the south, and it soon became clear that this region had little unity in cultural terms and even less unity geographically (Briggs, 1965: 317-320).

As a result of the above, it was almost inevitable that there would be disputes between the Regions over certain areas, and such an argument developed over the Potteries, which was 'transferred' from the North to the Midlands in 1935, leading to problems between both parties. Matters reached a head in 1936, when a Midland Region representative argued for the Potteries to remain in the Midlands on a permanent basis, only to be informed by the author of the BBC's *Report on Regions*, Charles Siepmann, that this area was much more closely associated with the North than the Midlands due to its industrial base and its geographical location, which would cut it off from the rest of the Midlands. Despite these reservations, Siepmann still recommended that the area in question should remain in the Midlands, due to the North Region already being larger than was convenient in geographical terms (Briggs, 1965: 319-320).

The early history of the Midland Region can also be used as a good example of the problems associated with the Regional Scheme as a whole, in that the Region did not exist when 5GB from Daventry replaced Birmingham's local station, 5IT, and with 5GB broadcasting programmes of an experimental nature, listeners in the Midlands had to tune in to the National station (5XX) to hear the programmes they had been

used to hearing on 5IT. When the Midland Region finally achieved its own identity in 1930, Percy Edgar, who was the first Regional Director after having been in charge of 5IT, informed Reith that many people within the region did not support his policy of centralisation, but despite this, the policy was still implemented. To compensate for developments such as the loss of local programmes and the disbandment of the Midland Regional Orchestra, the early 1930s saw an increase in outside broadcasts from the West Midlands, and a pledge was given to broadcast programmes reflecting the life of the Midlands, which was a region with its own 'personality', although it was unclear as to how far the BBC could project this personality, if it existed at all. In addition, the West Midlands was far more prosperous in the 1930s than the northern industrial areas of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and the differences between the East and West Midlands also came to the surface, with Birmingham audiences less likely to have been interested in regional programmes than listeners in the rest of the Midlands (Briggs, 1965: 324-325).

By the mid-1930s, it had become apparent to many people, including sources inside the BBC, that the Regional Scheme was not functioning as it was intended, with doubts being raised over the effectiveness of the system of regional broadcasting as a whole, and the Corporation's role in promoting this system in particular. One of the most noticeable shortcomings in this regard concerned the size of some of the regions, in that they were far too large to be of any benefit to the listeners, something that applied not only to the North Region (as has already been discussed), but also to the original West Region, which consisted of west and south-west England as well as the whole of Wales, and it was only after protests from both English and Welsh people over this matter that Wales finally received its own service in 1937. There was the added problem of the minimal contribution to regional broadcasting from eastern and

southern England, something that was not helped by factors such as East Anglia not being given its own region and therefore being completely left out of the system as a result, the isolated position of south-east England within the system, and the BBC's failure to develop a distinctive identity for London itself, with the capital being treated in metropolitan terms only (Briggs, 1965: 323-325).

As a consequence of the above factors, it became inevitable that a comprehensive survey on regional broadcasting would be required, in which factors such as the relationship between London and the regions, and the activities occurring within the regions themselves would be examined. This was the task that Charles Siepmann set for himself when he became Director of Regional Relations in 1935, one that he completed in the following year with his *Report on Regions*. Having visited all the regions and interviewed members of staff, Siepmann wanted to discover details on the listeners' impressions of Regional programmes, and the ways in which regional broadcasting could address the concerns of people in the provinces, although his emphasis was on details of the programmes themselves, rather than administrative matters. Siepmann argued that, whilst the policy of centralisation had led to a situation in which the regions had suffered due to a lack of resources and opportunities compared to London, there had been a failure on the part of the regional services to address local needs in an adequate manner, which was accompanied by a similarity in the various Regional programmes broadcast around the country, a trend that had to be reversed if that was possible (Briggs, 1965: 331).

For Siepmann, the problems concerning regional broadcasting originated from the policy of the regions doing nothing that London could have done better, along with a lack of adequate staff in the regions compared to London, a failure to appreciate the

work of the Regional Directors, and low standards in regional premises and equipment. Siepmann's solutions included an exchange scheme for BBC staff between London and the regions, a full programme of listener research to ensure that the views and attitudes of audiences around the country would be properly represented, and for southern and eastern England (including London) to be brought into the regional fold by being allocated its own station, with this to be achieved within a framework of financial control from the capital itself. The response from the BBC's Governors was to stress the important role that broadcasting could play in challenging general arguments in favour of centralisation by supporting local views instead, with regional programmes required to reflect these local concerns. Against this, however, the financial and technical boundaries within which the regions were expected to operate were to remain intact, so the position of the regions after 1936 (when Siepmann's report was published) remained largely unchanged, with local variations introduced throughout the regions, and finance for programmes being determined by a weekly allowance that was decided from London on a quarterly basis. Despite all the problems that the Regional Scheme had to contend with, it still provided a spirit of independence from London that could not have been found elsewhere (Briggs, 1965: 332-339).

The absence of a solid financial basis for the BBC's regional broadcasting system in the 1930s can also be attributed to two other crucial developments with which the Corporation became closely involved. The first of these was one that Reith himself vigorously supported, that of overseas or 'Empire' broadcasting, an idea dating back to 1924, and Reith's desire to broadcast to India. In the event, a series of delays due to technical and (especially) financial factors meant that the first Empire broadcasts from London did not occur until 19 December 1932 with the establishment of a short-

wave station at Daventry, which resulted in programmes being relayed to Australia, Canada, India, South Africa, and West Africa. Unfortunately for the BBC, its efforts to develop the Empire Service in the mid-1930s were hampered by the government's refusal to allow it to have extra revenue, which meant that the Corporation had to operate this service on its own, in contrast to other countries around the world, including Germany and Italy, whose regimes were extremely keen to develop their foreign services. It was not until the late 1930s that an improvement in this situation occurred with the introduction of services in foreign languages to complement the English-speaking Empire Service, the first two of these being the Arabic Service and the Latin American Service, which both started broadcasting in early 1938, and which led to a far greater profile for all the BBC's overseas services being established at home and abroad (Briggs, 1965: 369-410).

The second development was the one that was to have the most profound effect on the history of the media in Britain in general, and on the history of British broadcasting in particular, this being the advent of television in the mid-1930s. As with the start of overseas broadcasting mentioned above, the first experiments in this new medium began in the 1920s through the pioneering work of John Logie Baird, who continued his efforts into the early 1930s. By this time, however, Baird was in competition with his main rival, Electric and Musical Industries Limited (EMI), to determine who would be the first to devise a permanent high-definition television service (Briggs, 1965: 567). It became almost inevitable that the BBC would play a prominent part in discussions on television, and when the Selsdon Committee met in 1934, Selsdon himself wanted the Corporation to be solely responsible for this service, whilst Reith indicated that the BBC would open one station in southern England and another in the north, with the eventual aim of creating a network

consisting of fourteen stations, and raised the possibility that his might be funded through some form of sponsorship (Briggs, 1965: 588-589). In early 1935, the *Report of the Selsdon Committee on Television* confirmed that the BBC would be responsible for a regular television service to start in London immediately, and on 2 November 1936, the first television broadcasts started from Alexandra Palace in north London using EMI's system, with this service confined to London for the foreseeable future (Briggs, 1965: 591-610).

The period from 1936 to 1939 was one of the most significant in the BBC's history, starting in 1936 with the *Report of the Ullswater Committee on Broadcasting*, in which the BBC was given an extension of ten years to its Licence to take it up to the mid-1940s. This was followed in the summer of 1938 by Reith's resignation as Director-General (to become the Chairman of Imperial Airways), to be replaced in the autumn by the Irish academic F.W. Ogilvie, who took over in what became the prelude to the Second World War. When hostilities finally broke out in September 1939, the Corporation was faced with the problem of what to do with its various services, and the first decision it took over this issue was to close down the television service for defence reasons, which meant that there was no television in Britain for the duration of the war (the service did not resume broadcasting to London until 1946). In the case of the radio services, both the National Programme and the Regional Programme ceased to exist, with their replacement coming in the form of a combined network covering the nation, which was called the 'Home Service', and this new arrangement not only survived the war, but also continued well into the 1960s. This therefore meant that the pre-war Regional Programme would not return after 1945, but would instead be incorporated into the Home Service (Briggs, 1985: 372-374).

(iii) The war years: 1939-45

From the BBC's point of view, the war years were highly eventful, with the introduction of an increasing number of foreign language services, which enabled it to raise its profile abroad. In contrast, Ogilvie's resignation as Director-General in early 1942 was a serious blow to the Corporation, and a permanent replacement was not found until early 1944, when W.J. Haley was appointed to this position. However, the most important development to occur at this time came with the start of the 'Forces Programme' in 1940, which broadcast entertainment based shows to improve the morale of the participants in the war, but which were also much appreciated by domestic audiences. This service changed its name in 1944 to the General Overseas Service (GOS), by which time the network had established itself, both at home and abroad, as a genuine and popular alternative to the Home Service, so when the Second World War ended in 1945, it became clear that a permanent successor to the General Overseas Service would be required (Briggs, 1985: 374-378).

As the Second World War drew towards its end, so the post-war reconstruction of the BBC's domestic services became a top priority, especially for Haley himself, who was anxious to realise radio's full potential by creating a system that would have a complete cultural impact, and which all sections of the population could enjoy and identify with as a result. In addition to the Home Service, which had been in existence since 1939, Haley was responsible for the creation of the Light Programme, which started broadcasting in July 1945, and which took over from where the General Forces Programme (GFP) left off in reflecting the 'popular culture' of the period; and the introduction of a completely new network, the Third Programme, which first broadcast in September 1946, and which devoted itself completely to covering all

aspects of the arts, and with which Haley himself was very closely associated. The object of the exercise was to create a tripartite system in which the Light (the 'lowbrow' network) would be listened to by the majority of people in the country, Home would occupy the middle ground, and the Third would be the 'highbrow' station that listeners could gravitate towards after having sampled the other networks. This system provided a complete contrast to the pre-war position, in which a mixture of highbrow and lowbrow programmes were brought together, but which Haley argued only led to confusion amongst many listeners at that time (Briggs, 1985: 243-254).

Having created a national framework for radio in the post-war era, the question that had to be urgently addressed was that of the role to be played by the regions within the system as a whole. If the experiences of the war were any guide as to what the future of regional broadcasting would be after 1945, then the omens were far from promising, especially in view of the reduction in the number of wavelengths, leading to a decline in the influence of the Regional Directors. This in turn resulted in complaints from the Regions that they were not being represented as they should have been, and in 1942 the Midland Region's senior Directors claimed that the Region should have a key role in making programmes due to the importance of the Midlands in the war in general, a proposal that was seemingly not undertaken (Briggs, 1970: 541-543). The case for the regions remained unresolved whilst the war was still in progress, so ensuring that a permanent solution had to be found as soon as peace had been established.

(iv) The post-war era: 1945 to date

It was in July 1945 that regional broadcasting was resumed, at the same time as the start of the national radio networks (the Home, Light, and Third), but unlike the pre-war arrangements, there was no choice between the national and regional service, as the Home Service provided a network for the whole country, with the Regions 'opting out' of the network to broadcast their own programmes whenever this was appropriate. This policy of opting out did not find favour with those listeners who wanted to hear programmes on the national network, but who were forced to make do with the regional alternative instead. Against this, listeners had the opportunity to hear an increasing amount of regional programming within the national framework, with this new emphasis on the regions reflected in some of their programmes being broadcast on a network basis. The most important event to occur regarding regional programming, however, concerned the proposed merger between the Midland and West Regions in 1946, which was linked to Haley's plans to begin the Third Programme later that same year, although this did not happen following protests from people in the West Region, who succeeded in preventing this merger. The importance of the BBC's regions was measured by the many programmes that started on a regional basis before moving to the national networks, and the Midland Region's contribution in this regard was a soap opera with a farming theme, which was first broadcast in the Midland Home Service in 1950, before being transferred to the Light Programme in 1951. This programme was, of course, *The Archers*, which is still broadcasting to this day (Briggs, 1979: 94-108).

In the case of television, the BBC carried on from where it had left off in 1939 when the service resumed broadcasting on 7 June 1946 on the original system of 405 lines to London only. At this time, television as a medium was struggling to maintain its

identity within the Corporation's ranks, as radio was very much at the peak of its powers in that there was a broadcasting system consisting of three contrasting networks, from which people could choose which one they wanted to listen to regardless of where they lived. In total contrast, television did not receive the same attention as radio did from the Corporation's hierarchy, mainly because it was still exclusively based in London, as it had been before the war, and this problem became especially significant in the 1950s, when the BBC's monopoly on television was successfully broken (Briggs, 1979: 197-208). It was probably in response to criticisms from a variety of critics who objected to having to pay for a service that was restricted to London that plans were announced for four high-power transmitters to be built in a three-year period between 1949 and 1952, with the first of these to be located at Sutton Coldfield near Birmingham. This goal was achieved when the Sutton Coldfield transmitter was opened on 17 December 1949, so British television became available to viewers outside London for the first time, and the Midlands had its first television service, which not only covered the West Midlands, but also included Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Northamptonshire. The other high-power transmitters to be opened in the early 1950s were Holme Moss for northern England in 1951, Kirk o' Shotts for central Scotland in 1952, and Wenvoe for Wales and western England, also in 1952 (Briggs, 1979: 246-250).

In the light of the above developments, it became inevitable that another committee of inquiry would be formed by the government to examine broadcasting in general, with special emphasis on the BBC's attitudes to the medium, and it was under the Labour administration that took office in 1945 that the Beveridge Committee was formed, with its first meeting taking place in 1949. This body recommended that the licence fee should be retained in full by the Corporation without any other party

receiving a share of it, but the most important aspect of the *Beveridge Report*, which was published in 1951, was that the BBC's arguments concerning the continued monopoly on broadcasting were accepted, particularly in respect of competition destroying the sense of responsibility on which public service broadcasting depended. Whilst the *Beveridge Report* was received in a generally favourable light, there was a Minority Report by the Conservative Selwyn Lloyd, which emphasised the potential dangers that could arise within a monopoly, and led him to call for both commercial radio and television services to run alongside the BBC. In radio terms, the Corporation would compete with one or two national commercial companies and local commercial stations broadcasting their own programmes; whilst for television, there would be a British Television Corporation to be responsible for sponsored programmes, and the licence fee would be accompanied by agencies financed by commercial interests. These ideas would be further developed following the Tories' election victory in late 1951 (Briggs, 1985: 257-265).

The early 1950s was a period of great social and cultural change in Britain, and especially in terms of broadcasting, in which the relationship between radio and television underwent a transformation following the Coronation of 1953, which saw the balance between the two shift decisively in favour of television as a result of the impact this event caused amongst those people who saw it. With the end of wartime rationing in 1954, and an era of full employment fully established, the conditions were most favourable for people to be able to obtain a wide range of consumer goods, including television sets, with the number of sets in this country rising from one million in 1951 to over five million in 1955. Given this background, it came as no surprise to discover that a Conservative government would be keen to break the BBC's control of broadcasting, which came with the Television Act 1954, which

broke the Corporation's television monopoly, although it retained full control over radio broadcasts (Briggs, 1985: 274-279).

As with the BBC when it started its television service, the new channel that was established in the wake of the Television Act 1954, and which was known as 'Independent Television' (ITV), was only available to viewers in the London area when it started broadcasting in 1955, before moving to the rest of the country from 1956 until this network was completed in the early 1960s. With ITV being organised on a national basis, the opportunity arose for the Corporation to present itself as a national broadcaster, and it demonstrated its willingness to compete with its commercial rival when on ITV's opening night (22 September 1955), the BBC's radio services broadcast a full range of programmes, including (on the Light Programme) an episode of *The Archers*, in which one of the main characters died in a fire. As a consequence of this ploy, the following morning's newspapers concentrated on what had happened in the soap, with ITV's festivities being ignored by comparison. In terms of its television service, the BBC was determined not to 'lower its standards' in its battle with commercial television, and from 1955 to 1957, the percentage of serious programmes to entertainment shows rose rather than fell, with news and current affairs playing an important part in this regard (Briggs, 1985: 295-304).³

Having developed its radio services as far as it felt it could do at that time, the BBC turned its attention from the mid-1950s onwards towards promoting television, something that became essential when the various ITV companies started broadcasting throughout the country. It was not only in terms of the new programmes

³ In the year 1954-55, BBC Television's 'serious' programmes (including news, talks and documentaries, drama, and opera and ballet) accounted for 41.9 per cent of the total output, compared to 17.8 per cent for entertainment programmes, but by 1956-57, serious programmes rose to 44.1 per cent, compared to 18.8 per cent for entertainment (BBC, 1958: 218).

that started in the late 1950s, and had more of a 'light entertainment' basis to them than the programmes that were shown before this time, that the Corporation's priorities were going through radical changes, as this was the period when for the first time, the amount of money spent by the BBC on television exceeded that allocated to radio, something that would have been considered unthinkable only a decade before.⁴ This new commitment to television was further reinforced by the building and opening of new transmitters, which ensured that virtually the whole country could receive the BBC's television service by 1960, with ITV's network of regions not being completed until 1962. In organisational terms, the Corporation made significant progress at both national and regional levels, with the television service leaving its original London base at Alexandra Palace to move to a permanent site at White City in west London, where the new Television Centre was opened in 1960; and in the Midlands, the first Midland Region television studio was opened at Gosta Green, Birmingham, in late 1955 (Briggs, 1985: 273, 305-308, 384-391).

The confidence with which the BBC conducted itself during the late 1950s and early 1960s was well founded, and its contribution to broadcasting in general at this time was recognised in the *Report of the Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting*, which was published in 1962 under the chairmanship of the industrialist Sir Harry Pilkington (although many of its recommendations came from the academic Richard Hoggart). Pilkington was highly critical of market forces and the role they played in broadcasting in general, and of the performance of ITV in particular.⁵ In contrast, the BBC's position as a national broadcaster was accepted without any reservations, and

⁴ In 1955-56, the BBC spent £10.93 million on radio and £7.03 million on television, but in 1958-59, it spent £13.99 million on television and £11.44 million on radio, resulting in an increase of 99 per cent in its expenditure on television, compared to 4.67 per cent for radio in this period (Briggs, 1995: 30).

⁵ See Chapter Two (pp. 84-88) for further details on the *Pilkington Report's* recommendations for the commercial channel.

the government accepted Pilkington's suggestion that the Corporation should start a second television service run on 625 lines (BBC 2, which started broadcasting in 1964), although it did not accept many of its other findings (Briggs, 1985: 326-329).

The BBC prospered during the 1960s under its Director-General during the decade, Hugh Carleton Greene, with the most significant of its achievements probably being the advent of colour television, with the first transmissions occurring in the summer of 1967 on BBC 2, before being extended to BBC 1 and ITV in the autumn of 1969. By this time, television's profile as a medium had reached the stage where it achieved a dominant position over radio, but ironically the latter was to undergo a transformation in both national and regional terms. At a national level, the tripartite model of separate networks in the Home Service, the Light Programme, and the Third Programme, had remained unchanged since the 1940s, but changes to the system became inevitable as a result of the impact and interest generated by the emergence of the 'pirate' stations, many of which were run from ships located in international waters in the North Sea. When the pirates were outlawed following the Marine etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Bill, which was passed in the summer of 1967, a restructuring of the networks became inevitable, and so on 30 September 1967, the networks officially changed their names, with the Home Service becoming Radio 4, the Third Programme Radio 3, and the Light Programme Radio 2, along with the creation of a 'pop music' station to replace the pirates, to be known as Radio 1 (Briggs, 1995: 571-581).

It was in the area of regional broadcasting that the most dramatic changes occurred, and these were closely linked to the BBC's desire to create a network of local radio stations, with the first of these, BBC Radio Leicester, starting on 8 November 1967 on

VHF (Very High Frequency, now FM) only (Briggs, 1995: 639). In a real sense, these new local stations were very much a throwback to the original local stations that existed before the Regional Scheme began in 1928 as a result of the high-power medium-wave transmitters that were built at that time. Given this new emphasis on local broadcasting, it became inevitable that questions would be asked with regard to the future of the existing regional structure, especially with reference to how the 'region' would exist between local issues on the one hand and national interests on the other. This therefore meant that a solution had to be found to the unresolved relationship between regional and national programmes, especially in relation to the resources to be allocated to the regions, and the balance between institutional centralisation and decentralisation (Briggs, 1995: 622-623).

As has already been noted, the BBC's Regional boundaries in England had been created mainly on engineering matters in general and the location of transmitters in particular, which meant that cultural, demographical, and especially geographical factors were totally excluded as a result. The pre-war pattern of regional broadcasting therefore remained largely unchanged, with the North Region covering everywhere from Northumberland in the north to Lincolnshire in the south, the West Region extending from Cornwall in the west to Sussex in the east, and the Midland Region, with its headquarters in Birmingham, having been expanded to include East Anglia, which had been omitted from the original regional plan. Once again, the losers in this regard were London and the south-east, who remained outside this system, and as both of them were not given their own frequencies, they had to rely on regional programmes instead. Although the Regions did have a high degree of autonomy in the decade from 1945 to 1955, when radio was the dominant medium, the emergence of BBC Television, with its national emphasis and organisation, ensured that the

Regions had to adjust to the national framework and could not develop 'from below'. The outlook for the regions became even more uncertain when the ITV companies with their regional centres introduced a form of 'non-metropolitan' competition, something that was encouraged by the Independent Television Authority (ITA), which required these companies to produce 15 per cent (7.5 hours a week) of their output on local programmes. The most curious aspect of ITV's entry into broadcasting was that the BBC made no attempt to create any new regions to compete with its commercial rival, preferring instead to use the same Regional system that was already operating in radio (Briggs, 1995: 623-624).

The whole question of regional broadcasting, and the BBC's future plans in this field, was addressed in a paper from 1955 on *An Extension Of Regional Broadcasting* written by Frank Gillard, who was the prime mover in creating the BBC local radio network from the 1960s onwards. In his paper, Gillard stressed the importance of healthy regional cultures in the creation of a healthy national culture, but he argued that Regional broadcasting could only be a 'limited operation' in that it could serve the regional requirements of people living in a region, as well as enabling the Regions to be represented in national terms by making programmes that emphasised the region's character. Gillard therefore saw Regional broadcasting's main role as 'informational' in that it would be almost exclusively used as a provider of news for the national networks, with sectors such as entertainment playing a minor role in this system, which would require the creation of a 'news gathering' organisation to fulfil its responsibilities successfully. With the advent of VHF leading to a large increase in the number of wavelengths available, Gillard argued that it would be possible to split the Regions into smaller units, with local transmitters in the main towns and cities enriching the communities concerned. Although Gillard did not propose a local radio

network at this time, the options he suggested for the Regions were to have local opting out of Regional programmes on a local or area basis, in a similar vein to Regional opting out of national programmes, a Regional allocation of news bulletins to local communities, and his preferred option of dividing the Regions into several smaller areas, with transmitters serving selected communities (Briggs, 1995: 624-626).

By the 1960s, however, Gillard had become the chief advocate and instigator of BBC local radio, which started receiving money that the Regions must have believed should have been theirs instead, leading to Regional development being continually held back due to lack of funds. This was of little concern to senior figures from within the BBC, including Gillard himself, who claimed that the Regions would continue to play a key role in radio in the future, with the local radio stations being developed within the Regional system. If the prospects for regional radio were bad enough, for television they were even worse, especially given the fact that there was no way of opting out of the television network as there was in radio, and the high costs connected with television meant that the Regions would have to content themselves with contributing to the network as a whole, with a very limited role for programmes made by and for the Regions themselves. The one area in which regional television made inroads was that of regional news, with the Midlands Region starting a daily ten-minute bulletin in 1959, although other parts of the country were less fortunate in this respect, including London, which had no BBC regional service in this period, but did have two ITV companies broadcasting to the capital in Associated-Rediffusion and ATV (Briggs, 1995: 649-653).

The case for the English Regions was further undermined by the Pilkington Committee, which argued that there was little demand for more programmes reflecting their special needs in contrast to Scotland and Wales, and worse was to follow when it became clear that the Regions would not be making a contribution to the BBC's new television service, BBC 2, which broadcast on 625 lines, something that would render the Regions' output redundant, as they were still operating on the old 405 lines system. In the light of these developments, questions were bound to arise over the sites of transmitters on 625 lines, and the link between them and the regional radio and television services, which also had to consider population groupings within the main regional areas. In this context, the Midland Region's Controller, H.J. Dunkerley, produced a paper on transmitter sites, in which he suggested that the Region be divided into four 'Areas', these being West Midland, East Midland, South Midland, and East Anglia. In terms of the boundaries to be established for these Areas, the dividing line would run along a line from Ashbourne in Derbyshire to Banbury in Oxfordshire, whilst the boundaries between the East Midlands and East Anglia would be drawn along a line running from Boston in Lincolnshire through Cambridge to the county boundary of Essex and Northamptonshire (Briggs, 1995: 655-663).

As soon as talk of 'areas' and 'sub-regions' entered into the arguments over regional broadcasting, it became obvious that radical change was on the agenda, and despite a desperate rearguard effort to defend the old order by Desmond Hawkins in his *Note On Regional Broadcasting*, which included elements in favour of the Regional system, such as decentralisation and providing effective competition to the ITV companies (Briggs, 1995: 665-666), the BBC's system of English regional broadcasting, which had survived since the late 1920s, was finally on its way out.

The results of the Corporation's new approach to the Regions was contained in *Broadcasting In The Seventies*, which despite its title dealt primarily with radio, although the future of regional television was also revealed (Briggs, 1995: 721). In terms of the national radio networks, Radio 1 would remain the 'pop music' station, Radio 2 would be reserved for 'middle of the road' (MOR) music, Radio 3 would concentrate on classical music, and Radio 4 would become the 'speech-based' network (Briggs, 1985: 355).

The regional solution was more complicated, as the old English Regions did not exist after July 1970, and for radio disappeared altogether, with the new network of local radio stations replacing the old regional model. This meant that the only regional broadcasting from the BBC would be restricted to television only, with the old Regions (Midland, North, and West, based in Birmingham, Manchester, and Bristol respectively) being replaced by a system of eight new Regions with their own Regional Advisory Councils established in accordance with the BBC's Charter. Under this scheme, the old Regional centres were merged with the 'Area Centres' to produce the following Regions: Midlands (based in Birmingham), West (Bristol), North (Leeds), North-West (Manchester), North-East (Newcastle), East Anglia (Norwich), South-West (Plymouth), and South (Southampton). In programme terms, these new Regions were to make a daily news magazine, a Saturday sports report, and a weekly 'general interest' programme (this remains the case today), and in organisational terms, Birmingham, Manchester, and Bristol would all become 'Network Production Centres' that would supply programmes to the various national television and radio networks, whilst also developing local talent (BBC, 1971: 53-56). In the Midlands, the most significant event at this time was the opening of the Birmingham Broadcasting Centre (better known as 'Pebble Mill') on 10 November

1971, which is still in use at the time of writing in terms of producing radio and regional television programmes (Briggs, 1985: 356, 400).

Although the BBC's regional radio system was to be phased out when the network of local radio stations was completed, this process was not completed until 1983, when local stations for Devon and Cornwall were opened, which resulted in the regional service for the south-west based in Plymouth being finally closed down (BBC, 1983: 19). The regional television network has also undergone changes since the late 1960s, and the first of these occurred in 1986, with the Regions outlined above being reduced from eight to five. Of these Regions, the North-West in Manchester and the Midlands (with a Regional Television operation in Nottingham as well as Birmingham) were largely unaffected, with the major restructuring concerning the new North-East Region, which in addition to Newcastle included the former North Region based in Leeds, the South and West Region, a merger between the old South, West, and South-West Regions based in Southampton, Bristol, and Plymouth respectively, and the new East and South-East Region, in which the former East Anglia Region based in Norwich joined forces with Regional Television for the South-East from London (BBC, 1986: 1-4).

In the early 1990s, further upheavals to the BBC's Regional Broadcasting system resulted in another reduction in the number of English regions from five to three, a situation that lasted until the end of the twentieth century. The first of these new regions was created in 1990, when the new BBC North Region came into being, the result of an amalgamation between the old North-West Region in Manchester (the main centre for the new Region) and the former North-East Region based in Leeds and Newcastle. On 1 April 1992, the new BBC South and West Region was created,

this new entity being based in Bristol, and bringing together the former South and West Region and the South-East sector of the East and South-East region, with regional television in the London area being moved to Elstree in Hertfordshire. The last of these new operations was BBC Midlands and East, which meant that BBC East based in Norwich was transferred from the former East and South-East Region when BBC South and West was started. Although the BBC Midlands and East Region was primarily based in Birmingham, Nottingham's role became more prominent as a result of the introduction of the daily news magazine *East Midlands Today*, which was shown in the East Midlands at the same time as the Birmingham-based *Midlands Today* was broadcast in the West Midlands, the latter programme having been previously been transmitted throughout the Midlands until the early 1990s (BBC, 1992: 40-47). It may well be more than just coincidence that the present BBC regional structure of three 'super-regions' (Midlands and East, North, and South and West) closely matches the original regional pattern of Midland, North, and West Regions, with the major difference being that both London and the South-East play a full role in the system as a whole under the current arrangements.

(v) Conclusion

The history of the BBC's approach to regional broadcasting can be considered to be one of 'lost opportunities' in that there were occasions where the Corporation could have committed itself to developing the regions into a powerful force, including the immediate post-war period. However, it was the strong emphasis placed on the concept of nation in general by Reith, which evolved into a narrow interpretation of national culture as a bond that brought people together in a shared experience, which rendered differences in locality, class, and ethnicity redundant (Murdock in Mackay

and O'Sullivan, 1999:31). This ensured that the regional dimension had no chance of asserting itself in any meaningful form, and if anything this process accelerated even further in the post-Reith era, as the regions were denied the resources they urgently needed, especially with regard to money, with national and international services benefiting instead. The very limited role played by the BBC Regions during the Second World War meant that their future would be uncertain at best and non-existent at worst, and when ITV started in the mid-1950s on a regional basis, the decision to start a network of local radio stations instead of creating new regions to compete with ITV sealed the Regions' fate.

Whilst the BBC's decision to concentrate on its national and international services has proved to be the right one, especially in respect of its extremely high profile and reputation as a global brand, this has come at the expense of the Regions in general and regional broadcasting in particular. This conflict between the Regions and the network, coupled with the centralising tendencies associated with the medium of television, has led to figures such as Michael Grade asking whether the BBC should make programmes from as well as for the British nation in its efforts to retain the licence fee. For Grade, his view that the concept of 'British culture' would inevitably lead to network broadcasting dominating the local and regional alternatives is fully justified (Grade, 1999: 241-243). With the BBC allegedly becoming even more centralised in the 1990s under its Director-General for most of the decade, John Birt (now Lord Birt), it is almost certain that Peter Eckersley's vision of a collection of 'federal' BBCs around the country will never be realised (Eckersley, 1991: 179-180); but for the concept of regional broadcasting, all was not yet lost.

CHAPTER TWO: 'GOING INDEPENDENT': ITV'S ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT, 1950-2000

(i) Introduction

Having already discussed the BBC's regional system of broadcasting in the first chapter, this chapter will examine the events that led to calls for a commercial television channel to provide competition for the BBC in this medium, and the circumstances that resulted in this channel being run on a 'federal' and regional basis, rather than in a more centralised structure, similar to that of the Corporation. This chapter will also focus on the most important events to have occurred in ITV's history in general from the 1950s to date, including the recommendations of the Pilkington Committee in the early 1960s, and the effects they had on the commercial channel, together with full details on the changes of franchises resulting from the various contract awards over the years, and concluding with the most recent changes to the ITV system, in which the channel is in effect run by a 'duopoly' of Carlton and Granada.

(ii) The origins of ITV: 1946-55

Although there was no form of British-based commercial broadcasting before Independent Television (ITV) started in London in 1955 (and no British-based commercial radio was permitted until the early 1970s), it would be completely false to suggest that the British public had no knowledge or experience of broadcasts that featured advertisements at regular intervals. Whilst it was not possible for commercial radio stations to operate in this country, there was nothing to stop them broadcasting from studios based outside the United Kingdom, with the preferred option in this respect being to broadcast from the continent of Europe. This loophole was brilliantly exploited by two European-based stations that ran English-speaking

services between the two world wars, these being Radio Normandie, which began broadcasting in English in 1931, and was run by the International Broadcasting Company (IBC) created by Captain Leonard Plugge, and Radio Luxembourg, which started broadcasting from the Grand Duchy in 1933 under the auspices of the Luxembourg government.

Both these commercial stations enjoyed their highest audiences on Sundays, which Reith insisted the BBC should devote to religious programmes, a policy which alienated many people, who preferred to listen to the 'variety' shows that dominated the output of Normandie and Luxembourg. Following Reith's departure from the Corporation, a change in Sunday programming was announced to the effect that religion would not play such a prominent role as had previously been the case, a move that was seen as recognition that the foreign-based stations had made a significant impact throughout the 1930s (Briggs, 1985: 129-130). In addition to the programmes that were broadcast, listeners to the commercial stations were also exposed to the advertisements that were broadcast at various intervals, these commercials creating the revenue required to keep these stations in business, so despite the BBC's best efforts, what was known as 'sponsored' advertising had made a lasting impression on the British people. There is a compelling case to be made for the argument that, had it not been for the Second World War, the issue of British-based commercial broadcasting in general and commercial television in particular might well have been addressed in the 1940s rather than the 1950s (Briggs, 1979: 181).

After the war, Radio Luxembourg resumed broadcasting, with its English-speaking service not only maintaining the practice of radio featuring and being funded by advertising, but also continuing to provide an element of 'external' competition for

the BBC. However, the concept of competition was not exclusively confined to the commercial sector, as a high level of 'internal' competition existed within the Corporation's own ranks. One of the main instigators of this internal competition was William Haley, who in his post-war plan for national radio saw the Home Service, the Light Programme, and the Third Programme competing with each other, with music and plays offered by all the networks, and an emphasis on developing awareness in current affairs also important (Briggs, 1985: 244). Having established competition within the new radio networks, it became inevitable that this would be extended further, with the BBC's radio and television services competing with each other, a battle that radio won in the late 1940s, before television came into its own from the mid-1950s onwards. With the two concepts of competition and commercial broadcasting having played a prominent part in radio in both the 1930s and 1940s, there was every chance that both these ideas might well be applied to television in the 1950s, leading to the question of who would make the first connections over this matter.

In the immediate post-war period of the late 1940s, there was no real demand for commercial broadcasting based in Britain, whether it was for radio or television, and such arguments were most unlikely to find favour with a Labour government that was elected in 1945 on a programme of widespread nationalisation, so there was no chance of the issue of private sector broadcasting being on Labour's agenda at that time. Similarly, the opposition Conservatives were not particularly enthusiastic about British-based commercial stations, including their leader, Winston Churchill, whose criticisms of such enterprises as being 'un-British' were accepted by many people within his party (Wilson, 1961: 15). Although the idea of competition was one that most Conservative politicians were passionately committed to, this did not extend to

broadcasting, which was regarded as a 'special case', and was therefore something that was 'above politics'.¹ In addition, there was the financial question to consider, something that first became apparent in October 1938, when the BBC's *Report on Television Development in 1939 and 1940* concluded that an annual income of £1 million would not be sufficient to meet the needs of a nationally-based Television service for more than a few years (Briggs, 1965: 616-617). This problem manifested itself even further after the Second World War, when in the financial year ending in March 1946, only £14,487 was spent on television, compared to £214,587 on radio, with spending on television for the financial year 1946-47 fixed at £249,140 (Briggs, 1979: 208). Given the United Kingdom's economic difficulties following the end of the war, and the lack of investment in broadcasting in general and in television in particular, it became clear that there was no real enthusiasm for introducing commercial broadcasting at this time amongst the general public. However, support for the commercial option came from the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising (IIPA), which indicated its support for commercial broadcasting in its testimony to the Beveridge Committee; and advertising agencies such as J. Walter Thompson lobbied for commercial radio to be introduced in the 1930s and 1940s, with the expectation up to 1939 being that one of the BBC's channels would be given over to advertising² (Wilson, 1961: 135-136).

Given this apparent lack of interest amongst politicians for commercial broadcasting, it became more likely that any public support for it would come from within the BBC's own ranks, and so it proved when in late 1950 the Corporation's Controller of Television, Norman Collins, resigned from his position after having

¹ This particular approach to broadcasting survived until the late 1970s, when the incoming Conservative government devised its own radical plans for the various broadcasters.

² It would appear that the most enthusiastic supporters of commercial television were the advertising agencies, especially those with strong American connections and experience (Wilson, 1961: 139-140).

been passed over for the new role of Director of Television, and was to leave the BBC altogether. In making their decision not to appoint Collins to the position to which he felt he was entitled, the Board of Governors believed that he would have attempted to make television 'too popular', whereas Collins himself claimed that the BBC would be committing a 'betrayal of trust' if its promotion of radio prevented it from developing television in an effective manner. Having found apathy at best and hostility at worst from various critics inside the Corporation, Collins conceded that his next move would probably be to either join a new organisation that would be much more receptive to his aims and interests than was the case in his time at the BBC, or to play a large part in forming such a body, which would have to present its case directly to the people, as well as being independent of all groups associated with radio in general and the BBC in particular (Briggs, 1979: 452-456).

In early 1951, the *Beveridge Report* was published, which saw the BBC's monopoly on television and radio retained, although the 'Minority Report' from the Conservative Selwyn Lloyd warned of the dangers of such a monopoly continuing indefinitely, with his preferred option being the creation of local and national services to provide competition for the Corporation.³ At this point, the political dimension entered into the discussion on broadcasting in that Beveridge appeared in the wake of the General Election of 1950, which saw Labour re-elected, but with a small majority. This government could only survive until the autumn of 1951, when another Election was called, in which a Conservative administration took office with a clear working majority, and it was the Tories under Churchill who were responsible for formulating government policy on broadcasting during the period leading up to the creation of ITV and its launch in London in 1955 (Wilson, 1961: 58, 78). The two options that

³ See Chapter One (p.47) for further details.

this government faced in terms of broadcasting were either to accept Beveridge's findings and allow the BBC to retain its monopoly position, or to use Lloyd's Minority Report as a starting-point to create a new system that would result in this monopoly being broken.

On returning to government in 1951, the Conservatives had to develop definite policies on broadcasting, something that did not occur during the election campaign, in which there was no information given to voters regarding future developments in this area. From the viewpoint of those pressure groups that had been formed with the sole intention of trying to establish British-based commercial broadcasting, a unique and unexpected opportunity presented itself in respect of directly influencing and formulating government policy, something that would not have happened had Labour remained in power. When it became obvious that Churchill was not prepared to publicly defend the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, this meant that all the groups campaigning for commercial alternatives were given the 'green light' to mobilise support for their cause, and they made every effort to create powerful and persuasive arguments in support of the policies they adopted, which resulted in the creation of a commercial television network (Wilson, 1961: 78, 100-101).

The first sign of a break from 'traditional' broadcasting policies came with the White Paper of May 1952, in which there was a clause making provisions for competition to be introduced for television only, which meant that the BBC would still maintain a monopoly for British radio broadcasts (Briggs, 1985: 279). It was generally accepted that this change of policy came about as a direct result of the influence of a Conservative parliamentary committee, the Broadcasting Study Group, whose first chairman was John Profumo, and whose tactics the Conservative Party's

Chairman, Lord Woolton, devised. If there was one political figure who had the authority to challenge the BBC's monopoly position on broadcasting, then it was Woolton, whose reorganisation of the Tories' organisation in general and Central Office in particular led to professional advertising and public relations people assuming roles within British politics that had not existed before this time, including becoming prospective parliamentary candidates for the elections of 1950 and 1951. Not only did these new pro-business forces support Woolton's anti-socialist convictions, as they were also equally critical of senior Conservative politicians who they argued were 'out of touch' with the British people, with the harshest criticisms reserved for those Tories who opposed commercial television (Wilson, 1961: 84, 93-95).

The biggest boost that the commercial television lobby received at this time came in March 1952, when Woolton became Lord Privy Seal and minister in charge of broadcasting policy, which meant that it was his responsibility to implement the policy included in the White Paper (Briggs, 1985: 282). Outside of Parliament itself, but providing crucial support for the Broadcasting Study Group and working closely with groups such as the advertising agencies, were three figures whose role in creating British commercial television became crucial. The first of these was C.O. Stanley, who was Chairman and Managing Director of the Pye group of companies manufacturing radio and television sets, and the second was Sir Robert Renwick, whose role as President of the Television Society, along with his strong Conservative convictions in general and his influence on Lord Woolton in particular put him in the perfect position to advance the cause. The final member of this trio was none other than Norman Collins, who after his resignation from the BBC in 1950 joined forces with Renwick and Stanley to form High Definition Films (HDF), which became the

Associated Broadcasting Development Company (ABDC), the first British commercial television company.

It is generally accepted that Collins was the figure who was most responsible for ensuring that commercial television would be successfully established, especially amongst the general public, and such was his enthusiasm for the cause that he turned the whole issue into a personal crusade through his visits to a wide range of groups around the country. Not only did Collins use his talent for public speaking over this matter, as he was also uniquely qualified to discuss the arguments involved, given that he combined his vast knowledge of television production and techniques with his belief in the medium's potential in entertainment terms, which meant that he could discuss the advantages of breaking the monopoly both in detail and from the authority that his previous experience gave him. Collins was also regarded as being the key figure in advocating a system that would not correspond to the 'private enterprise' model that existed in the United States, something that he claimed nobody supported in any case, with his own preference being in the form of the system that was eventually created (Wilson, 1961: 142-148).

Collins was fully justified in his concerns that hostility to the 'Americanisation' of British broadcasting might well have lead to defeat in his objectives, something that became a real probability in 1953, especially after details were revealed over American television's coverage of the Coronation, which was in some cases interrupted by commercials. It was in response to the criticisms of this coverage that in June 1953 the 'National Television Council' (NTC) was formed under the direction of the Labour MP Christopher Mayhew to prevent commercial interests from entering broadcasting, whilst also retaining the BBC's monopoly position. It would appear

that this group operated primarily on a voluntary basis, as there was no significant financial backing for its activities. However, public support was forthcoming from organisations such as the national newspapers, which relied on advertisements to create the revenue they needed to remain in business, which explained their hostility to commercial television, and from cinema and theatre interests, whose fear that they would suffer from the competition provided by the new medium led them to support the monopoly. Ironically, one of the NTC's chief backers was the Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC), which became one of the original ITV companies, operating under the name of ABC Television (Wilson, 1961: 150-164).

In response to the NTC, the 'Popular Television Association' (PTA) was formed in July 1953 to campaign for commercial television, with Lord Derby appointed as its President. The PTA's origins have been brought into question, with claims made by its supporters at the time that it had no financial or political interests to defend being countered by Lord Woolton's recollections that Conservative Central Office created it as a 'non-party' organisation to challenge the NTC. At a political level, the PTA was confronted with the task of trying to persuade a reluctant Conservative administration of the merits of commercial broadcasting, and to this end a campaign was launched without regard for the costs involved, in which the Association argued that television should be 'set free' at an intellectual and cultural level. Despite the lack of popular support for the PTA, it was still able to convince Conservative MPs in general and the government in particular that commercial television's introduction would not harm them in political terms, even though people were more interested in a second television channel, rather than the basis on which this channel operated (Wilson, 1961: 164-179).

By the autumn of 1953, it had become clear that the debate over commercial television had been decided in favour of its proponents, as it was at this point that plans were announced by the government to provide 'alternative' programmes, with the only way of financing these programmes being through advertising. The main reason given for this policy was to end the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, but of equal significance was the decision to exclude sponsored programmes to appease those critics who were still inside the Conservative ranks, including members of the House of Lords who would have voted against sponsored television, leading to the compromise position outlined in the White Paper of November 1953. The added problem for the government concerning this new broadcasting policy was that of convincing Conservative voters who were hostile to advertising on either radio or television, and who therefore preferred the BBC, to accept these new proposals, and this was achieved through the efforts of Conservative Central Office and the Popular Television Association, which worked closely together to ensure that the conditions were favourable to enable commercial television to begin (Wilson, 1961: 180-185).

When the White Paper finally appeared, it recommended the establishment of a 'second authority' in the form of a public corporation that would own and operate the transmitting stations; but unlike the BBC, it would not be allowed to make its own programmes, which would instead be made by a number of private companies, who would rent the transmitters whilst selling time to the advertisers. As the controlling authority also owned the transmitting facilities, it was felt that the authority's ability to maintain standards would be increased, and having consulted with the advertising agencies, the view was taken that the new system's financial success would not be affected by separating advertisers from programme control. The rejection of sponsorship would ensure that responsibility for all broadcasts would lie with the

companies rather than the advertisers, and control over the amount of broadcasting on the new system would be decided by the Postmaster General, which was the same arrangement as already existed with the BBC. For many observers, the main problem was the new system's total dependence on advertising revenues, something that has continued throughout ITV's history from 1955 to date (Wilson, 1961: 188-189).

There were many reservations about the 1953 White Paper that were held not only by the National Television Council, but also by some members of the Popular Television Association, who were most dissatisfied with what they saw as a broadcasting system that combined both the public and private sectors, and was not the 'free' service that they wanted, which would have been owned and controlled by the private sector only. Despite these concerns, the White Paper's findings were used as the basis for the Television Bill, which was introduced on 4 March 1954, in which the new commercial stations, to be run by the various companies on contract, would provide programmes that had to be mainly 'British', and which would not be offensive to common decency. To ensure that these recommendations would be implemented, there would be a new body called the 'Independent Television Authority' (a name invented by Norman Collins in response to the BBC's Corporation), which would hold its powers by Act of Parliament, as opposed to the BBC, which held its powers by Charter. The Corporation was also the model that the new network was expected to follow with regard to religious and political broadcasting, as well as for a news service, which had to adhere to high standards of accuracy and impartiality.

In advertising terms, both political and religious groups could not advertise directly, with the advertisements themselves not being allowed to take up more than five

minutes in each hour, having to be clearly separated from the programmes, and not being allowed to detract from these programmes. In their selection of advertisements, the programme contractors could not discriminate for or against any particular advertiser, and the Authority would also be required to include in its contracts with the programme companies provisions allowing for advance previews in terms of both scripts and recordings of programmes and advertisements. The main difference between this Bill and the White Paper that preceded it was the provision of an annual grant of £750,000 from public funds to the Authority to reduce any dependence on advertising revenues, together with an authorisation to the Postmaster General (with the Treasury's permission) of a loan to the Authority of up to £2 million, a 'concession' that was attacked by both supporters and opponents of the commercial network (Briggs, 1985: 285-287; Wilson, 1961: 188-200; Sendall, 1982: 31-35).

On 30 July 1954, the Television Act 1954 became law, which meant that the Independent Television Authority (ITA) officially came into being, rather than being discussed in abstract. In all the discussions concerning the establishment of the new Authority, probably the most striking aspect was the similarity between its constitution and that of the BBC, especially in respect of the appointment of its members by the Crown, with the Postmaster General also having the power to dismiss them if such a move was warranted. The similarities between the ITA and the BBC were reinforced even further on an organisational basis in that they were run by a Director-General and a Chairman, and as with the executives who ran the Corporation in the 1920s (including, of course, Lord Reith), it was the Authority's Members and their executives who were allowed to use their discretion as to the pattern of broadcasting that was to be adopted. Given the many problems that the BBC faced over regional broadcasting, it probably came as a surprise to most observers to

discover that the new commercial channel would operate on a regional basis, something that the Act did not mention in any context (Briggs, 1985: 287).

The first position to be filled within the ITA came in early August 1954, with the appointment of Sir Kenneth Clark (later Lord Clark) as its first Chairman, followed by the names of the Authority's other members, and finally by advertisements for both programme contracting companies and the Authority's first officers. Of all the appointments that had to be made, the most urgent and important was that of Director-General, a position that was eventually claimed by the Australian-born Sir Robert Fraser, who started with the ITA on 1 October 1954. Fraser brought with him the experiences he had acquired at the Central Office of Information, where he had been the Director-General since 1946, together with his wartime work at the Ministry of Information, where he was a colleague of Clark, who appointed him to the ITA. Fraser's assistant (or Deputy Director-General) was Bernard Sendall, who started in his position in 1955, and as with his boss, Sendall made his name and reputation as Principal Private Secretary to the Minister of Information from 1941 to 1945, where he had been at the heart of the Ministry's discussions over the future of broadcasting (Briggs, 1979: 962-966).

Fraser's lasting contribution in his position as one of the ITA's 'founding fathers' was to create the 'network of regions' that provided a framework for Independent Television (ITV) to broadcast from the mid-1950s onwards. This approach to broadcasting can be traced back to the Television Act 1954, in which the Authority was required to make every effort to ensure that adequate competition existed to supply programmes between a number of programme contractors. The question of competition was one that the ITA was well aware of, as its first Annual Report stated

that its decisions on this matter would establish the ground rules for the new television system in the future. However, the Authority realised that this form of competition could only operate properly when all viewers had a choice of at least two programmes (and therefore two stations) covering each area, something that was not possible initially given that only two frequencies were given to it, which meant that the Authority could only provide 'adequate competition' with just one station in each area (Sendall, 1982: 63). This therefore meant that the 'external' competition that existed between ITV and the BBC would have been accompanied by an element of 'internal' competition between the ITV companies themselves, which failed to develop.

Although Fraser made his reputation as someone with strong socialist convictions, he fully embraced the arguments in favour of competition that were advanced by many leading Conservative politicians of the day, together with his rejection of monopolies in general, which supporters of commercial television campaigned for in their efforts to establish the new service. Fraser was not content to leave his anti-monopoly opinions at that, however, as in association with the rest of the ITA, he devised a philosophy on how the means of communication should be organised in a free and democratic society. In 1955, the Authority felt that problems were beginning to emerge as a result of the over-concentration of the control, ownership and direction of the means of communication, something that reached extreme levels in the case of the BBC, which was the only legal broadcasting agency, as well as being nationalised and an instrument of the State. In contrast to this, the Authority was keen to allow the principles of dispersion and pluralisation to be developed as far as ITV's economy would allow, and also stressed its belief in the value of the distinctiveness of the various regional communities that comprised the United Kingdom as a whole (Windlesham, 1980: 55-56).

This determination on the ITA's part to make ITV as unlike the BBC as possible, which included the adoption of a regional perspective to British broadcasting that had not previously existed, led to a chain of events in which theories of decentralisation were put into practice. Once again, the chief proponent of this policy was Fraser himself, with his strongest influences in this matter coming from overseas developments within television, including the United States with its three main networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC), and his native Australia, which was also starting its own three-programme system. Under Fraser's plan, there would be around fifty separate ITV companies allowing for direct competition between two ITV stations and two ITV networks over the majority of the country, so ensuring a system of free competition under public control. With an original allocation of just two channels in Band III (which was of inferior quality to Band I, which was owned by the BBC, leading to reception problems as a result), the Authority decided in October 1954 to have three stations based in London, the Midlands, and the North, to cover about 60 per cent of the population. The problems that arose here were those of building and equipping the stations by the earliest possible date, and to obtain from the Post Office the radio and cable links to join the stations together and enable them to operate as a network, and how to share this service between the competing contractors (Sendall, 1982: 64).

One proposal that was seriously discussed at this time was that of allocating a single networked programme between three contractors on either a 'horizontal' basis, with programmes divided into blocks of time, so one company would be producing morning programmes, another early evening news programmes, and a third the main entertainment shows, with all these programmes being broadcast from all stations; or

on a 'vertical' basis, with the dividing lines running not across from day to day, but downwards dividing one day from another, so there would be the prospect of both weekday and weekend companies sharing the same station. The Authority's decision was to operate a 'competitive optional network' for London, the Midlands, and the North, with any divisions being vertical only to allow for an element of competition to be introduced into the system, so the companies would compete with each other both for advertising revenues and to get their programmes on the network. In the absence of two companies providing 'simultaneous' choice in programming, this was the only way that genuine competition could be created (Sendall, 1982: 65).

Although this arrangement introduced the competition between the contractors required by the Television Act, the more significant element was the establishment of a framework around which new companies based in new areas could easily fit, and within which there was the opportunity to serve local 'tastes and outlook' in accordance with the Act, with Fraser claiming that this system would be of benefit to the stations operating in the future. In his memorandum to Clark written in September 1954, Fraser argued for this system to be vertical in control, but largely horizontal in the movement of programmes, with the introduction of a network connection technically capable of broadcasting programmes from any one region to the others. This would mean in practice that London would be in full competition with the Midlands to sell programmes to the North, the Midlands with the North in selling to London, and London and the North selling to the Midlands. In addition, each producer company would secure a proportion of its own original programmes from sub-contractors, leading to competition at another level in that the sub-contractors would compete with each other, and the main contractors would compete

with each other for the best programmes made by the sub-contractors (Sendall, 1982: 65-66).

Fraser's insistence on establishing a 'federal' system for ITV to be run on a 'plural, co-operative, and internally competitive' basis, led him to the conclusion that London was far too large and powerful for any single contractor to be given a full weekly franchise, which would therefore dominate the network and make a complete nonsense of any ideas of decentralisation in general. This meant that London would be served by two contractors, one broadcasting on weekdays (Monday to Friday), and the other at the weekend, and with London's two contractors being matched by two equally important provincial contractors, this also meant that the Midlands and the North would be divided into a 5:2 system. It was Fraser who was further responsible for creating the ITV regions themselves by dividing Britain into thirteen distinct territories, which became accepted as self-contained markets by both manufacturers and the advertising agencies. It was clearly essential that the advertisers accepted the regional plan, especially given the commercial channel's reliance on advertising revenues as a source of income (Thomas, 1977: 151).

The ITA's problem of introducing competition into a single television channel was put to the test when it came to selecting the four contractors who would be responsible for the six franchises on offer (two each in London, the Midlands, and the North). From the advertisements in the newspapers on 25 August 1954 inviting applications from all interested parties, a total of twenty-five groups replied, with the interviews starting in late September and ending on 20 October. At these interviews, the various groups in question were asked not only about the programmes they intended to make, but also on the methods of finance, an area that could not be

predicted with any certainty either by the applicants, many of whom were unsure about having enough money to cover their costs, or by the Authority, which calculated that the contractors would need to invest up to £3 million, and would only break even in the third year after incurring losses in the first two years. Once this process had been completed, only five groups remained with the necessary expertise, facilities, and above all sufficient finances, and the Authority chose four of these when the contracts were allocated on 26 October 1954 (Briggs, 1979: 966-968; Sendall, 1982: 68; Thomas, 1977: 151-152).

The first of these contracts was that for London on weekdays, which was awarded to a consortium consisting of the Broadcast Relay Service company (which became Rediffusion) and Associated Newspapers, publishers of the *Daily Mail*, with this new company adopting the name of 'Associated-Rediffusion'. Although the intention of the ITV system was to attempt to check London's domination as far as possible, it was understood that whoever was awarded the London weekday contract would enjoy a privileged position within the system (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001), and with Rediffusion belonging to the British Electric Traction (BET) group, this company enjoyed a high level of financial stability. The second contract was the Northern weekday contract, which was awarded to the Granada cinema and entertainment empire run by the Bernstein brothers, Sidney and Cyril. It was the Bernsteins' desire not to see commercial television become the preserve of the large financial institutions, together with the commitment that the brothers were willing to make to northern England in general, and to Manchester in particular (where they would make their base), which enabled them to succeed with their bid, and their television division, which was officially known as 'Granada (TV Network) Ltd', is the only one

of the original ITV network companies to have survived to the present (Briggs, 1979: 968-969; Sendall, 1982: 68-73; Thomas, 1977: 152-153).

Whilst the London and Northern weekday contracts were dealt with in a satisfactory manner, the same could not be said for the remaining two contracts, both of which comprised ITV's plan for the Midlands. The first of these concerned the only franchise to operate for seven days a week, that of London at the weekend and the Midlands on weekdays, which was originally offered to the Associated Broadcasting Development Company (ABDC) under Norman Collins, Sir Robert Renwick, and C.O. Stanley. Unfortunately, this group's official application failed to disclose their financial backers in advance of accepting the offer of a contract in principle, and in addition it came under renewed attack from a consortium called the Incorporated Television Company (ITC), consisting of figures such as the theatre impresario Prince Littler, the General Manager of Moss Empires Limited, Val Parnell, who owned the London Palladium theatre, and especially Lew Grade, whose talent agency was the leader in its field, with financial backing from the merchant bankers Warburgs. When Collins found himself unable to meet his financial commitments, he was forced to accept a merger between the ABDC and the ITC, with the new company being announced on 11 March 1955 originally known as the Associated Broadcasting Company Limited (ABC), before being required to change its name to Associated Television Limited (ATV), under which name it operated until the early 1980s⁴ (Briggs, 1979: 969-972; Sendall, 1982: 73-79; Thomas, 1977: 153).

⁴ Although the ABDC originally wanted to broadcast seven days a week to London only for financial reasons, the ITA was successful in its efforts to persuade it to accept the contract for London at the weekends and the Midlands on weekdays, which was the only seven-day franchise on offer (Sendall, 1982: 74).

The last of the original ITV contracts was for the Midlands and North at weekends, which was originally offered to the 'Kemsley-Winnick' group, an unlikely alliance between the proprietor of the *Sunday Times*, Lord Kemsley, and Maurice Winnick, a leading bandleader who had acquired the rights to American quiz programmes, with the third partner in this venture being the head of Great Universal Stores (GUS), Sir Isaac Wolfson. In early 1955, Wolfson decided to leave this group, followed shortly afterwards by Kemsley, which meant that Winnick was completely isolated and unable to proceed any further, leading to the ITA's decision to re-advertise this contract in July 1955. With ITV due to go on air in London in the autumn of 1955, Fraser had to act as quickly as possible, and to this end he asked the Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC) to inherit the contract. This company agreed to Fraser's suggestion, and formed a subsidiary company under the name of ABC Television, with this application accepted by the Authority on 21 September 1955, the day before ITV's official opening in London (Briggs, 1979: 968-973; Sendall, 1982: 73-84; Thomas, 1977: 152-155).

With all the contract details having finally been resolved, it was left to the companies involved to begin broadcasting to their various regions as soon as possible, which would therefore result in Fraser's theories being put into practice. On Thursday 22 September 1955, viewers in London saw the first programmes on the new ITV service, which were jointly produced by the two companies serving the capital, Associated-Rediffusion and the Associated Broadcasting Company under its original name of ABC (before it was forced to change to ATV when the original ABC, Associated British Cinemas, threatened legal action). In addition to the programmes made by the two London franchise holders, there was a news bulletin provided by Independent Television News (ITN), a company formed by the four main

ITV contractors (Associated-Rediffusion, ATV, ABC, and Granada) to provide news on a national basis, this being the only departure from the original concept that dominated the commercial channel's thinking. Once the opening night had been successfully negotiated, the split between weekday and weekend programming came into force, with Associated-Rediffusion broadcasting from Monday to Friday, and ATV taking over on Saturday and Sunday (Sendall, 1982: 85-87, 116-119, 127-130; Thomas, 1977: 157).

(iii) The early years of ITV: 1956-68

Having established ITV in London, the next step was to launch commercial television in both the Midlands and the North, a goal that was successfully achieved in 1956. Although the original plan for ITV in the Midlands was for the service to start broadcasting by the end of 1955, this did not occur as a result of the failure of talks with the BBC over the use of the masts at the Sutton Coldfield station near Birmingham. The ITA therefore had no choice but to build its own transmitter, which it did at a site at Lichfield in Staffordshire, with the service area closely matching the BBC's station at Sutton Coldfield. Whilst the Midlands was able to be covered by one transmitter, in the North a more complicated situation emerged when it became evident that it would take too long to build one station that could cover the whole region, so it was decided to divide the region into two for the purposes of reception. Under this arrangement, the western side of the Pennines, including Lancashire and Cheshire, was served by a station at Winter Hill near Bolton, and the Yorkshire station was situated at Emley Moor near Huddersfield, with the former opening in the spring of 1956, and the latter in the autumn of that year (Sendall, 1982: 92-93).

When the ITA opened the Lichfield station on half power in November 1955, ATV and ABC were left with the task of establishing ITV in the Midlands, as well as running the network as a whole at the weekend. This meant that the Managing Directors of both companies, Howard Thomas for ABC and Val Parnell for ATV, had to accept that, whilst they were competing both in terms of programmes and advertising revenues within their region, they had to co-operate as closely as possible to ensure that this federal system of broadcasting would be seen to be successful. To this end, Parnell and Thomas agreed to work together in Birmingham, and share the same studios in accordance with the regional split in which ATV broadcast on weekdays (five days), and ABC at weekends (two days), which led them to start a joint company by the name of Alpha Television for the purpose of operating these studios. With no time available to find a new studio complex, the search was on to find a building that was suitable for television studios, with the site that was chosen being a cinema (the Astoria in Aston), which was originally the New Theatre at Aston Cross. In the space of three months, the Aston studio had been converted in time for ITV's opening night in the Midlands on 17 February 1956, with ATV and ABC contributing to the programmes in a similar style to that which had occurred in London the year before (Sendall, 1982: 119-120; Thomas, 1977: 156-159).

The last of the original ITV regions to start broadcasting was the North, which was divided into two 'halves' (Lancashire and Yorkshire) due to the transmitter problems mentioned above. The relationship between ABC and Granada was not as close as that between ABC and ATV, probably due to Granada's status as a weekday company only, with ABC taking over at weekends. It should also be noted that Granada's decision to build a new television centre in Manchester meant that ABC found itself with no alternative but to 'go it alone', and as in Birmingham, it decided to convert a

cinema (the Capitol at Didsbury) into television studios, which was the base used for ABC's drama productions. The first phase of ITV's network of regions came to an end with the opening of the Lancashire station on 3 May 1956, and its Yorkshire counterpart on 3 November of that year, so the ITA had succeeded in its goal of ensuring that the core of the network was 'up and running', and could therefore extend the service to the rest of the country (Sendall, 1982: 121-123; Thomas, 1977: 154, 161-162).

Having made tremendous efforts to begin broadcasting to their various regions, the four ITV network companies were confronted with the related problems of trying to attract audiences away from the BBC's radio and television services to watch the commercial channel instead, and persuading advertisers of the benefits that would emerge if they were to display their products both between different programmes and within the same programme. Despite the vast sums of money spent on programmes at this time, by the end of ITV's first year (in the autumn of 1956), the total audience in London, the Midlands, and the North was 1.5 million homes and 25 per cent of available television viewers. For the advertisers, there was a choice between concentrating on their traditional outlets of newspapers and magazines, or putting their trust in television in the hope that there would be financial rewards in the long run. It therefore came as no surprise to discover that many advertisers decided to wait until the ITV companies had delivered enough viewers before committing themselves to television advertising, a decision that was doubtless influenced by the high rates involved, which meant that such an undertaking was not a viable proposition to many companies who wanted to display their wares on commercial television. The seasonal nature of advertising as a business was yet another significant factor, with revenues at a low point in January, before reaching a peak in the spring, and then falling back in

the summer, so when television advertising did not enjoy an improvement in its fortunes in the spring of 1956, concern for ITV's short-term future became inevitable (Thomas, 1977: 165-166).

The problems concerning advertising were mainly felt by ITV's two London companies, Associated-Rediffusion and ATV, with both parties being required to bear the total costs of the programmes until early 1956, as no network income was available whilst the service was confined to the capital. Of the two London contractors, Rediffusion was in the worst position as it held the weekday franchise and did not have ATV's advantage of broadcasting to the Midlands as well as London, which meant that it quickly incurred substantial losses running into millions of pounds. As the London weekday franchise consisted of an alliance of two distinct groups, British Electric Traction (including Rediffusion) on one hand and Associated Newspapers on the other, both parties took different approaches towards the problems they faced in that, whereas the BET/Rediffusion faction was determined to carry on at all costs, Associated Newspapers under Lord Rothermere became disheartened with the whole situation, and decided to sell out to Rediffusion in the autumn of 1956. Rediffusion was also involved in a deal with Granada in which the latter company would receive the financial assistance it needed from the London company, in exchange for Rediffusion receiving a share of net income received from advertising in the North, with this transaction occurring in the summer of 1956 (Sendall, 1982: 183-189, 193-200; Thomas, 1977: 166-167, 169-170).

In the case of ATV, it was very much history repeating itself in that the company continued to suffer from a range of financial problems in a similar way to the difficulties encountered by Norman Collins's ABDC group when it was required to

merge with the ITC organisation to form ATV in 1955. On this occasion, a combination of broadcasting to London at weekends only, and ensuring that the proper finances were in place to enable a prompt start in the Midlands, resulted in ATV running out of money altogether, with the real probability that the company would be forced out of business if no new finances were forthcoming. Help was at hand, however, when in April 1956 the *Daily Mirror* (the only national newspaper to publicly support the concept of commercial television in the early 1950s) under its Chairman, Cecil King (Lord Rothermere's cousin) announced that it was ready to make a deal to buy shares in ATV, something the ITA was prepared to accept provided that the newspaper did not own more than 25 per cent of the shares and no more than three directors on ATV's board, with the deal being completed at the end of May 1956 (Sendall, 1982: 189-192).

Given the above problems suffered by the network companies, they were delighted when plans were announced for the first of ITV's 'regional' stations to serve central Scotland, this being Scottish Television under the Canadian Roy Thomson. By the time this new company started broadcasting in the autumn of 1957, a dramatic transformation had occurred in the commercial channel's fortunes when the advertising agencies became aware of television's impact, with local and national campaigns proving that television advertising was an effective way to sell a wide range of goods and products. For ITV in general, the 'boom' was under way, accompanied as it was by the emergence of the large profits with which the companies were associated, leading to Thomson's assertion that the ITV franchises represented 'a licence to print money' (Thomas, 1977: 167-169).

With ITV's finances on an even keel, it was possible to complete the whole of the network from 1958 to 1962, with the introduction of a collection of companies who were responsible for their own regions and were therefore known as the 'regional' companies, as opposed to the four original 'network' companies who maintained their control over the network as a whole, especially with regard to the programmes that these companies made, and which were shown on a national basis. Unlike the BBC's regional system, these companies, which broadcast exclusively to their regions seven days a week, were based in a variety of locations around the country, including Southern Television, which covered south and south-east England, Tyne Tees Television serving north-east England, and Anglia Television, which broadcast to East Anglia and eastern England. In addition, Scotland was allocated two stations (Scottish and Grampian), Wales originally had two stations in TWW (Television, Wales and the West) and WWN (Wales [West and North] Television), before the latter company went bankrupt and ceased broadcasting, to be taken over by the former, Ulster Television served Northern Ireland, Border Television covered the English-Scottish border, and even the Channel Islands got in on the act with Channel Television (Sendall, 1983: 2).

ITV's fortunes continued to prosper until 1962, when the publication of the *Pilkington Report* cast grave doubts over the commercial channel's general performance and future prospects. Probably the most controversial recommendation to be made by Pilkington concerned the relationship between the ITA and the franchise companies, in which changes were to be made to ITV's constitution and organisation, with the Authority required to sell advertising time and plan programming, and the programme companies to produce and sell to the Authority items to be included in the programmes planned by the Authority (Briggs, 1995: 294).

This recommendation was made as a result of criticisms from various groups that the ITA had not met its public duties and responsibilities, whilst also not being in effective control of the ITV network by allowing the companies to do whatever they wanted in the knowledge that no action would be taken against them. It therefore followed that the Authority had no control over either the programmes or the advertisements that were shown, leading to the conclusion that it did not accept its own understanding of the 'purposes of broadcasting', or if it did, its failure to control the companies showed that these purposes could not be achieved.

In addition, the ITA's objective of creating a plural and decentralised organisational structure within which ITV was supposed to operate was felt by Pilkington not to have produced a service that contained the variety and diversity of character and attitude that was desired. The Authority was also forced to concede that the networking structure that had developed had failed to bring about a free trade among the contractors in buying and selling programmes, leading to the adequate competition in programme supply required by the Television Act 1954, and the system of affiliations between the major network and minor regional companies did not meet the requirement for competition between different companies who were independent of each other in respect of both finance and control. Although the Pilkington Committee accepted that a networking plan of some nature was inevitable in a plural broadcasting system, mainly because no one programme contractor would have the necessary resources to provide a full service, but also due to the requirement that the best programmes should be made available to everyone regardless of where they originated from, the networking system operated by the Authority did not provide the necessary ITA control, with the network companies (also known as the 'Big Four') manipulating the system to their advantage.

The Committee therefore took the view that the shortcomings of the ITV system in general was as a direct consequence of its overall structure, with no real improvement likely until radical changes had occurred in the relationship between the ITA and the companies. With the Authority's role being limited to regulatory matters only compared to the creative and planning functions performed by the companies, the most important part of the whole ITV system became the Authority's initial assessments and appointments of the contractors. The Authority would have had to have companies who were capable of providing good programmes, whilst trying to earn enough money from the sale of advertising time to pay for both the costs of the programmes, and to deliver reasonable dividends to their shareholders. In this system, it was felt that the power to terminate contracts due to unsatisfactory performance would not be of any practical benefit as it was unlikely to be used.

Having examined the evidence that had been presented to it from a variety of sources, the Committee noted that there was a perception that the ITA was not in effective control of the system as a whole, leading to a situation in which the Authority regarded the companies as part of a joint partnership pursuing the same goals, when it should have assumed a position of moral and legal domination over the companies instead, with the Authority employing the companies as its agents as part of a general role as guardian of the public interest. However, such an ideal could not have been created within the existing structure by increasing the Authority's powers when the companies were faced with the task of reconciling the conflicting targets of realising the purposes of broadcasting with ensuring their success as commercial enterprises. This led to the conclusion that, faced with a choice between providing an effective broadcasting service and the protection or maximisation of profits, the

companies would choose the latter option, and even if the Authority took control of programme planning, this would still be insufficient if the companies continued to sell advertising time. The Authority would therefore only achieve real and effective power in accordance with its public responsibilities if it also assumed control of advertising, which lead to the recommendation that the Authority should not only sell advertising time and plan the overall nature and content of the programme schedules and advertisements to be shown, but also receive from the companies the items to be included in the programmes concerned, with any surpluses earned by the system being received by the Authority, which would in turn pay them to the Exchequer.

As a result of these 'organic' changes, an ITV company's success would depend on its ability to produce 'good programmes', or those that coincided with the Authority's commitment to broadcasting, in contrast with the position that existed in reality, whereby only the Authority and the producers employed by the companies had any interest in good programmes, with the administrative staffs in the companies still trying to reconcile the conflicting goals of creative and commercial success, a problem that the ITA's administrators would not face as they had no commercial motivation. The Committee was convinced that advertising revenue would continue to grow under the new system, to the extent that it would be eventually be possible to support a second ITV service, which would not pose any threat to the survival of the smaller regional companies. There would also be no problems if the Authority requested more information about the programme companies' costs, or if it wanted to conduct any intensive technical and audience research that had occurred at this time, and finally the nature and composition of the companies would not be so important following the changes in the relationship between the companies and the Authority (Sendall, 1983: 120-123). The other matter in which the ITA was criticised by

Pilkington concerned the 'option agreement' signed between the Authority and the four network companies in the mid-1950s, which stated that, in the event of the opening of a second ITV station in either London, the Midlands, or the North, the company holding a franchise for part of the week in any of these regions would be given first refusal for a seven-day contract for the region. The Committee argued that the Authority should not have given its blessing to this agreement in any way, and suggested that it should not be renewed after July 1964, when it was due to end⁵ (Sendall, 1983: 131-132).

The proposals contained within the *Pilkington Report* led to a great deal of discussion from many groups, including the ITA itself, but when the Report was discussed in Parliament, its more radical aspects were rejected, especially with regard to the relationship between the Authority and the ITV companies. In the White Paper of 1962, it was recommended that the four network companies should not be allowed to dominate the system as a whole, with the ITA given increased powers and responsibilities to allow it to control ITV's affairs as a result. The Authority was also given responsibility for ensuring that the service had an appropriate level of balance, content, and quality, with the companies continuing to be in charge of both programme production and sale of advertising time. Shortly after this White Paper, the Television Bill was introduced in December 1962, in which ITV was for the first time to be equated with the BBC in providing information, education, and entertainment in a public service context, with the programmes to be of high standards and fully balanced in their subject matter. In addition, contracts between the companies and the Authority were to include provisions stating its reserve power to ensure that one company's programmes would be shown by other companies at the

⁵ See Chapter Five (pp. 169-170) for further details on the *Pilkington Report*.

Authority's discretion, with the financial arrangements for supplying these programmes to be approved by the Authority; and it could also regulate the timing, placing, and amounts of advertisements, with bans placed on both advertising magazines and subliminal advertising. Finally, details were given regarding the 'levy' on profits collected by the Authority for the Exchequer, with the formulas for working out the levy settled by the Postmaster General after consulting with the Treasury and the Authority, and the latter having to include them in its contracts with the companies (Sendall, 1983: 163-168). It was on this basis that the second Television Bill was passed in 1963.

The next significant event in ITV's history began in 1966, when the ITA started a new round of contract awards on the basis of a single ITV service. The first decision to be made was to divide the North into two separate entities, with Granada having to accept a change in its broadcasting pattern, from covering the whole of the North on weekdays only, to serving the north-west only for seven days a week, and a new company to be formed to broadcast to Yorkshire only, also for seven days a week, with this company adopting the name of 'Yorkshire Television', which became the fifth of the main ITV 'network' companies. This was followed by the announcement of the future plans for London and the Midlands, with the latter region given a full seven-day contract, and London divided into a 'weekday' contract from Monday to Friday evening, and a 'weekend' contract from 7.00 pm on Friday evening until Sunday night. In the Midlands, ATV was awarded the seven-day contract, which meant that it was required to relinquish its licence to broadcast to London at weekends; whereas in London, the weekend contract was awarded to a consortium consisting of David Frost amongst others, with this company known as 'London Weekend Television', whilst the London weekday contract was given to 'Thames

Television', the result of a 'merger' between Rediffusion (the company that had been broadcasting to the capital on weekdays) and ABC (which had originally wanted the London weekend franchise to replace the old Midlands and North weekend franchise), with ABC to be the senior partner in this arrangement. The only change to occur with regard to the regional companies came when Television Wales and West (TWW) lost its licence to broadcast to Wales and western England, to be replaced by Harlech Television (later known as HTV), and all these new companies started broadcasting in the summer of 1968 (Sendall, 1983: 333-366).

(iv) ITV in the modern era: 1970 to date

In the early 1970s the ITA underwent significant changes, with the first of these being Sir Robert Fraser's retirement as the Authority's Director-General in October 1970, to be succeeded by Brian Young (who became Sir Brian in 1976), who held this position until his own retirement in November 1982. When British-based commercial radio finally became a reality as a result of the Sound Broadcasting Act 1972, the Authority was obliged to change its name from the Independent Television Authority (as it had been known since July 1954) to the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), although the Authority had reservations over taking control of the new commercial radio system (officially known as Independent Local Radio), which was seen as turning attention away from the main business of television. The Authority further demonstrated its commitment to the ITV regions by employing ten National and Regional Officers to cover the fourteen areas, including one in Birmingham, with their task being to observe and consult with the various regional contractors. In addition, the General Advisory Council (GAC) was an advisory body that involved specialist representatives and members of the public in the Authority's decision-making procedures, whilst there were various committees established to investigate

areas such as advertising, education, religion, and appeals for charity (Potter, 1989: 84-96).

The mid-1970s was dominated by the work of the Annan Committee, which was established under Lord Annan to consider the future of broadcasting in a similar way to the Pilkington Committee in the early 1960s. When the *Annan Report* was published in March 1977, the findings were unfavourable for ITV in general, especially with regard to the network not being given the new fourth channel (known as ITV 2) that would have allowed it to compete with the BBC on level terms, along with the proposal that the IBA would have no responsibilities for either local radio or the development of cable and satellite television, and that it should be renamed the 'Regional Television Authority', leaving the BBC as Britain's only national broadcasting organisation (Potter, 1989: 243-260). Whilst there was some support for the fourth channel to be run by an 'Open Broadcasting Authority' (OBA), featuring Open University programmes and projects from independent producers amongst others, the IBA's revised plans as set out in *The Fourth Channel: The Authority's Proposals* saw the Authority distance itself from running the channel, which as a result of the Broadcasting Bill of November 1980 became the Channel Four Television Company (and S4C in Wales), with Channel Four finally coming on air in November 1982 (Potter, 1989: 279-305).

It was at the end of 1980 that the ITV franchises were awarded again, and whilst there was relatively little change regarding the regions as a whole, the most controversy surrounded the ITV Midlands contract, which had been held by the incumbent ATV from 1956 on a weekday basis, and from 1968 on a full-time basis. Most of the complaints about ATV concerned the company's commitment to the

region in general, and to both the East and West Midlands in particular, and the most common criticism was that the regional dimension was relegated to a secondary role, with ATV choosing to develop its national and international interests instead, which was exactly the same charge that had previously been levelled against the BBC. As a result of this dissatisfaction, two groups came forward to challenge ATV for the ITV Midlands franchise in the form of Mercia Television and Midlands Television Limited (MTV), and both these groups wanted to increase the regional profile from the level that had previously existed. In the event, ATV was allowed to retain its franchise to broadcast to the Midlands, but only on condition that its parent company ACC (Associated Communications Company) held no more than 51 per cent of the shares in the new company, which had to be renamed 'Central Independent Television' or Central for short.⁶ The other franchise changes occurred in the south and south-west, with Southern and Westward being replaced by TVS (Television South) and TSW (Television South-West) respectively (Potter, 1990: 336-361).

Probably the most controversial piece of legislation to have been associated with British broadcasting was the Broadcasting Act 1990, an attempt by the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher to impose the disciplines of the 'free market' on broadcasting in general, and the ITV system in particular. The first casualty of this Act was the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), which was to be replaced by the Independent Television Commission (ITC), which would not possess the statutory powers that the IBA enjoyed, and would exercise a 'lighter touch' in its dealings with the ITV companies. With regard to the franchises to be awarded in the future, the system that would be adopted would be that of 'competitive tender', in which the licences would be offered to the highest bidder, subject to these bids passing a

⁶ See Chapter Three (pp.120-125) for further details.

‘quality threshold’ test to ensure that the standards that had applied in the past would also be relevant in the future (Davidson, 1992: 16-21).

In the most recent franchise awards held in 1991 (with the contracts starting at the beginning of 1993), the only one of the network companies not to have its licence renewed was the most important of all in Thames Television, who lost control of the London weekday contract which it had held since 1968 to Carlton Television, which had attempted to obtain this franchise in the mid-1980s, but had succeeded, at least in part, by making a bid that was substantially higher than that of Thames’s offer (Carlton bid £43 million for this licence, with Thames only bidding £32 million). Once again, there were changes in the south and south-west, where TVS and TSW were replaced by Meridian and Westcountry respectively, and the breakfast television contract passed from TV-AM to GMTV. In the Midlands, however, Central faced no opposition in renewing its franchise, and one reason for this probably concerned its decision to concentrate much of its efforts in developing an effective broadcasting plan within the region, which was initially divided into Central West (based in Birmingham) and Central East from Nottingham, with a third ‘sub-region’ being created in the late 1980s with the introduction of Central South, based at Abingdon near Oxford (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 420-457).

By the end of 1993, the regional basis on which ITV had originally been created, and which had been dominant since the mid-1950s, was finally giving way to a new system based on patterns of ownership of the various ITV companies around the country. The first step in this process came in November 1993 when Carlton, under its owner Michael Green, added to his 20 per cent stake in Central by acquiring a further 19 per cent of the company to take effective control, a move that resulted in

the ITV Midlands franchise being taken over by the company who held the London weekday contract, and Central becoming the Midlands branch of an expanding Carlton empire, which went on to acquire Westcountry (ITV's south-west contractor) in 1997. Carlton's strategy was to be adopted by other companies within the ITV network, most notably Granada, under its Chief Executive, Gerry Robinson, who not only bought LWT (London Weekend Television) to obtain the London weekend contract, but also acquired Yorkshire Television after the latter company had taken control of Tyne Tees television in the north-east. The third of these 'conglomerates' was the MAI group owned by Lord Hollick, which controlled the holder of the licence for the south and south-east, Meridian, and which expanded its media interests by taking over not only both Anglia Television and HTV (formerly Harlech Television), but also acquiring United Newspapers (publishers of the *Daily Express*), with the group as a whole being renamed United News and Media (or United for short). Finally, Scottish Television acquired Grampian, leading to the creation of a Scottish national broadcaster calling itself the Scottish Media Group, which some observers argued would attempt to break away from the rest of the ITV network (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 477-478). From the mid-to late 1990s, this 'Big Four' (Carlton, Granada, Scottish, and United) asserted their domination over ITV in general, with only the smallest (and least profitable) franchises in Border, Channel, and Ulster, remaining outside the new system.

This concentration of power by the main ITV companies led to criticisms from many observers that the regional element to the channel was being seriously undermined, and matters reached a head in this matter when in late 1998 ITV's Chief Executive, Richard Eyre, announced that ITN's long-running news programme, *News At Ten*, was to be replaced by two new news bulletins, with the main news at 6.30 pm,

and a late night bulletin at 11.00 pm. When this change occurred in March 1999, many of the regional news programmes that had been shown at 6.30 pm had to make way for the new main evening news, a move that was widely regarded as having detrimental effects on all the various regional news programmes around the country, with people preferring to watch the national news instead.⁷ In September 1999, Carlton decided to dispense with the Central and Westcountry brand names in favour of the Carlton name itself, so ending the requirement that names such as Central had to be maintained as a 'separate broadcaster' to comply with the terms of the ITC licence (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 478). As a result of the Carlton name being adopted by ITV in the Midlands, Central has been relegated to a role in which it is currently used in the names of programmes for the region only, such as *Central News* and the Friday night discussion programme *Central Weekend* (Interview with Ian Squires, 2002). The most recent developments within the ITV system as a whole have witnessed an even greater concentration of ownership of the licences, especially following United's decision to sell its media interests in 2000, including its ITV franchises of Anglia, HTV, and Meridian. Although the government prevented Carlton taking over United's licences, it allowed Granada to take them over instead, on the condition that Granada would have to dispose of HTV, which was bought by Carlton. This led to a situation regarding the ownership of the ITV licences whereby Carlton owned Central, HTV, and Westcountry, in addition to its London weekday licence; Granada, in addition to the north-west, owned Anglia, LWT, Meridian, Tyne Tees, Yorkshire, and most recently Border, which it bought in 2001 from the Capital Radio group; the Scottish Media Group (SMG) retained control of both Scottish and Grampian; and with Border being the last of the small ITV companies on the British

⁷ See Chapter Six (pp. 227-228) for further details.

mainland before its takeover, the only 'independent' ITV companies to survive were Ulster Television (UTV) in Northern Ireland, and Channel Television, which was bought at the end of 2001 by the Illiffe Media Group (ITC, 2001: 41; *Broadcast*, 21 December 2001: 3). In 2002, Carlton and Granada announced their decision to merge their television interests into one company, to be known as 'ITV plc' (*Broadcast*, 18 October 2002: 2-3), and this deal was confirmed in 2003, although it was interpreted in some quarters as being a takeover of Carlton by Granada, in that most of the senior positions in the merged company were taken by former Granada executives (*Broadcast*, 10 October 2003). This suspicion was further confirmed by Michael Green's departure from the merged company as its Chairman due to investor demands, leaving Granada's Charles Allen as Chief Executive in charge of the daily running of the ITV channel (*Broadcast*, 24 October 2003).

(v) Conclusion

The concept of regional broadcasting benefited significantly from the efforts made by all the ITV companies to promote their regions in the twentieth century, something that the BBC was unable to do, and much of the credit for this success can be attributed to the work of the ITA's first Director-General, Sir Robert Fraser, who had the original idea to divide the country into a number of self-contained units that were locally based and independent of each other. The similarities between Fraser's network of regions and Peter Eckersley's vision of 'federal' BBC stations that would not only be free from London's control, but would also be autonomous of each other, are striking, along with Eckersley's assertion that regional broadcasting should promote local customs and talent, with real federalisation seeking to preserve different local characteristics without letting them clash with a sense of being part of a wider

community, and London's domination being challenged as a result (Eckersley, 1941: 179-185).

Although there can be no doubt that Fraser succeeded in giving ITV a plural and decentralised structure, he failed in his goal of creating a system of 'internal competition', with two separate ITV stations covering each region. This meant that the only competition that did exist within British television from the 1950s to the 1980s was of an 'external' nature between ITV and the BBC, but both organisations decided that their interests would be best served if they co-operated with rather than competed against each other. This led to the emergence of the 'duopoly' model, which was accepted by the majority of the British people, but which would not have found favour with figures such as Norman Collins, who campaigned for commercial television in the early 1950s. The main drawback of the ITV system was that its reliance on the regions meant that its overall costs were much higher than would have been the case if it had been organised on a national basis, or on similar lines to the BBC (Potter, 1989: 270). When the Broadcasting Act 1990 gave the ITV companies a position of power that they had not enjoyed since the network started, prior to the *Pilkington Report* of the early 1960s, it became inevitable that the main players, such as Carlton and Granada, would use the system to their own advantage. This has resulted in an approach to broadcasting that is much more 'national' in its character than ever before, and one that Fraser himself would probably not have accepted or even recognised.

CHAPTER THREE: 'THE VIEW FROM THE MIDLANDS: THE HISTORY OF ITV IN THE MIDLANDS, 1956-2000

(i) Introduction

Having already discussed the history of regional broadcasting in general terms as a result of assessing both the BBC's role in creating a regional system for radio in the 1930s, which was further developed for television in the 1950s and complemented its national services, and the introduction of ITV in the 1950s on the basis of Fraser's 'network of regions', it is now necessary to observe the ITV system in practice through a detailed review of the commercial channel's history in the Midlands. In addition to providing full details on the various companies that have broadcast to the region from 1956 to date, there will also be reviews of the franchise awards which have played a crucial role in determining ITV's approach towards the Midlands, the criticisms surrounding the channel from members of the public in general and the local media in particular, and the steps that were taken by the companies leading to ITV in the Midlands moving from a station based in Birmingham with the intention of attempting to cover the whole of the region, to the introduction of the 'sub-regions' (including the East and West Midlands) from the late 1970s onwards.

(ii) 'Laying the foundations': the creation of ITV in the Midlands

As has already been noted, Fraser's original blueprint for ITV was based on a 'federal' concept of broadcasting which would provide an alternative to what was perceived to be the BBC's centralising policies, and a crucial element of this approach was the concept of 'internal' competition with different companies broadcasting to the same region at different times, leading to a situation whereby these companies would compete with each other for advertising revenues and to have their programmes accepted by the network as a whole. In Fraser's view, the three main 'regions'

(London, the Midlands, and the North) had to be divided into weekday (Monday to Friday) and weekend contracts to prevent any of the franchise-holders from dominating ITV in general, and in the Midlands the two contracts were awarded to Associated Television (ATV), which was awarded the weekday franchise, and ABC Television, which broadcast at weekends to both the Midlands and the North¹ (Sendall, 1982: 68).

Although ITV started broadcasting in September 1955, the service was confined to London only until broadcasts began from the Midlands in February 1956, so this meant that anyone who wanted to watch the new commercial channel in late 1955 was required to travel to the capital to see it for themselves. Despite the early financial problems faced by the two London contractors (Associated-Rediffusion on weekdays and ATV at the weekend), the new station enjoyed a high level of popularity, and this led to feelings of both anticipation and frustration amongst viewers around the country, with many people having to wait for several years before they would receive their own ITV service. In the Midlands, which was intended to be the first region outside London to receive the channel, the original aim was to start broadcasting to the region by the end of 1955. This was also the position held by many of the leading politicians of the day, and in particular by those Conservatives who campaigned strongly in the early 1950s for a commercial broadcasting system for the United Kingdom, a stance that allegedly helped the Tories to win the General Election of 1955 (ITA, 1955: 2).

Unfortunately for all the interested parties involved, it was not possible for ITV to make a prompt start in the Midlands, and this failure can be attributed to the technical

¹ The franchise for the Midlands and North at weekends was, of course, originally awarded to the Kemsley-Winnick Group, but its withdrawal from ITV in general led Fraser to reallocate this contract to ABC Television (Sendall, 1982: 80-84).

difficulties involved in setting up the new channel. As has already been mentioned, it was the Independent Television Authority (ITA) that was charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the transmitters were erected so that people could watch the service, as opposed to the franchise-holders, whose duty was to produce the programmes only (in contrast to the BBC, which performed both functions). It would therefore appear that ITV's delayed introduction in the Midlands can be directly attributed to the ITA's failure to reach an agreement with the BBC over the sharing of television sites and masts, an area which the ITA assumed would not lead to any difficulties given that the existing sites were meant to cover the country in the most efficient way possible (Sendall, 1982: 92-93).

It was only when the ITA opened discussions with the BBC over sharing facilities in late 1954 that potential problems emerged, with the Authority's initial request being to share with the BBC's Midland station at Sutton Coldfield near Birmingham. It soon became clear that the BBC masts were not able to accommodate the various technical requirements that the Authority was looking for, including factors such as transmitting aerials and transmission lines, which the Authority believed to be essential in providing services which would be compatible in quality with those of the Corporation. The problems surrounding the Midlands would be repeated throughout the rest of the country, which led the Authority to seriously consider building its own separate stations and therefore erect its own masts to provide the necessary facilities rather than relying on the BBC's system, which was considered not to be appropriate for the commercial channel. The most obvious consequence of the failure of these discussions was that valuable time was lost in establishing ITV in general, and this loss was most deeply felt in the Midlands, with the main result being that there was no chance that the new service would start broadcasting until 1956 (ITA, 1955: 2-3).

Having decided that the only suitable course of action was to 'go it alone', the ITA's next task was to find a suitable site for the ITV Midlands region to transmit from, and to this end its location had to be near to the BBC's Sutton Coldfield station, whilst being of a similar height to that of Sutton Coldfield. An examination of the surrounding high ground revealed two potential sites, although one of these (at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire) was abandoned due to various technical problems. This meant that the site that was eventually chosen was at Lichfield (also in Staffordshire), with the transmitter built in the village of Hints near Lichfield, and it was from this location that ITV started its transmissions to the Midlands in 1956 (ITA, 1955: 13).

With the question of the transmitter having been resolved, the ITA turned its attention to selecting the companies that would broadcast to this region. Fraser's plan for ITV stated the need for a decentralised or 'federal' system of broadcasting, but this was accompanied by an element of 'equality' in that all the companies chosen to broadcast to London, the Midlands and the North (also known as the 'network' companies) had to be as equal as possible in their dealings with each other (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). The main problem to arise from this was that the two most powerful franchises in this system were London and the North on weekdays, with these two concessions holding a dominant position over the Midlands on weekdays and all the weekend contracts, all of these being measured in terms of both population coverage and the amount of broadcasting or 'airtime' available. Given this background, and the desire to achieve equality amongst the various programme contractors, the ITA decided that London and the North on weekdays had to be awarded to companies that would not be allowed to hold any other franchise (these

being Associated-Rediffusion [later Rediffusion] and Granada respectively), with the Midlands on weekdays and the weekend concessions allocated in a form that would lead to some form of equality in that one company could hold two of these latter franchises (ITA, 1955: 5).

An examination of the summary of applications received from the potential programme contractors from September 1954 reveals that the companies that eventually succeeded in obtaining the two ITV Midlands contracts were not primarily interested in broadcasting to the region, and this especially applied to the two companies that merged to form ATV. In the case of the Associated Broadcasting Development Corporation (ABDC), the contract that was desired was for London throughout the week, whilst the Incorporated Television Programme Company (ITC) wanted to broadcast on three days a week or its equivalent (with Sunday as one of the three days in question), and wanted to broadcast on a network basis, but with local interests included. This combination of broadcasting to the network in tandem with the inclusion of local and regional concerns also played a crucial part in the application made by the Associated British Picture Corporation (APBC, which became ABC Television), which wanted to broadcast for two full days a week in an effort to maintain the concept of competition within the system as a whole. With reference to those groups that expressed a real interest in broadcasting to the Midlands, one of these applicants (the *Birmingham Post* newspaper) was interested in broadcasting to the city of Birmingham only, whilst the Regional Programme Contractors group was prepared to broadcast to either Birmingham or Manchester, but in the event both of these bids were unsuccessful (ITA, 1954). The emphasis placed on running the ITV network in general was probably significant in the selection of ATV to broadcast to the Midlands during the week and London at the weekend, with

ABC Television being allocated the Midlands and North at weekends, which gave both parties two franchises each to achieve a level of equality with both Rediffusion and Granada (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001).

Having established both the location of the transmitter and the identity of the companies to represent ITV in the Midlands, the final, and most important, stage in the process as a whole was to start broadcasting as soon as possible, a factor that became even more crucial given the failure of the discussions with the BBC over the sharing of technical facilities (ITA, 1955: 2-3). In addition to the political pressures mentioned earlier, with some leading politicians expecting ITV to be already broadcasting to London, the Midlands, and the North by the end of 1955, there were also commercial pressures to be overcome. Not only did the advertisers want the station to start its broadcasts so that the commercials made by the companies that bought advertising time could be screened, but also the television companies themselves were keen to start broadcasting as the longer ITV's launch in the Midlands was delayed, the greater the losses in revenue would be for both ATV and ABC, with the latter group having to wait until 1956 before it could broadcast at all (ITA, 1955: 2i).

Although the full ITV service did not reach the Midlands until early 1956, the ITA first opened the Lichfield station in November 1955 on half power for the purpose of showing 'trade test transmissions' that would last until the following February, when the service proper began (Sendall, 1982: 119). From this point onwards, events moved with increasing speed, which provided evidence of the desire to get the new commercial channel up and running, and most of the action was almost inevitably centred on Birmingham, which was the location chosen by ATV and ABC to be their

Midlands base. The relatively short period from late 1955 to early 1956 was when the general public's interest in and awareness of the activities of ITV in the Midlands became increasingly more prominent, and this process was assisted by a delegation from ATV that visited Birmingham and other locations in November 1955 to determine what Midlanders wanted the commercial channel to provide for them. The results of this survey came from the delegation's leader, Stephen Wade, who was one of ATV's senior producers, and he reached the conclusion that viewers in the Midlands wanted to watch programmes that exercised their imagination and intelligence, including good plays and music, along with an insight into what was happening in their region. Wade also made a commitment that ATV would produce programmes for the Midlands only, and was also keen to promote local talent where possible, although he indicated that some of the programmes that had already been shown by ATV in London at weekends would be repeated for Midlands viewers during the week (*Birmingham Mail*, 25 November 1955; *Birmingham Evening Despatch*, 25 November 1955).

With the ground rules for ITV in the Midlands having been established, it only remained for the station to start broadcasting, and given the commercial and political pressures mentioned earlier, it was inevitable that the new service would begin as soon as all the technical arrangements had been completed. The decision was therefore taken to start on 17 February 1956, even though the Lichfield transmitter could only operate on a reduced power of 50 kilowatts, which meant that significant areas of the region, including the city of Leicester, would have potential problems regarding reception (*Leicester Evening Mail*, 29 November 1955). As a result of operating on reduced power, the area that could clearly receive the new channel (known as the 'primary service area') was restricted to a radius of about 30 miles

around Birmingham, including the cities of Coventry and Derby, and the towns of Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire, Evesham in Worcestershire, and Rugby in Warwickshire. According to the ITA's chief engineer, P.A.T. Bevan, it had been decided to start broadcasting on 50 kilowatts, rather than wait until the full power transmitter, which would operate on 200 kilowatts, was ready, with the switch to full power occurring in November 1956 (*Oxford Mail*, 29 November 1955).

Although nobody could possibly have realised it at the time, or for many years afterwards, the decision to broadcast on reduced power in early 1956 was to have lasting effects with regard to people's perceptions of ITV in the Midlands, with the most important of these being that the service was geared towards the West Midlands in general and Birmingham in particular. It was this primary service area that in effect formed the boundary for the original ITV Midlands region, with areas to the east, including Leicester and Nottingham, and to the south, including Cheltenham and Gloucester, initially comprising the 'secondary service area' or 'fringe' of the Lichfield transmitter, before being brought into the primary service area or 'heartland' in the autumn of 1956. Accompanying the problems over reception were questions over whether ITV would attempt to cover the whole of the Midlands region to which it broadcast, or would concentrate on Birmingham and its surrounding area, a dilemma which would continue to create problems for all the companies that have represented ITV in the Midlands (*Bristol Evening Post*, 29 November 1955).

(iii) The split franchise era: 1956-68

It was against this background that ITV started its broadcasts from the Midlands as intended on 17 February 1956, with the programmes shown that night being jointly produced by the two companies in question, Associated Television (ATV), which

broadcast on weekdays, and ABC Television at the weekend. Given the fact that both companies were not only based in Birmingham, but also shared the same studio complex (formerly the Astoria cinema in Aston) and formed the production company called 'Alpha Television' to operate this studio, it was inevitable that the first programmes would feature the city and its surrounding area to a great extent. The evening's entertainment started with the *Opening Ceremony* from Birmingham Town Hall, including speeches from the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and the ITA's Chairman, Sir Kenneth Clark; a variety show from the 'Midlands Television Centre' (Alpha Studios), with guests including Bob Monkhouse; the first episodes of the adventure series *Robin Hood* and the American situation comedy *I Love Lucy*; a boxing match from the Embassy Stadium in Birmingham; a return to Birmingham Town Hall for the *Opening Night Ball*; and the night's broadcast finished with an *Epilogue* from the Bishop of Lichfield (*Leicester Mercury*, 17 February 1956). Reactions to ITV's opening night in the Midlands were largely favourable, with the *Leicester Mercury's* television critic emphasising the need for the service to be truly regional rather than of a local or 'parish pump' nature, whilst the general public were more concerned with reception problems rather than the content of the programmes, something which applied to viewers in the Leicester area, who received their programmes on a transmitter running on reduced power for the reasons outlined above (*Leicester Mercury*, 18 February 1956).

The pattern of broadcasting for ITV in the Midlands was therefore quickly established, with ATV appearing from Monday to Friday, and ABC on Saturday and Sunday, and this remained the position until the summer of 1968, when ATV took over on a full-time basis after ABC's departure from the region. The relationship between the two companies was not confined to the Midlands alone, as ATV and

ABC were also charged with the responsibility of running the ITV network at the weekend (when ATV was broadcasting to London). At this point, it must be remembered that all the ITV companies that have broadcast to the Midlands since the mid-1950s (ATV, ABC, Central and Carlton) have been 'network' companies whose primary role has been to ensure the smooth operation of the ITV network as a whole, with regional considerations playing a secondary part in comparison, as opposed to the 'regional' companies such as Anglia Television, whose responsibility lies with its own region and plays little or no part in the national picture (Interview with Charles Denton, 2001). As ATV and ABC were so heavily involved in ITV at its various levels, it came as no surprise to discover that they both opened head offices in London, this occurring despite ATV only being in the capital at weekends and ABC not broadcasting there at all. From the point of view of the companies, ABC must have been pleased to have received a contract that meant that it could broadcast for two full days a week, which was what it wanted, whilst ATV found itself as the only one of the original network companies to broadcast seven days a week, which met its requirements, although it had to accept the Midlands on weekdays and London at weekends rather than broadcasting to London on a full-time basis as it had hoped (ITA, 1954).

The question of the ITV companies and their commitment (or otherwise) to their respective regions is one which has particular relevance in respect of ITV in the Midlands, and this problem can be traced back to the start of the channel in the region in early 1956. Following the first weekend's programmes, and the realisation that ABC's programmes would be transmitted from London on a permanent basis, the television critic of the *Leicester Mercury* argued that ATV provided the only vehicle for the Midlands to 'assert its independence' in television terms (*Leicester Mercury*,

20 February 1956). On the first anniversary of ITV in the Midlands (in February 1957), the same writer stated that the last year had demonstrated that the ITV Midlands service had nothing in common with Midlands television as such, and was pleased that the service had failed in its intention to provide viewers with a platform to 'tell the Midlanders about themselves' and include features with a strong Midlands bias, whilst repeating the claim that television was not a suitable medium to discuss 'parish pump' affairs. Similar sentiments were expressed by ABC's Managing Director, Howard Thomas, who claimed that, although ITV in the Midlands began with great hopes for its local programmes, it was found that the BBC's programmes attracted bigger audiences as they were of wider interest, with the solution to this problem being to emphasise national and international events, with a local perspective included where necessary (*Leicester Mercury*, 18 February 1957).

It can therefore be seen that the experiences of both ATV and ABC in the mid-1950s in general and the first year of broadcasting to the Midlands (from February 1956 to February 1957) in particular set the tone for the ITV Midlands region for the next decade in regard of the region's coverage, which was subject to increasing criticism from both television critics and members of the general public. This dissatisfaction must have continued to grow in the light of the decision of both companies to invest in new television complexes in the London area, with ATV adding to its Wood Green studios in north London by buying National Studios at Elstree in Hertfordshire in addition to its other television interests around the world, and ABC opening its own studio at Teddington in Middlesex, which became the headquarters of Thames Television when ABC moved to London in 1968 (ITA, 1963: 16-17, 22-23).

Probably the most interesting developments concerning ITV in the Midlands in the 1960s were connected to various 'off-screen' developments, and especially surrounding ATV's plans to move away from Birmingham and use Coventry as its Midlands base instead (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 28 February 1964). ATV did not go through with this proposal, however, initially continuing to share the Alpha Studios in Birmingham with ABC before choosing to build a new complex in the city in the late 1960s (details of which will follow later). It was in the field of technical developments that the real changes occurred, and particularly in respect of the dramatic growth of the ITV Midlands region from its original West Midlands base to a 'super-region' covering central England and beyond. The boundaries for all the ITV regions were defined by the 250 microvolt per metre 'field strength contour', which measured the expected limits of reasonably fair reception for a new transmitter (TAM, 1961: 5), and for the ITV Midlands region the boundaries extended to Chesterfield in Derbyshire to the north, Lincolnshire in the east, Basingstoke in Hampshire to the south, and Montgomeryshire in Wales to the west (*Birmingham Post*, 26 June 1968).

The 1960s also witnessed the arrival of new transmitters to serve the region in a more comprehensive manner, with the most urgent task being to provide a service for the eastern part of the Midlands, which found itself in an inferior position in terms of reception compared to the rest of the region. A new 1000 feet mast and an improved aerial had been brought into service at Lichfield in July 1961, which enabled the south of the region, including Gloucester, to enjoy an improved service, with the new aerial enabling the power to be increased to 400 kilowatts. In complete contrast, the eastern sector of the region saw its power reduced to 100 kilowatts to prevent harmful interference to viewers of the Netherlands Television Service on the Dutch coast,

which meant that the service to viewers living to the east of Lichfield had remained unchanged since 1956 (ITA, 1963: 176-177).

Unfortunately for the East Midlands, the ITA decided not to act on this problem immediately, preferring instead to concentrate on other parts of the region. In addition to the main Lichfield station, two more VHF (Very High Frequency) stations were opened in the 1960s, these being at Membury, which served the 'South Midlands' (including the city of Oxford and Swindon in Wiltshire), and which started broadcasting in April 1965, and at Ridge Hill near Ledbury in Herefordshire to serve Hereford and Gloucester, which was opened in July 1968 (ITA, 1967: 146-147). By this time, however, the VHF network that had been established by the ITA on 405 lines since the mid-1950s was about to be replaced by a UHF (Ultra High Frequency) network on 625 lines for the purposes of transmitting programmes in colour rather than in black-and-white. On this occasion, the ITA was able to reach agreement with the BBC, the Post Office, and the new Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications over the use of the various transmitters around the country, and in the case of the Midlands, the Sutton Coldfield transmitter was adapted to colour television, with the first colour transmissions to the region occurring on 15 November 1969. Shortly after this, the first-ever ITA transmitter to be based in the East Midlands came into operation when the UHF station at Waltham in Leicestershire began colour broadcasts on 28 February 1970 on a power of 250 kilowatts, this station again being a joint venture with the BBC, which started showing programmes from Waltham on BBC2 from August 1968 onwards (Briggs, 1995: 397).

Probably the most interesting aspect of ITV's operations in the Midlands in the 1960s concerned the increasingly strained relationship between ATV and ABC, which

intensified even further when Lew Grade became ATV's Managing Director in 1962, a move which led to Grade becoming the dominant figure both within his own company and the ITV network as a whole. One of the most publicised arguments between the two companies concerned ABC's adventure series *The Avengers*, which was at first not shown in London at the weekend, with ATV preferring to broadcast its own programmes instead. Although the matter was eventually resolved in a satisfactory manner, with the programme being shown in London, the damage had already been done, and this episode can be considered to be a public relations disaster on behalf of both parties, especially as they were supposed to be co-operating with each other at both a regional and national level in running ITV in the Midlands and the network at weekends respectively (Thomas, 1977: 189-190).

Another bone of contention for ABC emerged as a result of the broadcasting arrangements created by Sir Robert Fraser in the mid-1950s, with special reference to the company only being allowed to show its programmes at the weekend, in total contrast to ATV, which could show its product whenever it liked given that it could broadcast seven days a week. It is therefore easy to understand ABC's frustrations at this situation, which the company felt placed it at a permanent disadvantage compared to the other network companies at this time, and especially with ATV, which became the most important of these groups (Thomas, 1977: 182). As a result of ABC's experiences, the shortcomings in Fraser's theories of broadcasting were revealed, especially with regard to providing competition and a measure of equality between the companies, something which was never likely to happen if one of these companies could only broadcast for two days a week² (ABC, 1960: 12).

² In the light of ABC's problems, questions must be asked regarding Fraser's decision to re-advertise the Midlands and North franchise at weekends after the Kemsley-Winnick Group withdrew, as it would

The other problem confronting ABC related to its attitude towards the Midlands as a region, with the company being ambivalent at best and hostile at worst about broadcasting to the Midlands. To its credit, ABC admitted that it much preferred to broadcast to the North than the Midlands, with the evidence for this being that many of the programmes made by the company (including outside broadcasts) came from the North. It must also be remembered that ABC had its own studio complex in the North (at Didsbury in Manchester), and was not required to share any of its facilities with Granada in the same way that it did with ATV, which provided the opportunity for the company to produce some of its most popular programmes, including the long-running drama series *Armchair Theatre*. ABC therefore concluded that there was no chance that it could adequately cover two 'super-regions' if it could only broadcast at weekends, and claimed that given more broadcasting time, it could make more and better programmes instead of trying to fit its output into only two days a week (ABC, 1960: 15-16).

If ABC preferred to broadcast to the North rather than the Midlands, there were many people who argued that ATV was more interested in London, even though the company only served the capital at the weekend. The majority of its programmes were made at its London studios, including Elstree, and its links with the capital were confirmed as a result of the popular variety show *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* (ATV, 1960: 21-22). In its defence, ATV attempted to reflect the Midlands as much as possible, even though it may have been reluctant to do so at times, and the fact that the company broadcast to the region on weekdays must have given it a far more balanced and representative view of the Midlands, especially with

have made more sense to have shared the contracts between ATV, Granada and Rediffusion (see Conclusion [pp.299-301] for further details on this matter).

reference to the region's working life, than the distorted picture which was presented to ABC (ATV, 1960: 23-24). Given that ATV and ABC operated from the same base in Birmingham in the Alpha Studios, and formed their own production company to run ITV in the Midlands, a strong case can be made for the view that the ITV Midlands region from 1956-68 was not a split franchise as it was intended to be, but was instead a seven-day franchise operated by 'Alpha Television', with the ATV section of the company broadcasting on weekdays, and the ABC division taking over at weekends (Thomas, 1977: 161). Whatever the merits of this argument, it had become clear that ITV's original structure needed to be changed and improved if possible, and probably as a result of ABC's experiences, the decision was taken to turn the Midlands and North into seven-day contracts under the control of just one company, with the North divided into two regions, one serving Yorkshire and the other the north-west.

It was in 1966 that the ITA began a new round of contract awards, with the new franchises to start broadcasting in the summer of 1968. From the Authority's perspective, the move to seven-day contracts was based on the perception that the companies representing ITV in both the Midlands and the North had not placed enough emphasis on developing a distinctive regional identity, a problem which most affected the Midlands as a result of the approaches towards the region adopted by both ATV and ABC. The ITA therefore felt that if one company was given exclusive rights to broadcast to its region throughout the week, it could reflect that region in a far more comprehensive manner than had been the case with the system of split contracts. The Authority's views on this matter must have been strongly influenced by the efforts of Granada to create a positive sense of region through the concept of 'Granadaland', which undoubtedly provided a total contrast to the token attempts of

ATV and ABC to develop any real regional insights for the Midlands (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). It was with these guidelines in mind that the 'new look' for ITV in the Midlands and North would be established.

In respect of the ITV companies that had broadcast to the Midlands since 1956, ABC was undoubtedly strongly in favour of change due to its limited broadcasting hours and the minor role it played in running the ITV network, along with its desire to leave both the Midlands and North in the hope that it would be awarded one of the two London contracts, the capital being the only ITV region to retain the old 'split contracts' system (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001). ATV was faced with the choice of staying in the Midlands and broadcasting to the region throughout the week, and thereby taking over from ABC at the weekend in the process, or turning its back on Birmingham and concentrating its efforts on either retaining the old London weekend contract or even trying to secure the London weekday franchise held by Rediffusion. In the event, ATV did not apply for either of the ITV London contracts, preferring instead to remain in the Midlands because of Lew Grade's desire to obtain a seven-day franchise. In a meeting with Grade in 1970, Sir Robert Fraser told the ATV chief that his company would not have succeeded in any potential bid for the London contracts, so ATV would be broadcasting to the Midlands on a full-time basis, despite Grade's ambivalence over the concept of regional broadcasting in general (Potter, 1990: 34).

Before the new contracts for all the ITV regions were announced in the summer of 1967, the general consensus was that ATV would be awarded the Midlands contract, with ABC moving to London to take over the capital's weekend franchise in succession to ATV, and the North divided into Granada in the north-west and a new

company being created to serve Yorkshire, with the latter becoming the fifth of the 'network' companies. When the details of these contracts were made public in July 1968, the franchises for the Midlands and North were as predicted, with ATV taking over in the Midlands, Granada in the north-west, and 'Yorkshire Television' broadcasting to the east of the Pennines. The situation in London, however, became more complicated as a result of the ITA's decision to award the weekend franchise (which ran from Friday evening to Sunday night) to the 'London Weekend Television' consortium instead of ABC, which applied for the London weekday franchise in opposition to the incumbent Rediffusion. The Authority's decision was to order a 'merger' between ABC and Rediffusion, with the former company chosen as the dominant partner in the relationship, and the new merged company (which became known as 'Thames Television') operating from ABC's London base at Teddington (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001).

With these new arrangements coming onto force at the end of July 1968, the old system of split contracts had one more year left to run, which was therefore ABC's final year in the Midlands and North. Once again, ABC found itself in an unenviable position of preparing for the London weekday franchise (running from Monday to Friday evening) whilst at the same time continuing to broadcast to their original regions at the weekend. If anything, ABC had even less enthusiasm at the prospect of broadcasting to the Midlands than was the case in the previous decade, and this was noted by the region's television critics, who did not show a lot of sympathy for the company in general and its efforts to promote the region in particular. In fact, ABC's last night in the Midlands (on 28 July 1968) was seen as a matter of relief rather than sorrow, and for all ATV's shortcomings in its coverage of the region, the change from a weekday to a full-time franchise was considered to be a step in the right direction

compared to the split contracts which existed previously (*Leicester Mercury*, 29 July 1968).

ATV's takeover in the Midlands therefore resulted in the company's business arrangements with ABC (now renamed Thames Television) coming to an immediate end, including the production company Alpha Television, which was dissolved following ABC's departure from the region. As ATV had been broadcasting to the Midlands on weekdays since the mid-1950s, it was a relatively seamless transition for the company to extend its coverage in the region to the weekend, with this change being quickly accepted by critics and the general public alike. For its part, ATV admitted that it had neglected the Midlands in the split franchise era, when the company was broadcasting to London at weekends, and promised that it would provide the total commitment to the region that had previously been lacking (*Birmingham Post*, 26 June 1968). One example of this renewed enthusiasm concerned ATV's decision to move out of the old Alpha Studios in Aston, to move to a new purpose-built headquarters in Broad Street in the centre of Birmingham (known as the 'Paradise Centre'), which also brought an end to any possibility of the company moving its base to Coventry. This option was ultimately rejected due to the cost of laying landlines to the Post Office tower in Birmingham, to which the new centre had to be built as soon as possible (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 17 August 1968).

(iv) The ATV era: 1968-81

The period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, in which ATV broadcast to the Midlands on a full-time basis, saw a number of significant developments, starting with the opening of the Paradise Centre (renamed 'ATV Centre') in March 1970 to replace the Alpha Studios, which were closed down as a result. It was in ATV Centre

that the main nightly regional news programme (*ATV Today*) was produced, along with the long-running (and infamous) soap opera *Crossroads*, both of these programmes being transferred from Alpha (*Birmingham Post*, 1 October 1969). In addition to its activities in the Midlands, ATV continued to successfully fulfil its responsibilities to the ITV network as a whole, with the vast majority of its most popular programmes being made at its Elstree studios, and the company as a whole continuing to be run from its head office in London under the name of the 'ATV Corporation', with the Midlands television station known as the 'ATV Network' (Potter, 1990: 33). It is fair comment to suggest that ATV enjoyed the 'best of both worlds' as a national and regional broadcaster, especially in its determination to cover the whole of the Midlands from Birmingham.

The first mention of 'sub-regions' in the ITV Midlands region came from the ITA in the early 1970s in its review of 'ITV's Regional Pattern'. In this survey, the Authority divided the region into three distinct areas, these being the 'West Midlands', which included the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire; the 'East Midlands', featuring the counties of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, most of Derbyshire, and part of Northamptonshire; and an area to the south of the region (which was not officially referred to as the 'South Midlands') comprising most of Oxfordshire and parts of Berkshire, Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire. The various sub-regions were considered to have their own special characteristics, with the West Midlands consisting of a mixture of heavy industry and agricultural areas, with hill farming in Shropshire and fruit farming in Worcestershire; the East Midlands was dominated by the coalfield running through Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire into Derbyshire, with industry concentrated in the larger towns, especially Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, and

Northampton; and the south was mainly agricultural, with the exceptions of the main towns and cities in Oxford, Gloucester, Cheltenham, and Swindon (ITA, 1971: 177).

The question of dividing the region into two or more units began to find mass acceptance from the mid-1970s onwards, and was closely linked to ATV's programmes at both national and regional level. There was a strong perception that much of the company's output was of a 'transatlantic' nature, especially with regard to light entertainment, no full-time documentary department existed, and the regional output concentrated on Birmingham at the expense of the rest of the region. It was the latter problem that in May 1974 led a group of Labour MPs based in the East Midlands to meet the IBA's Chairman, Lord Aylestone, to discuss ATV's neglect of their area. In addition, the Authority was highly critical of the company's operations, citing the mutual suspicions between members of staff in Birmingham and Elstree, and the resentment that both these groups felt towards being controlled from London by the parent company, as serious impediments to progress, which had to be addressed as a matter of urgency (Potter, 1990: 39).

ATV's fortunes in the 1970s became very closely linked with those of its most important figure, Lew Grade (who became Sir Lew in 1969 and Lord Grade in 1976), to the extent that the company as a whole increasingly reflected his own attitudes to broadcasting. This approach was based on the premise that all television programmes should be regarded as entertainment, irrespective of their subject matter, and although this proved to be a popular and successful stance to take in the 1960s, the changes within ITV in the 1970s, which resulted in a more serious image being adopted by the network as a whole, led to the IBA's view that Grade's views on entertainment appeared to be set in the 1950s (Potter, 1990: 34). As the 1970s progressed, there was

pressure applied from the IBA for Grade to retire at the age of 70, something which Grade was reluctant to do until he was forced to retire from the television company (known as 'ATV Network') in September 1977, eventually becoming the company's President. Grade's links with ATV remained intact, however, as he remained Chairman of the parent company, ATV Corporation, which changed its name to the Associated Communications Corporation (ACC) in the late 1970s (Potter, 1990: 39-40).

The most important problem in the IBA's relationship with ATV was undoubtedly the company's refusal to base itself exclusively in the Midlands, so ATV was the 'odd one out' as the only ITV company to broadcast in the 1970s which did not have its main administrative and production centres in the region to which it was broadcasting (Interview with Clare Mulholland, 2001). When ATV was awarded the seven-day contract for the Midlands in the late 1960s, the Authority (then known as the ITA) was hoping that the company would leave both its head office in London (near to Marble Arch) and its studios at Elstree to the north of the capital, to make a permanent move to Birmingham. By the late 1970s, this had still not happened, as in 1979 only 738 out of the total staff of 1644 were based in Birmingham, to produce programmes ranging from the news magazine *ATV Today* to the legendary soap opera *Crossroads*. It was only when the contract awards of the 1980s were due to be discussed that ATV made a real effort to allocate resources for the Midlands, with the regional budget rising from £2 million in 1979-80 to £3.3 million in 1980-81 as a result of Birmingham overtaking Elstree in production, and the introduction of staff reporters and film crews based in Nottingham and Oxford (Potter, 1990: 41).

By this time, however, the tide had turned decisively against ATV, with the element of goodwill that was shown towards the company in the late 1960s having largely disappeared a decade later. Once again, it was the region's politicians that led the calls for ATV to be stripped of its franchise, with an all-party group of East Midlands MPs campaigning in 1977 for two separate ITV companies to take control of the East and West Midlands (*Nottingham Evening Post*, 20 October 1977). This was soon followed in 1978 by a group of West Midlands MPs also calling for ATV's hold on ITV in the Midlands to be ended, and this group went further by stating that the company tried to cover too large a region, resulting in there being no regional identity to speak of as a consequence (*Birmingham Evening Post*, 6 January 1978). It was against this background that a group called 'East Midlands Television' was formed, which included two leading figures from Yorkshire Television, with the intention of explaining the problems the East Midlands had in being linked with the West Midlands in general and ATV's Birmingham base in particular. Given the company's preference for producing programmes with both national and international appeal over regional output, the comment was made that ATV should have concentrated more on making programmes for Birmingham, England, rather than for Birmingham, Alabama (Potter, 1990: 338; Thomas, 1977: 195).

As a result of the above developments, the IBA was faced with probably its most difficult decision in the contract awards of 1980 in respect of the group (or groups) to represent ITV in the Midlands in the 1980s. In comparison to the other network companies (Thames and LWT in London, and Granada and Yorkshire in northern England), ATV's position was considered by many commentators to be precarious at best and untenable at worst, with the prevailing view being that the company would do very well to hold on to the franchise at all. In ATV's defence, it had played a

significant part in contributing to the ITV network throughout the 1970s, and the company could not be blamed for the region's geographical diversity, which was ultimately determined by the transmitter coverage, the responsibility for which rested with the IBA rather than ATV (Interview with Charles Denton, 2001). Although the company had made real efforts to develop a regional perspective in the late 1970s, many people still felt that this change had not occurred soon enough to save ATV from losing the franchise and allowing an alternative group to take over and promote the Midlands more vigorously (Potter, 1990; 336-337).

The first decision made by the IBA was to award the Midlands contract to one company only, which would be required to operate a 'dual franchise' covering the East and West Midlands, in preference to dividing the region into two separate entities, which might have weakened the ITV network as a whole and placed the finances of both companies involved in serious jeopardy (Interview with Clare Mulholland, 2001). With this issue having been resolved, the way was now clear for the applicants to reveal themselves, and as expected the incumbent ATV made its bid by forming a new company called 'ATV Midlands Limited', whose structure was designed to meet the dual franchise requirements outlined by the IBA. As with the former ATV Network, the renamed ATV Midlands was a wholly-owned subsidiary of ACC under Lord Grade's control, and in financial terms the parent company would determine how much money the subsidiary would receive, with the application stating that ACC's board would not make the large investment required in preparation for the new contract period if ATV Midlands was not fully controlled by ACC. The IBA expressed concern at the regional emphasis of the contract in the hands of a wholly owned subsidiary of a leisure group based in London, and wanted to know why ATV

Midlands could not be part-owned by both ACC and Midlands alike (Potter, 1990: 337-338).

There were two other groups which were formed to secure this franchise, the first of these being Mercia Television, which arose out of East Midlands Television, both companies having been started by the former Yorkshire Television producers, John Fairley and John Wilford. Mercia's proposals, which seemed radical on paper, included a viewer's forum, regional representation, developing the franchise by reinvesting profits, and not pursuing interests outside television. Voting shares were to be equally divided between a registered charity called 'Mercia Television Trust', local authorities, large Midlands institutions, and the company's management. The main board would be accompanied by four subsidiaries, these being Mercia Television Network (jointly run by Fairley and Wilford), West Mercia Television (run by Fairley alone), East Mercia Television (run by Wilford alone), and Mercia Services (providing non-broadcasting services such as engineering, sales, and marketing), as well as a group Policy Committee and a group Executive Committee. Supporters of Mercia's bid proved to be diverse in nature, ranging from the politician Shirley Williams to the comedian Jasper Carrott, and the IBA felt that these people would not have enough experience of either television or the region to assist Fairley and Wilford, who in turn were felt not to have the necessary administrative or financial experience to make the venture as a whole a success. Although the Authority had no problem with Mercia's programming plans, it was highly critical of the financial aspects of the application, claiming that the costs of the enterprise had not been taken into consideration (Potter, 1990: 338-340).

The other group to apply for the contract was Midlands Television (MTV), which was created by another former Yorkshire Television employee, Stuart Wilson, who was the company's Managing Director, with Sir Robert Booth as the Chairman of both the main board and of separate East Midlands and West Midlands boards. MTV was considered by the Authority to have presented a better and stronger application than that of Mercia due to a more credible financial package and the inclusion of experienced television executives, although the group's criticisms of ATV's performance was not appreciated by the IBA, the feeling being that MTV had lost a great deal of goodwill in the process (Potter, 1990: 340-341). Following two public meetings organised by the IBA in Birmingham and Nottingham in the autumn of 1980, both the Mercia and MTV bids were rejected, which led the Authority to interview ATV again concerning the ITV Midlands franchise. The main area of concern still remained that of ACC's complete control of ATV, to which the IBA suggested that the company should either accept a wider ownership or be part of a new company in which two of the applicants had shares, in a similar fashion to the London weekday franchise of the 1960s, which saw ABC and Rediffusion merge to become Thames. ATV's alternative to the Authority's proposals was to offer 40 per cent of the capital of ATV Midlands to the people and institutions of the Midlands, on the condition that ACC retained overall control of the company. Although the IBA did not accept ATV's revised offer, the company managed to retain the contract without having to reach an agreement with MTV, which the Authority favoured over Mercia, so on 28 December 1980 ATV Midlands was officially awarded the franchise, although it was required to accept some radical changes as a result (Potter, 1990: 341-343).

ATV found itself having to pay a very high price for its 'victory', including the declaration that the parent company ACC would only be allowed a 51 per cent holding in the new company, with the remaining 49 per cent to be allocated within the region, including the various groups involved in both the Mercia and MTV bids. ACC was also required to share the posts of Chairman and Managing Director with its rivals, along with the regional chairmen and general managers of the separate area boards for the East and West Midlands. Probably the most important part of the agreement concerned the requirement that the new company had to be based in the Midlands region itself, something that had never previously applied to ITV in the region. This was also connected to the IBA's decision to reject 'ATV Midlands' as the new company's name as evidence that a different form of company had been created, leading to a loss of identity and the end of ATV's association with the Midlands (Potter, 1990: 343).

With all the new ITV franchises due to come into effect at the beginning of 1982, it was imperative that the restructuring of the new company broadcasting to the Midlands was successfully completed during 1981. Unfortunately, this proved to be a protracted process, which was not assisted by the unwillingness of senior figures within ATV, and especially the Chairman and Managing Director of ATV Midlands, Lord Windlesham, to accept the leaders of the MTV bid, Sir Robert Booth and Stuart Wilson, as the IBA wanted the company to do. It was as a direct consequence of his opposition to the Authority's edict that ATV had to be totally restructured that Windlesham announced his resignation from the ATV Midlands board in May 1981, but he was persuaded to stay on long enough to appoint his successor, Bob Phillis, whose previous experience of industrial relations problems was to prove crucial with regard to the transfer of staff from Elstree to the new studio complex being built in

Nottingham. Phillis also had to ensure that 49 per cent of ACC would be passed on to Midlands-based investors, a requirement that could not ultimately be met given the unwillingness of Midlanders in general and supporters of Mercia and MTV in particular to make the necessary investments. Finally, the new company was registered under the name of 'Central Independent Television' instead of 'Central Television', the latter name having already been registered by an entrepreneur (Potter, 1990: 343-344).

(v) Central and Carlton: 1982 to date

On 31 December 1981, ATV broadcast to the Midlands for the last time before closing down, having served the region for 25 years in total, initially in partnership with ABC until 1968, and then in its own right until its enforced departure. The following day (1 January 1982) saw the beginning of broadcasts from the new franchise-holder, Central Independent Television, which referred to itself on screen as just 'Central'. Apart from this change in station identification, viewers might have been forgiven for assuming that nothing much had changed, given the fact that the new company had retained all the broadcasters that had been employed by ATV and now appeared under the Central banner. Probably the most obvious change to occur regarding this broadcasting handover was that the name of the daily regional news programme was altered from *ATV Today* to *Central News*, but as with ATV's move to full-time broadcasts to the Midlands in 1968, this transition proved to be relatively painless (Interview with Bob Warman, 2001). Indeed, a letter to a local newspaper claimed that some of Central's 'new' programmes were to have been shown originally on ATV as far back as 1980, leading to questions about ATV's influence on Central (*Birmingham Post*, 6 January 1982).

Although there appeared to be few problems to speak of on screen, there was a great deal of action behind the scenes, including various problems that had to be resolved by the company as soon as possible. The first of these concerned the financial problems facing ACC, which arose as a result of the huge losses incurred in the making of the feature film *Raise The Titanic* (Potter, 1990: 41). In December 1981, 51 per cent of ACC's ordinary voting shares were acquired by an Australian business tycoon, Robert Holmes a Court, who made a takeover bid for the company in early 1982, initially with the support of its leading figure, Lord Grade. By the spring of 1982, however, relations between Grade and Holmes a Court had sharply declined following the latter's successful bid for the company, leading to Grade's departure in June 1982. As Holmes a Court acquired ACC through his Australian-based Bell Group, and the Broadcasting Act 1981 decreed that a programme contractor could not be controlled by a company not registered in the European Economic Community (EEC), the IBA in 1983 stated that ACC's 51 per cent voting interest in Central was to be held by a trustee company until the final arrangements were made for ACC to divest itself of Central as a whole. This led to Central being divided in the following manner: three groups each held 20 per cent of Central's shares, these being the Scottish publisher D.C. Thomson, the bookmakers Ladbroke's, and Sears Holdings, who were new shareholders; Robert Maxwell's British Printing and Communications Corporation (BPCC) and Pergamon Press held 7.8 per cent; Prudential Assurance held 5 per cent; and the remaining shares, amounting to around 25 per cent of the total capital, was held by over 840 institutional and private shareholders, including over 400 living in the Central region (Interview with Bob Phillis, 2002).

An even more pressing problem was that of the long-standing issue of the future of the Elstree studios, with the main bone of contention amongst the workforce being the IBA's decision that all the network programmes made by Central after 1982 would have to be produced in the Midlands itself. The main thrust of the argument was that the East Midlands could be adequately served by a much smaller studio than the proposed 'East Midlands Television Centre', which the unions claimed was too expensive and unnecessary in respect of the production needs of the ITV network as a whole. It is clear from these comments that the Elstree employees had no particular 'sense of region' in their decision not to relocate to Nottingham, which would have particularly affected older workers, in some cases approaching retirement, for whom a move would have made no economic sense (Interview with David Glencross, 2001).

There can be no doubt that this argument delayed the introduction of Central in the East Midlands to a large extent, with the company opening temporary studios at Giltbrook, near Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, until the new studios were ready. In the event, a pay dispute involving the electricians ensured that no transmissions were broadcast from Giltbrook, which left viewers in the East Midlands having to continue to rely on Birmingham for their regional news and other programmes (Upshon, 1996). By the summer of 1983, Central had finally left the Elstree complex, and in March 1984 the East Midlands Television Centre based at Lenton Lane, Nottingham, was officially opened. The IBA's blueprint for ITV in the Midlands was finally realised, with the East and West Midlands divided into 'sub-regions', East Midlanders rewarded with their own service, West Midlanders with a company based in the region, and Central totally involved in ITV at both a regional and national level (Potter, 1990: 344).

In a national context, Central took its place as the 'new boy' amongst the other ITV network companies (Thames, Granada, LWT, and Yorkshire), and the company quickly established an excellent reputation for its wide range of programmes, of which arguably the best and most successful was the satirical puppet show *Spitting Image*. The positive impact made by Central on the Midlands, with its total commitment to the region, ensured that, by the mid-1980s, ATV had already become a distant memory, and any doubts on this matter were fully removed when in 1988, Central took the decision to finish the original *Crossroads*, ATV's flagship programme connected with the Midlands (Interview with Andy Allan, 2001). The two sub-regions also enjoyed a high level of acceptance and development, with *Central News East* in Nottingham and *Central News West* in Birmingham covering their respective areas in a thorough and professional manner, and it was generally felt that the scenario of an ITV company broadcasting to, and being accepted by, people in the Midlands, was being realised (Upshon, 1996).

Undoubtedly, Central had already made excellent progress in attempting to cover the whole of the Midlands, but history began to repeat itself when people living in the 'South Midlands', and especially in the Oxford area, argued that they were not satisfied with being part of the West Midlands sub-region and receiving their local news from Birmingham, and wanted their own service instead, in a similar way to people in the East Midlands in the 1970s. On this occasion, however, Central was quick to spot the danger, which also included attempts by certain groups to remove the county of Gloucestershire from Central's control and hand it to HTV, the ITV company broadcasting to Wales and the west of England, which had its English base in Bristol. With the possibility that the company might not be allowed to retain its franchise unless it addressed this problem in some way, and in anticipation of a

campaign led by HTV to claim this area for itself, the decision was taken to create a third sub-region under the name of 'Central South', to be broadcast from the Oxford and Ridge Hill transmitters, with studios based at Abingdon near Oxford. The new sub-region was launched on 9 January 1989 with the first edition of *Central News South*, which accompanied the sub-regions already in existence in the east and west of the region, so anyone who wanted to challenge Central for the ITV Midlands franchise would have to provide news services for the all the sub-regions (Upshon, 1996).

Although nobody could have possibly realised at the time, a far greater threat to Central's independence, and even its existence, came from a company with no previous experience of the ITV system called 'Carlton Communications' under its founder and owner, Michael Green. Carlton's first involvement with ITV was as a minor shareholder in LWT, before the company attempted to take over Thames Television in 1985 following discussions with Thames's main shareholders, British Electric Traction (BET) and Thorn EMI, who wanted to sell the television company to Carlton. This proposal was blocked by the IBA on the grounds that Carlton's takeover would have led to changes in the nature and characteristics of Thames as a viable ITV programme company, and as such was not acceptable in respect of the Authority's responsibilities under the Broadcasting Act 1981 (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 284-302). The first link between Carlton and Central was established as a result of the decision of Central's Managing Director, Bob Phillis, to join Carlton in a similar capacity in February 1987. This was followed in the following month by the Ladbroke Group's decision to sell its 20 per cent shareholding in Central to Carlton, who in the autumn of 1987 bought Central's film and television subsidiary company Zenith Productions (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001).

Central's development as a company in the 1980s is revealed in Table 3.1, which shows how the company grew in terms of turnover, profit before tax and extraordinary items, earnings per share before extraordinary items, and dividends per share, and indicates the company's success in being based in the Midlands at this time.

TABLE 3.1

CENTRAL'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, 1983-89

Year	Turnover	Profit before tax and extraordinary items	Earnings per share before extraordinary items	Dividends per share
1983	£129.2 m	£6.8 m	15.8 p	6.5 p
1984	£152.2 m	£10.0 m	24.3 p	10.5 p
1985	£165.0 m	£11.9 m	26.2 p	12.5 p
1986	£195.2 m	£16.6 m	40.0 p	17.0 p
1987	£239.6 m	£22.5 m	55.1 p	22.0 p
1988	£264.2 m	£26.5 m	64.1 p	25.5 p
1989	£320.1 m	£27.0 m	64.2 p	28.5 p

(The above information has been taken from Central, 1987: 7; 1989: 5.)

It was in the late 1980s that Central adopted a new approach, which was started by the company's Managing Director, Leslie Hill, which saw the company in terms of operating as a business, and this was explained in a statement that first appeared in Central's annual review of 1987 as 'The Central Mission':

‘We are people working with people, producing programmes for broadcasting and distribution to our region, the ITV network and the world.

‘We work to the highest standards of creativity and production excellence across all programme categories, and intend to make more high-quality programmes.

‘We aim to understand and satisfy the needs of our viewers by providing a range of distinctive and innovative programmes which appeal to their wide interests and tastes. In achieving this we will also satisfy the needs of our customers, the advertisers.

‘We will develop our sales to all international markets through our awareness of their needs, our willingness to co-operate with others, and our creative versatility.

‘We recognise that, in a competitive world, we must become ever more businesslike, disciplined and cost-efficient. We are a commercial organisation and our primary financial objective is to maximise our earnings per share over the long-term.

‘We shall continue to be closely identified with and committed to our regional community, and to act as a good neighbour making tangible contributions to the life and success of the region we serve.

‘We value the skills and talents of our people in the Company. We aim to communicate with and motivate everyone, so that all our people can achieve job

satisfaction, develop as staff, managers and human beings and contribute to the mission of the Company for the greater good of the whole' (Central, 1987).

Having established strong links with Carlton, and created the new Central South sub-region, and with Robert Maxwell having sold his stake in the company to a number of financial institutions, Central was in a strong position to apply for the ITV Midlands franchise, with the new ITV contracts to begin at the start of 1993. In contrast to the drama which surrounded the contract awards for the Midlands in 1980, Central ensured that nothing would be left to chance in its decision to form the 'Licence Campaign Unit' (LCU), which was especially created to publicise the company and its alleged strengths in a campaign aimed at local opinion formers in general and the region's politicians in particular (Interview with Marshall Stewart, 2001). This strategy proved to be highly effective, with the only real challenge to Central coming from a group led by the East Midlands Electricity Board, who withdrew six weeks before the bids were due to be completed in the belief that it could not defeat Central due to the incumbent's high profile and popularity within the region, and with no other group declaring an interest in the franchise, Central was very confident about its prospects of maintaining its position (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 442-443).

This confidence was fully justified when it became clear that Central would be unopposed in bidding for the franchise, and with this in mind Central's Managing Director, Leslie Hill, decided to submit a bid of £2000, an amount which would have to be paid to the Treasury each year and a derisory sum compared to the millions which other companies were required to bid for most of the licences throughout the country. The bid was submitted on 15 May 1991, and on 16 October 1991 the

Independent Television Commission (the ITC, the successor to the IBA) announced that Central was unopposed in its bid, with the application itself considered impressive and the 'quality threshold' also having been passed (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 444). In effect, Central enjoyed a 'double celebration' in that not only did it retain the ITV Midlands contract, but it also held a 20 per cent stake in Meridian, the company which won the franchise for south and south-east England, defeating the incumbent Television South (TVS) in the process (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001).

Once the new licences had been finalised and had started broadcasting at the beginning of 1993, Central soon realised that its 'victory' was rather hollow given the increasing speculation surrounding the company's future and its possible takeover by another ITV company. This was closely related to the concept of the ITV network being divided into a smaller number of units, an idea supported by Carlton's Michael Green, who believed that a larger broadcasting base would give his company greater stability and cost-effectiveness. The arguments over ITV being divided into as few as four or five units based on patterns of ownership, rather than the 15 companies serving the various regions around the country, were not new, as Lew Grade supported this view as far back as the late 1960s, claiming that ATV would be able to make better programmes if such a change was made. For Central's part, Leslie Hill repeated this assertion in the late 1980s, and took this discussion to its ultimate conclusion in calling for just one company to be formed, featuring a corporate ITV identification, to be based in London, to replace the network of regions (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001). These theories began to be put into practice when the Department of National Heritage announced in November 1993 that the moratorium on takeovers would be lifted at the start of 1994, at which point Carlton's stake in Central increased from 19 to 39 per cent, and after deciding against taking over

Anglia, Central accepted a bid from Carlton of £758 million at the end of November 1993 (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 477).

Having outbid the incumbent Thames Television to obtain the London weekday franchise, Carlton became the largest of the ITV companies following its acquisition of Central, although the name of the Midlands station had to stay as 'Central', which was required to be maintained as a 'separate broadcaster' to fulfil the terms of its ITC licence (Bonner with Aston, 1998: 478). Carlton's takeover meant that, in effect, ITV in the Midlands reverted to the position that had existed from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s, of a company that was broadcasting to the region, but whose head office was based in London, from where the most important decisions about the Midlands station were taken. It was almost inevitable that serious questions would arise concerning Carlton's continuing commitment to the Midlands, especially in comparison to Central's considerable efforts in developing close links with various groups around the region (*Birmingham Evening Mail*, 20 September 1994). These feelings were expressed most clearly in Birmingham, where the closure of the Broad Street studios and the decision to move all its programmes made for the network as a whole to Nottingham was a cause for concern, and in the summer of 1997 the 'Central Court' complex was opened in Gas Street (near to the old Birmingham site), where news and other regional programmes would be made (Interview with Andrew Fox, 2001).

Although Carlton had to continue broadcasting to the Midlands under the Central banner, senior figures within the parent company, including Michael Green himself, became increasingly dissatisfied with the Central name, with Green wanting to rename the station 'Carlton Midlands' (*Observer*, 5 January 1997). On 6 September

1999, the Midlands station changed its name from Central to Carlton, the idea being to promote the Carlton brand name across its media businesses, including its television and Internet interests as part of a three-year strategy. Curiously, the Central name was retained for the programmes that were made for the region only, such as *Central News*, *Central Sport Special*, and *Central Weekend*, although many people in the Midlands expressed concern as to how long these new arrangements would last for, as if anything they were even more difficult to understand than those that had gone before (Interview with Ian Squires, 2002). Finally, Carlton and Granada's decision to merge their television interests in 2002, which led to the disappearance of ITV's regional branding in favour of the channel being renamed 'ITV1', saw the Carlton brand name used for regional programmes only, which has led to the Carlton Central region being referred to as 'ITV1 Carlton for Central England' (Electromusications, 2002, via Transdiffusion website).

(vi) Conclusion

The history of ITV in the Midlands must be by far the most controversial of all the regions, if only because for most of its history the various companies that have broadcast to the region have been branches of other companies based in London, something which applies to Carlton today as much as it did to ATV and ABC in the early years of the service.³ The one honourable exception to this rule was Central, which for over a decade was based in the region, with its head office in Birmingham, although it was not owned by people from the Midlands, despite the best endeavours of the broadcasting authorities, and most notably the IBA, to rectify this problem.

³ In 1960, ATV's "Allied Interests" included the Incorporated Television Company (ITC), the British Relay Wireless and Television Ltd, Pye Records, and media interests in both Australia and Canada (ATV, 1960: 5), whereas ABC's parent company, ABPC, also owned Associated British Cinemas Limited, Associated British-Pathe Limited, and the Elstree Film Studios (ABC, 1960: 4).

Although Carlton continued to provide a comprehensive regional service, with news and documentaries amongst the programmes made exclusively for the three sub-regions (East, South, and West), in addition to programmes such as *Central Weekend* covering the entire region, serious questions will doubtless be asked with regard to how long the new 'ITV plc' company will continue with its commitments to the Midlands, including the future of the Central name for all regional broadcasts, and the possibility that ITV1 could be adopted as the name for all the company's programmes at both regional and national levels.

It must also be stated that all the decisions about ITV in the Midlands taken in the mid-1950s had serious effects that are only now being realised, especially in respect of the first broadcasts, which could only be seen clearly by people in the West Midlands, and the feelings amongst some people living in the East Midlands that they were 'left out' helped create high levels of resentment, especially towards ATV, that eventually came to the surface in the 1970s. In addition, there was the suspicion that a combination of the original split franchise, which resulted in ATV and ABC being unable to provide any coherent coverage of the Midlands, and ATV's reluctance to fully develop its regional base in the 1970s, led to feelings of resentment towards ITV in the region, and that Central's attempts to create a distinctive 'philosophy' in the 1980s were therefore in vain (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). In spite of the criticisms raised against his company, Lord Grade's prediction that ITV should and would be run by just a handful of companies eventually came about in the 1990s, and with Carlton controlling both Westcountry in south-west England and HTV in Wales and the west of England as well as Central, it seems highly unlikely that the old ITV based on the regions will ever return in the future. This view has been confirmed by Carlton and Granada's decision to run ITV as one company from the autumn of

2002 onwards, with this merged company adopting the name of 'ITV plc' (*Broadcast*, 18 October 2002: 2-3).

Looking at the history of ITV in the Midlands since the mid-1950s, it can be seen that, despite the best efforts of all the companies concerned to develop some kind of regional identity, many people living in the region were not convinced by their attitudes towards it, with special reference to ATV's assertion that it did not want to broadcast to the Midlands at all, preferring to broadcast to London seven days a week instead. It was ATV's decision to concentrate its efforts on maintaining the ITV network at the expense of its regional base that almost certainly led many critics to claim that the company only paid 'lip service' to regional broadcasting, and was only interested in the money, so when Central started broadcasting to the region in 1982, it can be argued that the damage had already been done as far as regional broadcasting was concerned, and that Central was 'too late' in its desire to develop its own philosophy for the Midlands. In the absence of any economic details, the companies would have to be judged both by the claims that they have made in their annual reports and related material, as well as by the activities they have undertaken during their time in the Midlands.

PART TWO: EXAMINING THE CONCEPT OF 'REGION'

CHAPTER FOUR: 'LOOKING FOR DEFINITIONS': EXPLAINING THE CONCEPTS OF THE REGION AND THE MIDLANDS

(i) Introduction

As has already been noted in Part One, the regional dimension to British broadcasting, which was originally started by the BBC when it was developing its radio services in the late 1920s, before being extended by ITV from the mid-1950s onwards, created many problems for the broadcasters, with the Corporation being most affected in this respect. One of the factors that played a crucial part in the question of regional broadcasting as a whole concerned the boundaries to be used to denote where one region ended and another began, along with the related matter of which areas should comprise a region in the first place. This phenomenon was first noticed by the BBC in the 1930s, when it was confronted with the problem of certain areas which led to disputes between its own Regions, including the Potteries (the area around Stoke-on Trent) which many people argued should have been part of the North Region, but which was allocated to the Midland Region instead. As a result of these arguments, it will therefore be necessary to consider all aspects of the regional approach, with special emphasis on what will become the core question of 'What is a region'? Following on from this will be an attempt to define the concepts of the Midlands in general, and the East and West Midlands in particular, with reference to the regional systems of broadcasting that have been introduced and developed by both ITV and the BBC, together with an examination of other regional models to be compared with the ITV regions, a comparison between the region and the related concepts of locality and nation, and an assessment on whether the Midlands can ever be considered as a region in its own right.

(ii) Definitions of the region and the Midlands

Discussing the concept of the region in general is complicated at best and almost impossible at worst given the various uses of the term, some of which can contradict each other, so in an attempt to clarify the situation as far as possible, it will be necessary to consult the *Oxford English Dictionary* to examine the word 'region' in greater detail. Amongst the various definitions of region included within the *OED* are a realm or kingdom, a large tract of land, a country, a defined portion of the earth's surface, especially as distinguished by elements such as natural features and climatic conditions, an area, space or place with definite extent or character, the rule or government of a kingdom, a place, state or condition having a certain character or subject to certain influences, an administrative division of a city or district, a relatively large subdivision of a country for economic, administrative, or cultural purposes that frequently implies an alternative system to centralised organisation, and an area of the world consisting of neighbouring countries that are considered socially, economically, or politically independent in international terms. For the purposes of this study, however, the most relevant definition of region from the *OED* relates to broadcasting as a part of the country covered by a particular programme service or broadcasting company, or with reference to the company itself, and this can also be used in respect of defining the word 'regional' to explain something of or relating to a broadcasting region (*OED*, 1989b: 510-511).

Having discovered a wide range of definitions for the word 'region', it comes as no surprise to discover that similar problems surround definitions of the 'Midlands' (which is not to be confused with 'Midland' in the singular, which only refers to the central area of the United States and the type of 'American English' spoken in that

area). The *OED* uses 'Midlands' as a collective term to be applied to the middle counties of England, with the counties in question being situated south of the rivers Humber and Mersey and north of the Thames, with the exception of the Eastern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, the southern counties of Middlesex and Hertfordshire, and the western county of Gloucestershire and the other counties bordering on Wales such as Herefordshire and Shropshire. Other definitions of 'Midlands' from the *OED* refer to the subject of the dialect that was spoken in the ME (Middle English) period in the region between those of the 'northern' and 'southern' dialects, with the dialect itself divided into 'East' and 'West' Midland forms, and the region in which this dialect was spoken including South Lancashire, the Welsh borders, Lincolnshire and East Anglia as well as central England; in a classification of modern English dialects compiled by A.J. Ellis, the dialect of an area extending from Wharfedale in Yorkshire in the north to Stratford-on-Avon in the south, and from Chester in the west to the Lincolnshire coast in the east; in hunting use, to the 'champaign' country including parts of the counties of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, and Derbyshire; and in a more general sense, for the names of companies or organisations such as the Midland Bank. Finally, the *OED* defines the word 'Midlander' as one who lives either in the Midlands or the Midland of the United States (*OED*, 1989a: 747-748).

Another definition of the Midlands which is not to be found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, but which is probably more important than those mentioned above in a broadcasting context, is the use of the Midlands as shorthand for the 'West' Midlands only rather than a description of central England as a whole. Many groups and companies have adopted this distinction over the years, including the old gas and electricity boards, with a split between 'Midlands Electricity' in the West Midlands

and 'East Midlands Electricity' in the East Midlands as one example. This use of the Midlands is generally confined to the West Midlands only, with people from the East not adopting this shorthand, preferring to use the term 'West Midlands' instead. With regard to broadcasting, however, the BBC's decision to split the Midlands into East and West for the purposes of regional news meant that decisions had to be made over the future of its daily news programme *Midlands Today*, which had been broadcast from Birmingham since the 1960s. When the East Midlands was given its own news review (*East Midlands Today*, which started broadcasting from Nottingham in the early 1990s), the decision was taken to leave the *Midlands Today* name intact, despite the programme only serving the West Midlands rather than the whole of the region as had previously been the case (BBC, 1992: 46). It is likely that had *Midlands Today* become 'West Midlands Today', an element of confusion might well have emerged amongst some people living in the West Midlands, not to mention viewers living in the East Midlands who continued to watch *Midlands Today* in preference to its eastern counterpart, and who might have been offended by a change to the programme's name. Whatever the reasons for this decision may have been, *Midlands Today* remains the name for the BBC's main news programme for the western part of the region, although the term 'Midlands' is still used for the BBC's programmes for the whole of this region.

With the concepts of both the region and the Midlands having already been discussed, it is therefore necessary to define both the 'East' and 'West' Midlands, and attempt to make some distinctions between the two if possible. The *Oxford English Dictionary* made reference to the 'East' and 'West' Midlands regarding the question of dialect, and a similar division can be made in geographical terms, so if the *OED*'s definition of the Midlands is accepted, then the 'East Midlands' would include the

counties of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and possibly both Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire; the 'West Midlands' would comprise Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, and the metropolitan county of the West Midlands (including Birmingham); and there would even be a 'South' Midlands to include counties such as Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Buckinghamshire (*OED*, 1989a: 747).

The policy of creating regions out of a group of counties that have strong geographical links may well be the best and easiest way to understand the concept of the region as a whole. If the East Midlands is considered in this fashion, for instance, then Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire would probably be the three main counties involved, with other counties around them also comprising this region, the two main candidates in this respect being Lincolnshire to the north and especially Northamptonshire to the south. This particular model has already been adopted by a number of bodies and organisations, including the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) based in Nottingham (emda, via website). For the West Midlands, the four counties mentioned above would almost certainly be included, but a strong case could be made for this region to be extended further west to finish with its western boundary on the border of Wales, allowing both Herefordshire and Shropshire to become part of a larger region than the West Midlands that some people would accept. It would therefore follow that to have two regions of this nature, with both of these being clearly defined, would make sense in a geographical context and would be accepted and understood by many people, and would also be far preferable than the alternative of having the Midlands as a kind of 'super-region' based in Birmingham, which would be seen as too remote for many people in the region, and would not receive any real public support as a result. It was this problem, of course, which led

to ITV in the Midlands adopting 'sub-regions' for regional news and other programmes.

(iii) The Midlands as defined by ITV and the BBC

It was in response to criticisms that the regions would not receive a fair deal that the BBC decided to create its own 'Regional Scheme' to cover the whole of the country. With Birmingham being given its own station in 1922, it was almost inevitable that the city would also be the base for the Midland Region, a role which it fulfilled until regional broadcasting was abandoned by the BBC in radio terms in the late 1960s, and was applied to television only (Briggs, 1985: 369). In respect of the latter medium, the story was remarkably similar in that the first television transmitter for the Midlands was built at Sutton Coldfield near Birmingham, with the first televised broadcasts made by the BBC to the region appearing at the end of 1949 (Briggs, 1979: 246-250). When the Corporation wanted to create a new broadcasting centre for the whole of the Midlands region, it wasted little time in choosing a site at Pebble Mill in the centre of Birmingham, which opened in the early 1970s, so maintaining its broadcasting links with the city¹ (Briggs, 1985: 356, 400).

From the perspectives of the major broadcasting organisations, the assumption was made that Nottingham would be inevitably accepted by the rest of the East Midlands as the region's broadcasting capital, and this policy can be traced back to the 1920s, when the BBC, after having established a radio station in Birmingham, opened a relay station in Nottingham in 1924 (Briggs, 1985: 364-366). Following the creation of the BBC's Regional Scheme, and the decision to make Birmingham the base for the Midland Region, the concept of broadcasting to the East Midlands only was not

¹ See Chapter One (pp.25-28, 30, 32-33, 35, 37-38, 45-46, 49-51, 53-57) for further details on the BBC's development in the Midlands in general, and Birmingham in particular.

seriously considered until the UHF television transmitter at Waltham was opened in 1968 (Briggs, 1995:397). The site of this transmitter was significant in that it primarily served the area around Nottingham, which had remained on the 'fringe' of the ITV Midlands region since the mid-1950s, whilst at the same time ensuring that the city would be the dominant force in its region in broadcasting terms. This trend was confirmed in the 1980s, when the BBC's *East Midlands Today* and the East Midlands version of *Central News* began broadcasting from studios in Nottingham, a position that has persisted to this day and is likely to continue into the future (BBC, 1992: 21).

At this point, it is necessary to examine the 'Midlands' as understood by both ITV and the BBC, and the most obvious difference between both organisations is that, whereas they have 'sub-regions' for both the East and West Midlands, ITV has an extra sub-region in the form of the 'South Midlands' which is based in Oxford, but also includes the counties of Buckinghamshire, Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire. The latter county is usually considered by geographers and governmental bodies amongst others to be part of the 'West Country', but in broadcasting terms, this county has firmly remained in the Midlands region ever since the 1920s, when the city of Gloucester was part of the BBC's 'Simultaneous Broadcasts Line Network', taking most of its programmes from Birmingham (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991: 306). When the Regional Scheme was started by the Corporation in the early 1930s, it was inevitable that Gloucestershire would become part of the Midland Region, especially as one of the other regions was designed to cover Wales and the rest of south-west England, this latter region not being separated until the late 1930s (Briggs, 1965: 323-325). At the time of writing, the Gloucester area is still part of the BBC Midlands

region in general, and of the 'Midlands' (actually West Midlands) sub-region in particular.

When ITV first started broadcasting in the mid-1950s, it was decided by the ITA that the pattern of the transmitters to be located around the country would follow the BBC's system, so when the ITV Midlands region came into being, it was inevitable that Gloucestershire would fall into line and become part of this region. It must also be remembered that the Midlands was the first region outside London to receive its commercial service, which gave ATV and ABC a 'clear run' in broadcasting to this area in 1956, with the rest of western England having to wait until the late 1950s before ITV started there, including Bristol (Interview with Peter Tomlinson, 2001). When the sub-regions first appeared in the early 1980s, Gloucestershire was part of the 'Central West' sub-region, but it was the possibility of a campaign led by HTV in Bristol to reclaim this area which led Central to devise a plan that would keep it under its control, this being the creation of the 'Central South' sub-region, which would also satisfy people in Oxford. Of course, Central was extremely keen to retain the ITV Midlands region in its entirety, as there was the possibility that parts of the region might have been awarded to companies such as Anglia and Yorkshire, who were serving Central's boundaries in a circle around the Midlands (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001).

The city of Oxford is another interesting case, and is most probably unusual in broadcasting terms in that, whilst it became part of the ITV Midlands region in the mid-1960s, with the Membury transmitter serving both the city and the rest of the 'South Midlands', it has never been part of the BBC Midlands region at any time, and has been more commonly associated in the Corporation's thinking with London and

the south-east for its regional news output. This discrepancy between the BBC and ITV over Oxford has undoubtedly revealed a serious flaw in the Corporation's regional plan, but it seems highly unlikely that there will be any immediate changes to this situation, for if the BBC had any plans to create another sub-region to serve the South Midlands in general and Oxford in particular, these ideas would surely have been put into practice in the late 1980s, when Central South first started broadcasting. As the current positions indicate, ITV and the BBC are poles apart on this issue, with ITV's 'pro-active' approach contrasting sharply with the BBC's indifference to the problem. It is also very difficult to see any future developments in this matter, as the Corporation appear to be determined not to follow ITV's lead and create a third sub-region for the Midlands, especially in the light of the BBC's decision to give Oxford its own regional news programme (BBC, 2002: 39).

Having discussed the differences between the BBC and ITV regional plans, with special reference to the sub-regions, it is possible to detect the similarities between both organisations in respect of their treatment of the Midlands. Probably the most important factor to be noted is that the BBC and ITV Midlands regions are both completely landlocked, with no coastline to provide any natural boundaries (the Lincolnshire coast not being regarded as part of the Midlands by both broadcasters). In geographical terms, the region is therefore totally surrounded by most of the other English regions, and this applies particularly to ITV in the Midlands, which has Granada on its north-west border, Yorkshire to the north and north-east, Anglia to the east, Carlton and LWT in London to the south-east, Meridian to the south, and HTV to the south-west and west. In addition, the Midlands is by some margin the largest of the ITV regions with regard to its size, as it covers around 25 per cent of England, so

all the programmes made for the whole of this region are required to take this matter into consideration (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001).

As the Midlands is the one region in ITV's system that has no natural boundaries to speak of, the holder of the ITV Midlands franchise is faced with the problem of appealing directly to all the 'fringe' areas around the region, ranging from Stoke-on-Trent in the north-west to Milton Keynes in the south-east. This was the challenge that confronted ATV in the 1960s and 1970s (initially in tandem with ABC until 1968, and then on its own until 1981), before Central took over the franchise, which it held for over a decade until the Carlton takeover (Interview with Bob Phillis, 2002). Central's approach to the Midlands in general was far more positive in tone than most of its predecessors in that it treated all the fringe areas in exactly the same thorough manner as it approached Birmingham itself, with a research paper of 1988 indicating that most people living in these areas wanted Central to provide their regional programmes, in preference to other ITV companies such as Anglia, Granada, and Yorkshire. The only exception to this trend came in the south of the region, with people in Gloucestershire indicating their preference to have the regional news provided by HTV from Bristol rather than from Birmingham, as a result of which the Central South sub-region was created to ensure that this area remained in the Midlands (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001). With all of the ITV companies surrounding the region now owned by either Carlton or Granada, the importance of the fringe areas is nowhere near as important to Carlton in the Midlands as it was to Central in the 1980s (Interview with David Glencross, 2001).

It must also be remembered that the boundaries for all the BBC and ITV regions are determined by the 'field strength contour' that measures the expected limits of

reception for all the transmitters, which therefore creates the fringe areas. In the event of an area being able to receive more than one of the ITV regions, the television aerials are usually adjusted so that the strongest signal is chosen over its weaker alternatives (TAM, 1961: 5). This position not only applies to the fringe areas of the ITV Midlands region as a whole, but also to the areas forming the various sub-regions for the Midlands. An example of this can be found in the city of Leicester, which is in the heartland of both the BBC and ITV Midlands regions, but on the fringes of the BBC East Midlands and 'Carlton Central East' sub-regions. This means that many people living in the south and west of the city have their aerials pointing towards the Sutton Coldfield transmitter, which has a stronger signal than Waltham, and receive the BBC's *Midlands Today* and *Central News West*, both broadcast from Birmingham (Negrine and Eyre, 1998: 50).

A further consequence of the boundaries for the BBC and ITV regions being determined by the reception limits of the transmitters is that county boundaries become completely irrelevant. Although many people would consider the counties of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire to be part of the Midlands in general and the East Midlands in particular, in television terms this is not the case, with the northern areas of both counties being served for ITV by Yorkshire Television rather than Carlton in the Midlands. Amongst the towns that are affected by this problem are Chesterfield in Derbyshire and Worksop in Nottinghamshire, but this is not just restricted to the Midlands, as the city of York, which most people would assume to be part of the Yorkshire region, is served by Tyne Tees Television, the company most usually associated with north-east England (Potter, 1990: 84). Perhaps the most extreme examples of the shortcomings in the ITV regional network can be found in the 'triple overlap areas', where one area can receive three different ITV regions. One of these

areas is that of Stamford and south Lincolnshire, where it is possible to receive Anglia, Carlton, or even Yorkshire, depending on the direction in which people's aerials are pointing (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001).

The final element in the discussion of broadcasting to the English regions concerns Donald Read's observations on the subject, with particular reference to the audiences that the various programmes are aimed at. In Read's opinion, almost all the programmes made for the regions, and especially by the BBC, were only intended for the people living in these areas and not for the whole country in general, as Birmingham found itself broadcasting to Birmingham only, Nottingham broadcasting to itself, and so on, with this practice known as 'inward-looking' regionalism. Read argued that it could and should be possible for a region to broadcast either to another region or to the whole country, a phenomenon which he referred to as 'outward-looking' regionalism, with the regions taking the lead in promoting themselves, rather than allowing London to carry on dictating terms. Although the ITV companies were supposed to concentrate on making programmes for the regions for which they were given exclusive broadcasting rights, Read mentioned Granada's efforts in promoting the north of England as a positive step forward (Read, 1964: 252-256). One early example of outward-looking regionalism was found in Granada's long-running soap opera *Coronation Street*, based in inner-city Manchester, which began in December 1960 and has been shown on the ITV network ever since.

(iv) The future of the Midlands

Given all the issues that have been raised in this chapter so far, it is necessary to consider the question of whether the Midlands in general can ever be seriously considered as a region in its own right in the future, or whether the region will have to

be permanently divided into smaller and more accessible units that people could accept and understand more easily than a vague concept that would probably not receive too much public support. The concept of the Midlands as a complete unit was very closely related to the region's status as the industrial heartland of England, with the West Midlands in the form of the Black Country dominated by industries such as iron and steel and engineering, and the East Midlands by its coalfield. It was the combination of these two industrial areas that produced a 'super-region' enjoying a unique national and international reputation, as well as giving the people of the Midlands a genuine regional identity as members of the region, who played a positive role in its working life and economic prosperity.

From the early 1980s, however, the Midlands as a whole went into a period of economic decline, in which the industries mentioned above were the worst affected, and especially the East Midlands coalfield, which has now almost completely disappeared. The effects of this decline were dramatic with regard to many people's perception of the region, as the special and distinctive part played by the Midlands since the Industrial Revolution no longer existed. This was accompanied by a decline in feelings of regional identity, with those people living in the region realising that they could no longer display the same level of influence through their work as they had done in previous years, and people outside the region accepting that the Midlands would become much more like the other English regions than had previously been the case. It also became clear that it would not be possible to bring the East and West Midlands together in one unit, as a result of the erosion of the industrial base that had provided the direction and stability that had directly contributed to the region's success. As the twentieth century drew to a close, the concept of a unified Midlands region was replaced by an increasing emphasis on the East and West Midlands as two

different areas, with the differences between the two considered to be more important than the similarities, which led to a policy of 'separate development' in both cases.

The idea of separating the Midlands into either East or West or along similar lines was firmly established in its own right, dating back to Fawcett's plan for the provinces from 1917, which included two distinct regions for the Midlands based around Birmingham in the West and Nottingham in the East. The English regions played an important part in the activities of central government in the twentieth century, especially in respect of the network of Civil Defence Regions created in 1940, shortly after the start of the Second World War. This regional system included a northern region based in Newcastle, north-eastern in Leeds, north-western in Manchester, south-western in Bristol, southern in Reading, eastern in Cambridge, and south-eastern at Tunbridge Wells in Kent, with a London region run by the Metropolitan Police Area. For the Midlands, the region based in Birmingham was the 'Midland', whilst its neighbour with its capital in Nottingham was referred to not as 'East Midland', as might have been expected, but as the 'North Midland' region instead. Once the Second World War ended, both the Treasury and the Ministry of Town and Country Planning adopted the above regions, with the latter department referring to these with regard to the Town Planning Act of 1947 (Dickinson, 1964: 479-485). The regional concept has also been favoured by the government to deal with serious crises in the form of two Emergency Powers Acts (in 1920 and 1964), with eleven Regional Emergencies Committees (RECs) established at the time of the 'winter of discontent' in 1978-79, which included the military and the police amongst others (Bonner, 1985: 31-33, 223).

The importance of the regions has been recognised at central government level by the creation of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) to deal with all aspects of regional development in general. Amongst the regions featured in the system are the North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, Eastern, South West (including Gloucestershire and Wiltshire), South East (including Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire), and London. In the Midlands, the two regions in question are 'East Midlands' (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, and Nottinghamshire), and 'West Midlands' featuring the counties of Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, along with the metropolitan county of the West Midlands, which of course is not to be confused with the West Midlands region as a whole (DETR, 1998: 69-72, 73-76).

The metropolitan county of the West Midlands is one of several units that were created as part of the reorganisation of English local government in 1974, and include counties based in both the north-west in Merseyside (including Liverpool) and Greater Manchester, and the north-east in Cleveland (featuring Middlesbrough) and Tyne and Wear (Newcastle and Sunderland). The West Midlands metropolitan county consists of the seven boroughs of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton, and this county, along with Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, comprises Advantage West Midlands (or Advantage for short), which refers to itself as 'The Development Agency for the UK's Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Heartland' (Advantage West Midlands, 2002, via website).

Advantage West Midlands is one of eight English Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) that were established by the British government in April 1999, and this

agency sees its role as one of developing a regional economic strategy and ensuring its implementation, with an emphasis on 'sustainable economic regeneration', which would reflect central government's ideas as a result. The three key roles that Advantage sees for itself in partnership with other groups are those of a 'Regional Champion', working on behalf of the region to secure funding and investment, and to influence policy and external perceptions of the region in helping to set up the group 'West Midlands in Europe'; a 'Regional Co-ordinator', bringing various groups together to deliver important regional initiatives, including the Advantage Technology Fund; and a 'Regional Catalyst', using its funding and strategic plan to co-ordinate the strategies of other groups with the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy, which assists in shaping the direction of the Learning and Skills Councils and Small Business Service to meet the needs of the region's businesses. Advantage therefore finds itself working closely with a variety of public, private and voluntary sector partners, with its role being mainly strategic in working with and through others to align programmes and priorities in line with the West Midlands Economic Strategy mentioned above, whilst also enjoying a direct role in providing investment to support regeneration, inward investment, business growth, and skills development programmes in the region (Advantage West Midlands, 2002, via website).

Advantage's view of the West Midlands is that of a region with a unique industrial heritage due to its role in starting the Industrial Revolution, which has led to the region's reputation for being associated with innovation and change over the years. The West Midlands is currently seen as a region that is known not only for the contrasts between urban and rural communities, but also for the many multi-ethnic and multi-faith communities that prosper as a result of the many community projects that exist. In industrial terms, the urban areas have acquired an international

reputation for manufacturing a wide range of products, including ceramics in North Staffordshire, bicycles and cars in Coventry, and metal production in the 'Black Country' towns of Walsall and Wolverhampton. Despite the problems these industries have had in recent years, the region is still this country's main manufacturing centre, with this sector producing 30 per cent of its GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 27 per cent of employees working in this sector, although growth in the service sector has been the fastest of all the regions, with special emphasis on retail, distribution, hotel and catering, and business services. In addition, there has been significant growth in the small to medium enterprise sector, and industries ranging from plastics and rubber to food and drink have played their part in establishing a secure base for the region's economy (Advantage West Midlands, 2002, via website).

Advantage has a number of partners at both national and regional levels, with its national partners including government departments such as the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), as well as other groups such as the Learning and Skills Council, the Small Business Service, and the Environment and Countryside Agencies. At a regional level, Advantage's partners include groups such as Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) and the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA), along with a 'Regional Concordat', a voluntary agreement between Advantage, GOWM, WMLGA, and the 'West Midlands Regional Chamber' (a collection of local authority and business groups) providing a framework for integrating regional strategies with the aim of securing improvements in the quality of life for the people of the West Midlands; the '2WM Partnership', in which Advantage, British Telecom, Coventry University, and

the European Commission have come together to provide links to business support, land and property searches, jobs and events, with direct links to local business support agencies, environmental agencies, and training centres; and the 'West Midlands Minority Business Forum', which acts as an independent advisory body representing the interests of ethnic minority businesses across the West Midlands. Finally, there is a 'Regional Innovation Strategy', which has been set up to develop value added products and services throughout the West Midlands, and this body, in which Advantage has a crucial role, sets out plans for knowledge transfer between science and research bases and industry, whilst proposing new levels of collaborative working and networking between businesses, along with more investment in research and development (Advantage West Midlands, 2002, via website).

In the East Midlands, the body responsible for promoting the region is the East Midlands Development Agency (emda), a government sponsored public body that started its work in April 1999. emda sees itself representing a region at the heart of Britain, consisting of the five 'shire' counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, and Nottinghamshire, plus the revived county of Rutland, with Northamptonshire in the south being 50 miles from London, and the region then stretching 100 miles to the north. The main landmarks in the region are Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire and Rutland Water, along with the new National Forest being planted in Leicestershire (emda, 2003, via website).

The Agency sees its brief as wide-ranging in its nature for the benefit of the region as a whole, and includes areas such as spearheading the region's economic development strategy through job creation and other schemes, increasing business competitiveness, improving the skills base, attracting inward investment, regenerating

land and buildings, and attacking social exclusion through community regeneration. In terms of 'values', emda has stressed the need to integrate economic, social and environmental development to achieve a better quality of life for all, unlocking people's potential in order to bring economic prosperity to the region, and empowering everyone in the region to contribute to and share in success amongst other factors. The 'key features' of the region noted by the Agency are a population of 4.2 million, representing seven per cent of the UK total, a strategic central location providing speedy access to UK and European markets, a diverse industrial base, with food and drink, engineering, and textiles most prominent, world class universities at the forefront of education, innovation and technology, and the region hosting some of the most prominent international companies (emda, 2003, via website).

The Agency's main focus is to work with a range of partner organisations to agree and implement an ambitious strategy for the region with economic and regional dimensions, under the name of 'Prosperity Through People', which will provide a basis for the region's economic development to the year 2010. In emda's view, its work is managed across three teams, these being 'Economic Development', including a range of economic policy and specific development issues, ranging from the promotion of business growth to broadband technology, whilst also working to develop enterprise and innovation, and developing 'Sub-Regional Strategic Partnerships' (SSPs) throughout the region; 'Corporate Services and Development', with the intention of developing international trading opportunities, supporting tourism initiatives, and analysing and informing on European Union (EU) policy; and 'Strategy and Communications', with the task of managing corporate and strategic planning, observing the region's economic performance through the 'East Midlands Observatory', and directing emda's communications programme, including

marketing, public relations, and the media. For the 'Regional Strategy', the five key themes are 'Learning and Skills' to produce one of the most adaptable, motivated and highly skilled workforces in Europe, 'Enterprise and Innovation' to create a culture of enterprise and innovation that will put the East Midlands at the heart of Europe, 'Information Communication Technology [ICT] Revolution' to create an ICT capability to use information to maximum effect, 'Climate for Investment', with a modern industrial structure based on indigenous growth and inward investment, and 'Empowering Communities' so that everyone in the region can benefit from and contribute to its economic growth (emda, 2003, via website).

It is the Agency's view that the East Midlands will be one of Europe's most prosperous economies, and it is working closely not only with the East Midlands Regional Assembly to put a strategic framework in place for the region's future, with emda leading on economic development, but also with Government Office for the East Midlands to ensure that central government understands the region's needs. Finally, in 'Our Vision for the Region', emda's goal is for the East Midlands to be one of Europe's top 20 regions by 2010, and will be a place where people want to live, work and invest due to the region's vibrant economy, quality environment, and a healthy, safe, diverse and inclusive society (emda, 2003, via website).

Having closely examined the Development Agencies for both the East and West Midlands, it becomes immediately apparent that the concept of 'separate development' is here to stay, and will therefore put an end to calls for a unified 'Midlands' region based on the traditional industries that previously dominated this region, including iron and steel in the West and coal in the East. Despite this division, however, the vast majority of the people living in both the East and West Midlands

still regard themselves as 'Midlanders' in a general sense, rather than 'East Midlands' or 'West Midlands'. This situation leads directly on to the question of whether people who live in the East Midlands, for example, should be expected to refer to themselves or be referred to as 'East Midlands' when such a term has been used so rarely in the past, and also as a result of the many ambiguities associated with the concept of the region in general and the Midlands in particular (Interview with Professor James Halloran, 2002). Under these circumstances, it would almost certainly be asking too much of people to expect them to show their allegiance for an idea that has not yet enjoyed the popular support that has been forthcoming for the concepts of locality and nation. Whether the proposed regional assemblies will result in more enthusiasm being shown for the concept of the region is unclear, because if these assemblies are considered not to have been successful, the regional perspective will almost certainly be regarded with even more indifference than is the case at present. For proponents of the regional option, therefore, it seems almost inevitable that a long fight lies ahead if the goal of creating a network of regions independent of central government is to be achieved.

(v) Conclusion

"The Midlands is a weird sort of place. Nobody knows where it is or what goes on there". (Terry Hall) (*Smash* TV programme, 2000.)

This observation from the former lead singer of the Coventry-based reggae-ska group The Specials provides a neat summary of many people's feelings of the concepts of the region in general, and the Midlands in particular. In the light of the various regional systems that have been discussed in this chapter, including the ITV Midlands region, the only answer that can be found for the question 'What is a

region'? is that a region is whatever people want it to be. This explanation undoubtedly applies not only to the Midlands region as a whole, but also to both the East and West Midlands in particular. One example of this is Dury's description of the East Midlands, which in addition to Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Nottinghamshire, also includes the whole of Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire, and most of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire (Dury, 1963: 1-3, 224-227). Although the latter four counties would be considered by many people, and especially geographers, to represent the region of the 'South Midlands', there is no good reason why they should not also be included in the East Midlands, given the many versions of the latter region that already exist.

The confusion surrounding the areas or counties that are considered to comprise a region is not a new phenomenon, and this can be noted with regard to the history of the Midlands in general. In Darby and Terrett's study of *Midland England* at the time the *Domesday Book* was compiled in 1086, the counties featured excluded Derbyshire but included Gloucestershire (before it became known as part of the 'West Country'), along with Herefordshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire (Darby and Terrett, 1971: vii, 421-449). In contrast, Fawcett's concept of the Midlands was based on the 'Ancient Counties' as organised around the region's valley towns, and in addition to the counties mentioned above (except Rutland), the rest of the region consisted of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire to the south, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire to the east, and also including counties ranging from Cheshire in the north-west corner of the region to Hertfordshire in the south-east corner (Fawcett, 1960: 59-60).

Given the very large size of the Midlands as a whole, it was inevitable that people with an interest in the subject of regionalism in general would pin their hopes on the region being divided into East and West to discover whether both the latter regions would be successful in their development. Whilst the West Midlands has been regarded as a success, largely as a result of Birmingham's influence over its region, the East Midlands has not enjoyed the same prestige, with the rivalries between Leicester and Nottingham contributing to the problems experienced by this region. A strong case can therefore be made for the East Midlands as a concept being something of a 'lost opportunity', in that the region's potential has not been realised in many different ways, including the geographical dimension. It remains to be seen what would have happened if, for instance, Leicester had been chosen by the BBC as the location for the first radio station in the East Midlands rather than Nottingham. There is every chance that, in geographical terms, Leicester's position in the centre of the region might well have enabled the East Midlands to extend not only north to Nottingham, but also south to include Northampton, at least in a broadcasting sense, to create a much more cohesive and effective unit than has been the case.² In the event, the historical factors surrounding the region, which can be dated back to the era of the 'Five Boroughs',³ of which Northampton was not a part, have ensured that Nottingham has remained the dominant force in the region in general and broadcasting in particular, with both the BBC's *East Midlands Today* and *Central News East* broadcast from the city, and Northampton being too far to the south to come under Nottingham's influence.

² This idea has come from this project's supervisor, Dr Ralph Negrine.

³ The original 'Five Boroughs' comprised the county towns of Derby, Leicester, Lincoln and Nottingham, along with Stamford in Lincolnshire (Fawcett, 1960: 114-115).

It therefore remains to be seen what the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) can do to reverse the above trends, with Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire joining Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire to form a 'region' that would probably not be accepted as such by the majority of people living in it, so this body might well find itself having to perform a public relations role to gain general acceptance compared to its West Midlands counterpart. Finally, it is ironic that, at a time when regional television as a general concept and ITV's 'network of regions' in particular appear to be in danger at best and terminal decline at worst, the proposal for regional assemblies to serve all the English regions has enjoyed a measure of support in recent years, and their initiatives will determine whether these assemblies can reflect English regional identity in the twenty-first century in the same way that the ITV regions did in the twentieth century, and can make a similar impact on all these regions as a consequence.

CHAPTER FIVE: 'IN YOUR REGION': PROGRAMMES MADE BY AND FOR ITV IN THE MIDLANDS

(i) Introduction

As has already been stated, one of the most important aspects of the 'federal' system of broadcasting as created by Sir Robert Fraser in the mid-1950s was to ensure that the whole of the United Kingdom in general, and the English regions in particular, would have the opportunity to express their own ideas and opinions on various subjects that would be of interest to the regions themselves, but which would probably not have been of much concern to a national audience. It therefore followed that the best way to achieve this particular goal was by ensuring that programmes would be produced with the intention of serving the regions only, with the programmes themselves reflecting the diverse interests of the regions in a manner that the BBC had not been able to achieve through its regional radio service in the 1930s.¹ It will therefore be necessary to present a general history of the programmes made by the companies that have represented ITV in the Midlands (ATV, ABC, Central, and Carlton) over the years, which will provide an accurate account of the ways in which the companies' coverage of the region changed, from an emphasis on 'leisure and lifestyle' programmes such as *Gardening Today* and *Angling Today* to the creation of 'multi-cultural' programmes, including *Drumbeat* and *Soul Music*. This chapter will conclude with a discussion on the long-running soap opera *Crossroads*, and the unique role it played in bringing the concerns of the people of the Midlands to the nation as a whole. The information that is included in this chapter has come from both research and a series of interviews with many of the people responsible for these programmes, including presenters, producers, and other interested parties.

¹ See Chapter One (pp. 32-42) for further details.

The ITV system was very much in its infancy when broadcasts to the Midlands began in February 1956, and it is not surprising to discover that both ATV and ABC were far more concerned with establishing ITV in the Midlands than making a conscious effort to produce programmes directly aimed at the region. As the Midlands was also the first region outside the London area to receive the new ITV service, it was very much the 'test case', and the other regions therefore had the opportunity to observe ATV and ABC's efforts to see how they could adopt their own approaches to regional broadcasting, something that was taken to heart by Granada in the north-west through the concept of 'Granadaland', an attempt to create a distinctive regional identity compared to the totally diverse nature of the Midlands.

Of the two companies representing ITV in the Midlands, ATV held a number of advantages over ABC. The first and most obvious of these was that ATV had been broadcasting to London at the weekend since ITV's initial launch in September 1955, which gave the company crucial experience of broadcasting 'on air'. For its part, ABC had to start from scratch in the Midlands, and was required to examine ATV's approach to broadcasting to learn about the medium of television in general and the region in particular for itself, before ITV moved to northern England in the spring and autumn of 1956. ATV was therefore able to show some of the programmes it had originally broadcast in London to a new and different audience in the Midlands, and of course the company held the weekday franchise for the region, giving it five days a week compared to ABC's weekend licence. The other important factor to note is that ABC broadcast to the Midlands only from February to May 1956, when the station in Manchester was opened, and from October 1956 to Yorkshire and surrounding areas. This meant that the company had to serve the North at exactly the same time as the Midlands, an arrangement that led to several problems during ABC's existence,

especially during the 1960s, concerning the availability of certain programmes for both regions. In total contrast, ATV had the 'best of both worlds' in broadcasting to London at the weekend and the Midlands on weekdays, which allowed it to show some programmes in London only to discover whether they would also be successful in the Midlands, and vice versa.

Before ITV could be established in the Midlands, however, it had to be seen to have made a successful start in London when the new channel began its broadcasts to the capital in September 1955 through its franchise holders, Associated-Rediffusion (who held the London weekday licence) and ATV at the weekend (which was originally known as ABC before it had to change its name for legal reasons).² It was therefore clear to both of the above companies broadcasting to London, and especially to ATV, who would be serving the Midlands on weekdays as well as London at weekends, that they had to make a positive and immediate impact in attracting audiences through their programmes, without which the 'network of regions' created by Sir Robert Fraser might never have developed to any meaningful extent.³ ITV's cause was helped by the perception that the programmes that were broadcast on the BBC's television service at this time were largely of a 'highbrow' nature, with serious and factual programmes dominating the schedule. In response to this, ITV made a large number of shows in the 'variety' and light entertainment field (including the hugely successful *Sunday Night At The London Palladium*), and in doing so managed to attract large audiences, leading to the commercial channel's dominance in the television ratings over the BBC.

² See Chapter Two (p.78) for further details.

³ No information has been found in relation to ATV and ABC's early operations in the Midlands.

(ii) General regional programmes in the Midlands: 1956-68

Having successfully established itself in London in the autumn of 1955 and the start of 1956, ITV started broadcasting to the Midlands on 17 February 1956. As with Associated-Rediffusion and ATV in the capital, the programmes that were both broadcast and produced by ATV and ABC were very much in the 'popular' strand, with ATV's early programmes including the famous quiz shows *Double Your Money* and *Take Your Pick* (both made by Associated-Rediffusion) and the legendary American 'sitcom' (situation comedy) *I Love Lucy* (starring Lucille Ball). For its part, ABC's early programmes included the adventure series *Robin Hood* (which helped emphasise Nottingham's historical links to the region), and ATV's *Sunday Night At The London Palladium*, and most of the programmes that were shown in the Midlands were also shown in London. Although there were some programmes that were made for the Midlands only, these were either of a 'leisure and lifestyle' nature, such as *Midland Movie Magazine*, a regional film review programme made by ATV, or were firmly set in the 'light entertainment' mould, such as ABC's *Hometown Saturday Night* (which was based on Hughie Green's long-running variety talent showcase *Opportunity Knocks*), in which the main towns and cities in the Midlands were given the chance to present a show featuring various musical and comedy acts amongst others.

In respect of programmes made for the Midlands, ABC made the early running, largely through its various sporting programmes, including *Sports Desk* (a summary of the day's football results and other sports headlines), and *Sports In The Midlands* (a review of sporting exploits in the region), along with programmes such as *Moment Of Fame*, with people in the Midlands being interviewed on various topical subjects (TV

Mirror, 24 March 1956: 6). As time progressed, it became clear that there was a need to provide a regional news service featuring the main events to have occurred in the Midlands, even though the ITA saw this new undertaking as supplementing ITN's national news bulletins rather than being a requirement of the franchise as such (ITA, 1957: 15). As ATV held the weekday contract for ITV in the region, it took the lead in starting ITV's first regional news programme, *ATV Midlands News*, which started broadcasting on 7 May 1956 (*Daily Express*, 21 April 1956), and whose first producer and presenter was Ned Sherrin:

'I started it simply because they [ATV] decided they had to have a local news programme, and Philip Dorte, who had been in the news gathering section of the BBC, decided that I was the one to do it...It was a very primitive set-up, there was a newsreader called Patricia Cox, the material came from the *Birmingham Evening Despatch* in very much a *Birmingham Evening Despatch* journalese, to which we didn't have time to do much, there would be still photographs, again from the *Despatch*, and there was also a local firm that was used to filming weddings and christenings [Birmingham Commercial Films] and they took some silent film for us occasionally...I don't know that there was much [coverage of the region], if you were filming it was obviously easier to cope with things around Birmingham, but we were conscious of the fact that the region spread out to Nottingham...I think we were very conscious of the fact that we were the first local commercial television station to try to give some impression of being interested in the region'. (Interview, 2001)

Ned Sherrin was one of a team of three producers who worked in Birmingham when ATV started broadcasting to the Midlands in 1956, and he remembered both his colleagues and the programmes he was involved with at this time:

‘I was working in the studios in London until February [1956], when ATV started broadcasting in Birmingham, and I went up to Birmingham with Noele Gordon and Reg Watson, and we started producing [there]...Noele Gordon had not yet started her “on-screen” career, she was still a producer, but she was very much into “advertising magazines” and the like, Reg Watson was very much [into] variety, and I suppose I had more of an interest in current affairs, so I was deputed to do that...My schedule at the busiest time was doing *Seeing Sport* with Billy Wright for half an hour [as an] outside broadcast on Monday afternoon, and then I started the *[ATV] Midlands News* at six o’clock, five minutes of news, then the *Midlands Short Storyteller* at ten o’clock live for fifteen minutes. On Tuesday, I would do the news, and then a controversial tabloid interview programme with the journalist Douglas Warth, called *Paper Talk*, from 10.00 – 10.20 pm. On Wednesday, there would be half an hour of *Tea With Noele Gordon*, in the afternoon, and then the news, Thursday was the news, and then something called *Midlands Affairs*, which was like the [the BBC’s] *Question Time*, and then Friday was just the news, unless Reg Watson was too tired to produce *Lunch Box*, in which case I would have had to have done that as well! I then came back to London on Friday night, and after I had been in Birmingham for just over a year, I thought it would be nice to come back to London, so I went to see Bill Ward, who was the Head of Programmes, and I told him what I wanted to do, and he said “No Ned, we see you as a

Birmingham person”, at which point I decided it was time to get out, so I joined the BBC’. (Interview, 2001)

It is not surprising that Ned Sherrin had a ‘distorted’ view of the Midlands, especially in view of his refusal to move to the region on a full-time basis, as he decided instead to spend his weekends in London, so he was only in the Midlands on weekdays (from Monday morning to Friday evening) in his time at ATV from 1956-57. In the cases of people who worked in television and who were living in the Midlands on a permanent basis, their feelings of a ‘sense of region’ were far greater, and one example of this can be found in the story of a camera operator, Gary Hughes, who was aware that there was more to the Midlands than the Birmingham area, as the region extended from Skegness (in Lincolnshire) to the east to Shropshire in the west (Interview with Gary Hughes, 2001).

The regional news programme quickly established itself in the Midlands at this time, to be followed by *Look Around*, which was the first programme to concentrate on the region and its activities (Interview with Roger Cowper, 2001). The importance of regional programmes to ATV’s output in general was emphasised in the company’s report to the Pilkington Committee on Broadcasting, which was submitted in November 1960. ATV took great pride in what it referred to as ‘Midlands Programmes’, which included the *ATV Midlands News*, *Look Around*, and *Paper Talk*, along with other programmes such as *Midland Profile* (an interview programme), *Midlands Affairs* (a discussion programme featuring an invited audience), *Midlands Grouses* (in which people explained their problems to a variety of experts), *Midland Farming* for the agricultural community, *Where Are You Going?* (to provide advice on careers for school leavers), and a programme called *Midland*

Montage, which was created with the intention of providing more ‘in-depth’ coverage of stories that were only briefly covered in the main news bulletin, but which deserved to be featured in greater detail⁴ (ATV. 1960: 23). For its part, ABC decided to produce its own weekly review of the events that occurred in its regions, and in what was probably the first instance of ‘sub-regional’ broadcasting on ITV, the company simultaneously broadcast *ABC Of The Midlands* and *ABC Of The North* (‘ABC’ in this case referring to Arts, Business, and Current events).⁵ (ABC, 1960: 11).

The late 1950s was largely a period of ‘consolidation’ for ITV in the Midlands, with both companies (and especially ATV) firmly establishing themselves in the region, but it was in the early 1960s that the first serious questions were asked over ATV and ABC’s coverage of and commitment to the Midlands following the Pilkington Committee’s report on British broadcasting, which was published in 1962. This report was highly critical of many aspects of ITV in general, especially with regard to its emphasis on ‘popular’ programmes in areas such as variety and light entertainment (see Chapter Two for further details). In the cases of both companies, strong criticisms were made of Fraser’s theories of broadcasting, especially regarding ATV’s dislike of ‘interrupted working’ in serving the Midlands on weekdays and London at weekends, with the company preferring the option of broadcasting to London seven days a week, which it argued would provide a better service for the public, and would make full use of the main studios and administrative offices based in the capital (ATV, 1961: 5, 7). ABC was as critical of Fraser’s system as ATV, with its main complaint being that it was restricted to broadcasting at weekends,

⁴ No information is available on the level of regional output for the Midlands alone, as ATV chose to combine details on its programmes for both London and the Midlands in 1960 (ATV, 1960: 27-28).

⁵ No information is available on ABC’s regional output for both the Midlands and North in 1960.

whilst having to employ similar numbers of staff to the other network companies in ATV, Associated-Rediffusion, and Granada, a situation that ABC found wasteful and frustrating. As with ATV, ABC favoured seven-day contracts, but suggested that if the system of 'split contracts' was to survive, these were to be divided into 'four-day' contracts (from Monday to Thursday) and 'three-day' contracts (from Friday to Sunday). One result of this was that the companies broadcasting at the weekends could contribute on Fridays to educational, women's and children's programmes, and minority programming, amongst others (ABC, 1960: 15-16). In the event, both ATV and ABC were to be disappointed in that their wishes were not achieved, with the existing split between weekday and weekend contractors continuing despite ABC's concerns, and ATV failing in its desire to broadcast to London on a full-time basis.⁶

It was in the early 1960s that one of the most important regional programmes to be associated with ITV in the Midlands was first broadcast in the region in *Police Five*, which was first broadcast on ATV in London on Saturday nights in the summer of 1962, before the Midlands version began in Birmingham in September 1962. The original intention of *Police Five* was that it would be a five-minute programme for the police, in which people would have the opportunity to provide information that would assist in solving crimes. The programme therefore 'filled the gap' that arose when the police abandoned their traditional 'beat' and started using cars instead, so *Police Five* gave people the chance to talk to the police about crime, and the format was copied, with versions appearing in countries from Holland to the United States. The main legacy of *Police Five* was that it paved the way for programmes such as the BBC's *Crimewatch UK*, which have maintained the tradition of shows concerned with solving crimes (Interview with Shaw Taylor, 2001).

⁶ See Chapter Two (pp. 84-88) for full details of the Pilkington Committee's main recommendations.

Shaw Taylor's views on the ways in which *Police Five* attempted to create or reflect feelings of regional identity in the Midlands are as follows:

'I would name the Midlands *Police Five* as one of the best in that it was essentially very regional. I had liaison officers from Birmingham, they started off in Birmingham city police, but they were very often attached to other forces in the area. In those days, the City of Birmingham Police was named as the ideal force in size and number, it was the optimum police force, so what did [the authorities] do? They destroyed it, and created the West Midlands Police Force, with too many Chief Constables and not enough regular police'. (Interview, 2001)

The pattern of regional broadcasting that had been established by both ATV and ABC in the late 1950s continued into the early 1960s, with ABC's programmes being broadcast in the North as well as the Midlands, the one exception being the weekly news review programme *ABC Of The Midlands* (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001). This situation probably would have remained unchanged, had it not been for the first renewal of all the ITV franchises in 1963, in which other groups and organisations were allowed to challenge the incumbents for the rights to represent the various regions for a period of four years, ending in 1968. Although there were no changes to the ITV system in general, with all the incumbents continuing to serve their own regions, the ITA still felt it necessary to criticise aspects of the companies' performances where this was considered appropriate, and ATV was accused by the Authority of not having served the Midlands properly through its regional programming (ITA, 1963a). In the autumn of 1964, ATV responded to the ITA's criticisms by changing its regional programming for the Midlands, and the two most

notable developments saw the beginning of a half-hour evening news magazine called *ATV Today*⁷ and the creation of a soap opera based in the Midlands in *Crossroads*, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

As with ATV, there was some criticism of ABC's regional programmes, but this did not originate from the ITA, as it came instead from members of the general public, who expressed concern at the company's policy of showing the same programmes in the Midlands and North, and therefore attempting to satisfy the wishes of people in both regions with completely different views and interests. This problem came to a head in the mid-1960s following ABC's decision to show highlights of Rugby League matches on Sunday afternoons, which was approved by viewers in the North, where Rugby League had its origins and power base, but was not accepted by people in the Midlands, where Rugby Union was the dominant code, and where League had no background or support (*Sunday Mercury*, 22 December 1963). In its defence, ABC argued that it would have been very expensive to show Rugby League on its Northern transmitters, whilst also running something else at the same time in the Midlands, so it was therefore required to explain the financial limitations involved, including the problem of there not being enough money to serve one area, let alone three, a reference to the Midlands and both 'halves' of the North in Lancashire and Yorkshire (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001).

Despite these financial constraints, ABC was determined to cover both the Midlands and North as fully as possible, and the two main programmes in this regard were *ABC Of The Midlands* and *ABC Of The North* from Birmingham and Manchester respectively, both of which were broadcast simultaneously on Sunday nights, with the

⁷ See Chapter Six (p. 208) for further details.

transmitters being split for this purpose. In the 1960s, ABC adopted a policy of producing regional programmes as part of an attempt to cover the whole range of programming, and it took the opportunity to use the Midlands and North for its light entertainment shows, such as *Sing Along With Joe* (featuring the pianist Joe Henderson), which visited factories and other major production sites in both regions, and to show farces from the main repertory theatres on Sunday nights, which gave audiences in both the Midlands and the North the chance to see each other's work (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001).

ABC's efforts in promoting the Midlands through its regional programmes were not matched by ATV in this period, and this occurred despite the latter company broadcasting to the region on weekdays. ATV's shortcomings in this area were discussed in a report on the company's application for the ITV Midlands contract from 1968 onwards written by the ITA's Regional Officer for the Midlands, F.W. Bath, which examined ATV's programme policy in general, and its stance on regional programmes in particular. Bath based his criticisms of ATV's programmes on the company's assertion that it intended to continue with a programme policy based on constant change in the light of experience, and in respect of what he referred to as 'Midlands regional programmes', Bath stated that no such policy existed in the case of local programming, which had remained unchanged since November 1964, with the most recent regional programme to be started by ATV being the weekly political review *Midland Member*, which began in the autumn of 1966. Bath was also highly critical of ATV's decision to show repeats of some of its most popular programmes such as *Thunderbirds* (children's adventure series) and *The Saint* (starring Roger Moore), many of which were made by the ATV subsidiary ITC (Incorporated

Television Company), and also emphasised the distinction made by the company between different types of regional programmes:

‘ “...Our [ATV’s] expectation is that nearly three hours of the total output would be of *specific* regional material, though there would probably be a further two hours of regional production reaching a wider audience, but with a Midland flavour”. The application therefore foresees five hours of regionally based programmes, of which three would be addressed to the Midland audience only, and two to a wider field. If we look at the present Midlands schedule, we find that ATV are producing six hours per week, which they claim to be of local interest and this is, in fact, the amount required specifically in the existing contract. Of these six hours just over three, consisting of *[ATV] Midlands News*, *ATV Today*, *Midland Member*, and *Epilogues* [late night religious programmes], may be regarded as of interest to the Midlands only. The remainder, just under three hours, consisting of *Crossroads* and the *Tingha And Tucker Club* [children’s programme], may be regarded as appealing to a wider audience, but with a Midland flavour...It would then appear that, as a result of increasing its regional commitment from five days to seven days, ATV is proposing to reduce its regional output from six hours to five, the reduction being mainly in the field of Midland flavour programmes appealing to a wider audience.

‘ “We [ATV] expect to continue to produce drama series, comedy, light entertainment, plays, religious programming, outside broadcasts, documentaries, educational programmes and Midland interest programmes”. It would appear that the company regards Midlands interest programmes as a category outside all the others, and one would suspect it is included because it is required in the

[Television] Act. They do not say that they will produce Midlands drama series, Midlands comedy, Midlands documentaries, etc. It is sometimes asked whether the Midlands have a distinctive contribution to make in any of these fields' (ITA, 1967: 2-3).⁸

Bath concluded that ATV had not taken advantage of the opportunities that had been made available to it in the Midlands since it started broadcasting to the region, but despite these problems, ATV succeeded in its bid to broadcast to the Midlands on a full-time basis from the summer of 1968 onwards (ITA, 1967: 3).

(iii) General regional programmes in the Midlands: 1968-92

Once ATV had secured the ITV Midlands franchise on a full-time basis, the company introduced a set of new regional programmes, ranging from *Women Today* (a daily magazine programme) to the weekly football review *Star Soccer* (ITA, 1971: 189), and of course this meant that, for the first time, viewers in the Midlands could watch programmes made for the region only throughout the week, rather than just on weekdays, as had been the case during the 'split franchise' era of ATV and ABC. There was another dimension to ATV's regional programming at this time, which was explained by ATV's camera operator, Gary Hughes:

'The company [ATV] in fact tried to diversify as much as possible as a small organisation, we found that we were doing as well as the basic news from an office in the centre of Birmingham, which is where we were based, we were developing into other things that were reflecting the area, such as farming and

⁸ See Chapter Seven (pp. 250-254) for full details on Bath's criticisms of ATV's attitudes towards the Midlands in general.

fishing programmes...The fishing programme, for instance [*Angling Today*], started off as a Sunday morning regional programme, but then developed into a national programme. This was significant to ATV's development in the Midlands, because before this all the main programme ideas seemed to be based very largely in London, and so anything that was big or extraordinary had to be literally developed in the region, and developed into something that was going to be worthwhile...So many programmes had been London-based, London thinking, *Sunday Night At The London Palladium* and so on, so this was an immense development...although there was a studio in the centre of the city [of Birmingham] which was fairly big, there was still a great feeling that programmes should be [done] as much as possible on location'. (Interview, 2001)

The effect of the decision to base as many of the regional programmes as possible 'on location' was that viewers in the Midlands had the chance to see some of the region's most notable locations for themselves, and two examples of this were found in *Angling Today*, which included visits to places such as the River Wye, and *Gardening Today*, which was based at King's Heath Park in Birmingham (*TV Times*, 28 December 1972: 43; 18 January 1973: 43). This particular pattern of programming remained largely unchanged throughout the 1970s, which was the period when 'leisure and lifestyle' programmes began to make an impact on television in general and regional programming in particular.

Despite these changes to the regional programmes, which led to a far greater emphasis on giving publicity to a number of localities in the Midlands, ATV still found itself being criticised for concentrating too much on Birmingham, whilst at the

same time continuing to ignore the East Midlands, which was still regarded as the 'poor relation' of the region. Many people who supported this theory claimed that the regional programmes that were produced during this period, from the daily evening news magazine *ATV Today* to *Angling Today* and *Gardening Today*, actively encouraged this trend, one example of this being that all the news bulletins came from Birmingham, with the stories featured in these bulletins also being confined to the West Midlands area only (Interview with John Mitchell, 2001). In addition, the ITA claimed that, with the exception of *ATV Today*, the company saw all its other regional programmes (or 'Birmingham output' as they were referred to) as being product that could also be shown on the ITV network, with programmes such as *Women Today* and *Crossroads* having started on a regional basis only, before being shown by other companies, and in the case of *Crossroads*, becoming one of the network's most popular shows (ITA, 1971a: 25-26). ATV's defence of its position came from the company's former Controller of Programmes, Charles Denton:

'Birmingham was ATV's geographical base, but it was a time when there was an enormous misconception about what a regional ITV company could or should do, and ATV's remit, like the other 'Big Five' companies [Granada, Thames, Yorkshire, and LWT], was to sustain the whole fifteen ITV companies with a schedule across 100 per cent of network time, rather than the six or seven hours [per week] that were allocated to regional programmes'. (Interview, 2001)

This opinion is confirmed by the findings of Table 5.1, which describes the level of broadcasting hours devoted by ATV to the wide range of programmes it produced in the period from 1970-73. This table provides evidence in the ATV era, for which information is available, on the company's determination to concentrate its efforts on

fulfilling its responsibilities to the ITV network as a whole, which many critics believed came at the expense of local and regional programming.

TABLE 5.1
DETAILS ON ATV'S PROGRAMME HOURS, 1970-73⁹

Year	1970		1971	
Programme	Number of	Percentage	Number of	Percentage
Category	hours	share	hours	share
Regional programmes	197	26.73	243	32.31
Network programmes	540	73.27	509	67.69
Consisting of				
Drama	162	21.98	148	19.68
Light Entertainment	154	20.90	103	13.70
Documentaries	33	4.48	11	1.46
Education	48	6.51	25	3.32
Religion/Church services	47	6.38	41	5.45
Children's programmes	20	2.71	27	3.59
Outside broadcasts	76	10.31	154	20.48
TOTAL	737	100.00	752	100.00

⁹ Some of the figures in the original reports for the years 1970, 1971 and 1972 are incorrect, but these figures have been corrected for this study, so this table is now accurate in all aspects.

Year	1972		1973	
Programme	Number of	Percentage	Number of	Percentage
Category	hours	share	hours	share
Regional programmes	283.5	33.87	254	25.50
Network programmes	553.5	66.13	742	74.50
Consisting of				
Drama	134	16.01	263.5	26.46
Light Entertainment	113	13.50	141.5	14.20
Documentaries	18	2.15	23.5	2.36
Education	21.5	2.57	34.5	3.46
Religion/Church services	47	5.61	37	3.71
Children's programmes	8	0.96	12	1.20
Outside broadcasts	212	25.33	230	23.09
TOTAL	837	100.00	996	100.00

(This information has been taken from the following ATV Annual Reports: 1970: 7; 1971: 7; 1972: 7; 1973: 8.)

In 1970, ATV spent £18.24 million on television in general, of which £4.87 million was devoted to regional programming;¹⁰ in 1971, £37.63 million was spent in total, of which £12.16 million was given over to regional programmes; 1972 saw the company spend £38.02 million in all the above categories, of which £12.88 million was received by the Midlands; and in 1973, the last year for which figures are available,

¹⁰ The significant increases in both the totals for programmes in general and regional programmes in particular can be attributed to the increase in programme hours in the early 1970s.

ATV spent £45.55 million on its television interests, with regional programming receiving £11.62 million¹¹ (ATV: 1970: 15; 1971: 19; 1972: 30; 1973: 31). These figures would have been used by ATV to demonstrate its determination to continue to deliver regional programmes to an acceptable standard (Interview with Charles Denton, 2001).

From the above table, it can be seen that ATV devoted between one-quarter and one-third of its broadcasting hours to regional programmes, with the majority of the network programmes in areas such as drama, light entertainment, and outside broadcasts, with the company demonstrating its expertise and knowledge in all of these fields. It is not surprising that variety programmes played a large part in ATV's overall programme strategy, especially in view of the company's position as the light entertainment 'powerhouse' of the ITV network as a whole (Interview with Charles Denton, 2001). In addition, there was the perception that ATV's regional programmes for the Midlands were not subjected to the same scrutiny as similar programming made by the regional companies, one example of this being Southern Television, which was criticised for the level and quality of its regional programmes in the 1970s.¹² It would therefore appear that ATV's privileged position within the ITV system in general, and within the network companies in particular, ensured that the company's regional programming did not receive as much criticism as it might have done otherwise (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001).

¹¹ The period from 1970-73 would appear to be the only one in which figures for regional programmes in the ITV Midlands region have been ascertained in relation to the programme hours and the total amount spent on ATV's television operation, from which the percentage shares have also been drawn.

¹² The IBA's annual reports of the 1970s did not mention any criticism of Southern Television's regional programming at this time.

Charles Denton's view was not shared by the IBA's Regional Officer for the Midlands from 1977-82, Clare Mulholland, who expressed her surprise and disappointment at the programmes ATV made for the region at this time:

'My impression of [the] programmes was one of shock, because I had expected ATV's regional programmes to be bigger, more elaborate, more hours, and more numerous than HTV in the west of England. In fact, the reverse was true, because at that stage ATV as a company was really still based at Elstree [to the north of London, where ATV had its main production studios], and although it had a different management in Birmingham, I felt from day one that it did not reflect the whole multi-racial nature [of the region], and that is my main observation, never mind criticism. My main observation was that, if you lived in any one of the Midlands cities and you looked at the population, and you looked on the screen, you didn't see that reflected in local programmes, and I told ATV that early on in our relationship'. (Interview, 2001)

Clare Mulholland's time in the Midlands coincided with the IBA's decision to provide information on the number of broadcasting hours that the ITV network companies (including ATV) devoted to regional programming, instead of adding the number of hours for regional programmes for each network company into one combined total, as had been the case until the late 1970s. Table 5.2 therefore provides information on the weekly averages of hours devoted to regional programming by both ATV and Central from 1978-84, which is compared with the IBA's minimum weekly requirements in this period. This table reveals that both ATV and Central met the requirements laid down by the IBA in respect of regional programming during this

period, with Central beginning the process of establishing programmes for the East and West Midlands only.

TABLE 5.2

PRODUCTIONS FOR LOCAL INTERESTS BY ITV COMPANIES IN THE
MIDLANDS, 1978-84

Year Ended	1 April 1979	30 March 1980	29 March 1981
ITV Company	ATV	ATV	ATV
Weekly Average	6 hrs 42 mins	6 hrs 59 mins (Adjusted on basis of number of days on air)	7 hrs 25 mins
IBA Minimum	6 hrs 30 mins	6 hrs 30 mins	6 hrs 30 mins
Weekly Requirement			

Year Ended	4 April 1982	3 April 1983
ITV Company	ATV (April – December 1981)/ Central (January –March 1982)	Central
Weekly Average	7 hrs 32 mins (to December 1981)/ 8 hrs 1 min (from January 1982)	7 hrs 37 mins
IBA Minimum	6 hrs 30 mins (to December 1981)/	11 hrs
Weekly Requirement	11 hrs (from January 1982)	
IBA requirements for Sub-regions:		
West Midlands only	(3 hrs 30 mins)	(3 hrs 30 mins)
East Midlands only	(3 hrs 30 mins)	(3 hrs 30 mins)

Year Ended	1 January 1984	30 December 1984
ITV Company	Central	Central
Weekly Average	8 hrs 15 mins	10 hrs 49 mins
(Total Production)		
Sub-regional averages:		
West Midlands only	(51 mins)	3 hrs 45 mins
East Midlands only	(51 mins)	3 hrs 45 mins
IBA Minimum	11 hrs	10 hrs 30 mins
Weekly Requirement		
IBA requirements for		
Sub-regions:		
West Midlands only	(3 hrs 30 mins)	3 hrs 30 mins
East Midlands only	(3 hrs 30 mins)	3 hrs 30 mins

(This information has been taken from the following IBA annual reports: 1978-79: 34; 1979-80: 34; 1980-81: 36; 1981-82: 38; 1982-83: 38; 1983-84: 44; 1984-85: 33.)

ATV’s response to Clare Mulholland’s misgivings was to start a new ‘multi-racial’ programme in 1980 called *Here And Now*, which was created by its producer and presenter, Zia Mohyeddin (in a similar role to that of Melvyn Bragg on LWT’s *The South Bank Show*). This programme was not only retained by Central when it took over from ATV in the Midlands in 1982, but it became one of the most important and influential regional programmes to be broadcast in the region in the 1980s, a role it

continued to fulfil until it ended in 1990 (Interview with Robert Southgate, 2001). Probably the most important legacy of *Here And Now*'s long run was that it helped to create a policy of making regional programmes that were much more 'proactive' in their approaches to the region than those that had gone before,¹³ and this neatly coincided with Central's public commitment to covering the whole of the region, and especially the East Midlands, in a fashion that ATV could not or would not have done (Central, 1985: 4-7). This new policy on regional programmes led to the creation of series featuring the cultural and social life of the region, many of which were introduced by Central's Head of Regional Programmes in the 1980s, Robert Southgate:

'I introduced quite a lot of regional programmes; *Heart Of The Country* was among them. I also introduced some I'd rather not remember. One was called *Gi It Som' Hommer* [Give It Some Hammer], which was a set of local documentaries, in which I let documentary makers "have their heads". This proved to have been a mistake, [as] I once famously had to stand on the stage at Burton-on Trent [in Staffordshire] and apologise to the whole town for the way it had been introduced in one of the programmes in the *Gi It Som' Hommer* series. We also introduced [public] service programmes like [*Central*] *Jobfinder*, which was useful because it kept up our regional minutes and satisfied the IBA and so on, but it actually provided a service, and we did that with a lot of things. We were the first [ITV company], for example, to provide a programme that found homes for children looking for adoption [*Find A Family*], which has been copied by many stations since'. (Interview, 2001)

¹³ *Here And Now* was criticised for celebrating cultural and individual achievements in business and the arts, rather than discussing wider social issues (Cottle, 1993: 209).

Central’s decision to place more emphasis on developing its programmes for the Midlands only was reflected in figures produced by the IBA and the ITC from 1985-92, and which are included in Table 5.3, which provides information on the weekly averages of hours devoted to regional programming during this period, in which Central consistently exceeded the IBA and ITC’s requirements for this type of programming, whilst also creating the Central South sub-region and producing programmes for this area only.

TABLE 5.3
PRODUCTIONS FOR LOCAL INTERESTS BY CENTRAL FOR ITV IN THE
MIDLANDS, 1985-92

Year Ended	30 December 1985	28 December 1986	3 January 1988
ITV Company	Central	Central	Central
Weekly Average	11 hrs 6 mins	12 hrs 2 mins	12 hrs 31 mins
(Total Production)			
Sub-regional averages:			
West Midlands only	4 hrs 1 mins	4 hrs 20 mins	4 hrs 16 mins
East Midlands only	4 hrs 1 mins	4 hrs 20 mins	4 hrs 16 mins
IBA Minimum	10 hrs 30 mins	10 hrs 30 mins	10 hrs 30 mins
Weekly Requirement			
IBA requirements for			
Sub-regions:			
West Midlands only	3 hrs 30 mins	3 hrs 30 mins	3 hrs 30 mins
East Midlands only	3 hrs 30 mins	3 hrs 30 mins	3 hrs 30 mins

Year Ended	1 January 1989	31 December 1989	31 December 1990
ITV Company	Central	Central	Central
Weekly Average	12 hrs 40 mins	16 hrs 7 mins	16 hrs 25 mins
(Total Production)			
Sub-regional averages:			
West Midlands only	4 hrs 21 mins	4 hrs 37 mins	4 hrs 26 mins
East Midlands only	4 hrs 21 mins	4 hrs 37 mins	4 hrs 26 mins
South Midlands only	-	3 hrs 9 mins	3 hrs 53 mins
IBA Minimum	11 hrs 30 mins	14 hrs	14 hrs
Weekly Requirement			
IBA Requirements for			
Sub-regions:			
West Midlands only	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs
East Midlands only	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs
South Midlands only	-	3 hrs	3 hrs

Year Ended	31 December 1991	27 December 1992
ITV Company	Central	Central
Weekly Average	18 hrs 49 mins	19 hrs 55 mins
(Total Production)		
Sub-regional averages:		
West Midlands only	4 hrs 55 mins	5 hrs 10 mins

East Midlands only	4 hrs 55 mins	5 hrs 10 mins
South Midlands only	4 hrs 55 mins	5 hrs 10 mins
ITC Minimum	14 hrs 30 mins	14 hrs 30 mins

Weekly Requirement

ITC Requirements for

Sub-regions:

West Midlands only	4 hrs	4 hrs
East Midlands only	4 hrs	4 hrs
South Midlands only	3 hrs	3 hrs

(This information has been taken from the following IBA and ITC annual reports: 1985-86: 32; 1986-87: 36; 1987-88: 19; 1988-89: 21; 1989-90: 22; 1991: 30; 1992: 35.)

(iv) General regional programmes in the Midlands: 1993 to date

Central's impressive track record of developing a wide range of regional programmes to cater to an increasingly diverse audience continued into the 1990s, but by the middle of the decade, questions began to be asked concerning the future of these programmes, a trend that became more prevalent following Carlton's takeover of Central in 1993/94. In addition, the demise of *Here And Now*¹⁴ meant that a new approach had to be found in respect of programmes aimed at the ethnic minorities, and the responsibility for creating and developing this strand of programming rested with Carlton's former Head of Regional Programmes in the Midlands, Mike Blair:

¹⁴ *Here And Now*'s demise can be attributed to its marginalisation in the schedules, as it was moved from a half-hour slot on Thursday nights to just 20 minutes on Sunday afternoons (Cottle, 1993: 210).

‘[I was appointed] to run a department of around 60 to 80 people, it was to develop a strategy for regional programming, which in my view included coming up with ideas for [new] regional programmes. It was to liaise with the other departments in Birmingham and Nottingham, to make sure that the work was done effectively...It was a programme making job, because I was a programme maker, I was very much “hands-on”, so I was executive producer of nearly all the series that we did, and I came up with the ideas for quite a lot of them, I changed the tone and the style of the things that we were doing...Each head of regional programmes has their own style and their own ways of doing things, have their own ideas about what they would like to see or what they think people like to see, as I did, and so the main duty was to make sure that we had the best regional programmes in the country, and at the right price!

‘I had looked for quite some time at what we were doing and how we were reflecting the diversity of the Midlands, and in conjunction with the Managing Director [of Carlton in the Midlands] Ian Squires, I thought that perhaps we were not doing enough to reflect cultural diversity in mainstream programming. I sat down with a number of groups and asked them “What do you want to see”? (This was how *Drumbeat* began.) There had been [multi-cultural] programmes in the past made by both Central and Carlton, and it appeared to me that ethnic groups wanted to see something that reflected their lives more, but didn’t want it to be exclusive, and so we tried to achieve that with *Drumbeat*...[It] was a wonderful mixture of music and chat, and it tackled some serious subjects, such as racism between different ethnic groupings as well as racism between the [white] majority and the minorities, it looked at inter[-racial] marriages, it had great music and good comedians, and the whole idea was to try and make it

accessible to anyone who switched on, that anyone would find it interesting and enjoyable. We achieved that partly, the research showed that the people who watched it said that they got a good deal out of it. The problem was that, like many regional programmes that are “close to the edge” in terms of content, they tend to go out quite late [at night], in which case you are facing opposition from Channel 4 or Channel 5, or something on satellite, so in terms of ratings *[Drumbeat]* didn’t do dramatically well, but in terms of the profile it was great. We also gave an opportunity to talent from the Midlands to express themselves, new presenters who weren’t quite off the street, but were people who had never done it before, and I was very proud of that, we actually gave a lot of people opportunities.

‘Moving on to *Soul Music*, we are obliged to have an amount of religious output. In the past, it was the traditional church service, and then [my predecessor] made religious-based documentaries. I thought that we were being slightly exclusive, not inclusive, in that kind of programming, and so I asked myself “What were the areas of religions I liked”? I thought it was music, which was the one strand that connects many religions, that whatever they are, they often celebrate their faith with music. I am a huge “world music” fan, and I saw it as an opportunity to do two things: to meet our requirements, which are very important, and also to have a music show that would be so different, interesting, and challenging, and yet really uplifting, and not just spiritually, in the sense that everyone would rush out to a church, a temple, or a mosque, but people would actually listen and say “This is great fun”! There was a huge range [of music], from Hindi music to Islamic rappers to reggae artists to country and gospel singers, and we actually attracted some very big names,

because word got around that here was a show with a difference. The only show that *[Soul Music]* could have been compared to, in a strange way, was [the BBC's] *Later With Jools Holland*, because it had that same feel about it, and yet we did that on a regional programming budget, we made that show for £25,000 per half-hour, with four or five bands in each show. That was one of those [programmes] that I was incredibly proud of, because that was not intended, and never was intended, as a show that was ethnic or [something that would have been made] in a trite sense, but it was intended as a real “multi-cultural” celebration, a show that was accessible to everybody, because it had that common thread, it had music’. (Interview, 2001)

The importance of *Drumbeat* and *Soul Music* to Carlton's overall regional programming for the Midlands was recognised at a national level, with *Soul Music* being nominated for ‘Best Regional Programme’ in the Royal Television Society (RTS) awards in 2000, and *Drumbeat* winning the ‘Best TV Entertainment’ category in the Campaign for Racial Equality (CRE)'s Race in the Media Awards 2001 (Letter from Duncan Rycroft, 2001). Both these shows have played their part in Carlton Central's policy of producing programmes with the intention of reflecting the region's cultural diversity, and these include the programmes made in the company's Nottingham newsroom, such as *Asian Eye*, *Eastern Mix*, and *Spotlight Asia* (Interview with John Mitchell, 2001).

Central and Carlton's commitment to the Midlands in general and programmes made for the region in particular is shown in Tables 5.4 and 5.5, which provide evidence of the average weekly hours achieved by both companies with regard to regional programming, which consistently exceeded the ITC's required weekly

average of 15 hours 21 minutes. In Table 5.5, full details are provided on the various categories of regional programmes produced by Central and Carlton from 1997 to 2000.

TABLE 5.4
NEW AND REPEAT REGIONAL PROGRAMME HOURS PROVIDED BY ITV
COMPANIES IN THE MIDLANDS (CENTRAL AND CARLTON), 1993-2000

Year	ITV Company/ Licensee	Average [Hours] Per Week (Per Viewer – Excluding additional sub-regional programmes)		Percentage variations
		Hours Required	Hours Achieved	
1993	Central	15 hrs 21 mins	19 hrs 26 mins	26.60
1994	Central	15 hrs 21 mins	19 hrs 34 mins	27.47
1995	Central	15 hrs 21 mins	19 hrs 35 mins	27.58
1996	Central	15 hrs 21 mins	19 hrs 10 mins	24.86
1997	Central	15 hrs 21 mins	18 hrs 21 mins	19.54
1998	Central	15 hrs 21 mins	17 hrs 43 mins	15.41
1999	Central	15 hrs 21 mins	17 hrs 17 mins	12.60
2000	Carlton	15 hrs 21 mins	17 hrs 39 mins	14.98

(This information has been taken from the following ITC annual reports: 1993: 22; 1994: 26; 1995: 28; 1996: 30; 1997: 35; 1998: 31; 1999: 29; 2000: 72.)

TABLE 5.5

**SUMMARY OF REGIONAL PROGRAMMES ON CENTRAL AND CARLTON,
1997-2000**

(i) Weekly Licence Requirements for Central and Carlton, 1997-2000

Programme Category	Weekly Licence Requirements	Percentage share
News	4 hrs 15 mins	27.69
Factual	2 hrs 50 mins	18.46
Education	8 mins	0.87
Religion	7 mins	0.76
Arts	20 mins	2.17
Jobfinder	7 hrs	45.60
Entertainment	8 mins	0.87
Sport	33 mins	3.58
Total	15 hrs 21 mins	100.00

(ii) Weekly Amounts Achieved by Central and Carlton, 1997-2000

Year	Programme Category	Weekly Amounts Achieved	Percentage share
1997	News	6 hrs 11 mins	33.69
	Factual	3 hrs 4 mins	16.71
	Education	9 mins	0.82
	Religion	13 mins	1.18
	Arts	21 mins	1.91
	Jobfinder	6 hrs 59 mins	38.06

	Entertainment	14 mins	1.27
	Sport	1 hr 10 mins	6.36
	Total	18 hrs 21 mins	100.00
	(consisting of: First Run	17 hrs 30 mins	95.37
	Repeat	51 mins	4.63)
1998	News	5 hrs 57 mins	33.58
	Factual	3 hrs 11 mins	17.97
	Education	11 mins	1.03
	Religion	9 mins	0.85
	Arts	21 mins	1.98
	Jobfinder	7 hrs 2 mins	39.70
	Entertainment	13 mins	1.22
	Sport	39 mins	3.67
	Total	17 hrs 43 mins	100.00
	(consisting of: First Run	16 hrs 45 mins	94.54
	Repeat	58 mins	5.46)
1999	News	5 hrs 56 mins	34.33
	Factual	2 hrs 57 mins	17.07
	Education	10 mins	0.96
	Religion	10 mins	0.96
	Arts	20 mins	1.93
	Jobfinder	7 hrs	40.50

Entertainment	8 mins	0.77
Sport	36 mins	3.47
Total	17 hrs 17 mins	100.00

(consisting of: First Run	16 hrs 30 mins	95.47
Repeat	47 mins	4.53)

2000	News	6 hrs	34.00
	Factual	2 hrs 57 mins	16.72
	Education	10 mins	0.94
	Religion	10 mins	0.94
	Arts	21 mins	1.98
	Jobfinder	7 hrs 17 mins	41.26
	Entertainment	8 mins	0.76
	Sport	36 mins	3.40
	Total	17 hrs 39 mins	100.00
	(consisting of: First Run	16 hrs 51 mins	95.47
	Repeat	48 mins	4.53)

(This information has been taken from the following ITC annual reports: 1997: 77; 1998: 70; 1999: 17; 2000: 97.)

The above table reveals that Central and Carlton exceeded its licence requirement for news by up to two hours a week, but this meant that the percentage shares in the other programme categories were mainly below those for the requirement. In the year 2001, Carlton Central continued to exceed the annual requirement for the number of regional programme hours, achieving a total of 920 hours against an annual requirement of 801 hours, with the annual requirement being exceeded by almost 15 per cent (ITC, 2001a: 53).

From Mike Blair's account, it is clear that ITV in the Midlands has made significant progress in its regional programming over the years, to the extent that the programmes themselves have been recognised at a national level. Unfortunately, it was inevitable that there would be casualties in this area, and some of the debates concerning regional programmes concerned whether these programmes should be mainly confined to leisure and lifestyle pursuits, or whether they should also reflect the experiences of the various communities living in the region. In addition, changes in society in general, leading to the rise of a 'free market' economy, meant that programmes devoted to community issues came under increasing threat, and one of the most notable departures was the enduring and hugely popular feature, *Police Five*,¹⁵ which finished at the end of 1990 following the decision of its presenter, Shaw Taylor, to end his involvement with it. Although *Police Five* did not manage to create feelings of regionalism as such in its treatment of crime in the Midlands, it still had an important part to play in dealing with this subject throughout the region, with arrests being made in one-third of the cases the police worked on, and the region's police forces relying on the programme, which cost comparatively little to make.

¹⁵ *Police Five* was 'inserted' into *Central News* under the direction of freelance production units (Cottle, 1993: 43).

Unfortunately, Central's management took a different view, and once the company had succeeded in retaining the ITV Midlands licence, it decided not to continue with *Police Five* under another presenter, which indicated that business and economic considerations were gaining the upper hand over community initiatives (Interview with Shaw Taylor, 2001).

Despite this unfortunate end, *Police Five* holds the distinction of being the longest serving regional programme broadcast by ITV in the Midlands (with the exception of the daily evening regional news programme), with this feature lasting from 1962 to 1990 in the region. It is therefore possible to see *Police Five* as an 'on-screen' indicator of ITV's regional programmes in the Midlands over three decades in that it started in the early 1960s at a time when ATV began to be criticised over its commitment to the region, and the feature was used to challenge the company's critics on this matter (ATV, 1964: 10); it complemented the 'leisure and lifestyle' programmes of the 1970s in its treatment of crime in the region (ATV, 1979: 8); and when Central began to cover the Midlands in a more comprehensive manner in the 1980s, *Police Five* continued to play its crucial public service function (Central, 1983: 9). The emergence of a 'free market' approach to society in general eventually made its mark on television, leading to a situation in which programmes fulfilling a 'social action' role came under increasing threat, or as in the case of *Police Five*, disappeared altogether. In recent years, however, the concept of 'community' has undergone something of a revival, and the success of *Drumbeat* and *Soul Music* has proved that programmes made by and for ethnic minority groups can be enjoyed not only by these groups, but also by the general population of the Midlands as a whole, with these projects also receiving recognition on a national basis in their efforts to combine the concepts of regional identity and cultural diversity.

(v) 'The Midlands broadcasting to the nation': the impact of *Crossroads* on ITV in the Midlands

Of all the programmes made by the ITV companies that have served the Midlands over the years, arguably the most popular (and certainly the most notorious) was the long-running soap opera *Crossroads*, the original version of which was broadcast from 1964 to 1988, when Central decided to finish the programme. This short account will explain the reasons behind the creation of the soap, along with the extent to which it attempted to create or reflect a distinctive regional identity for the Midlands in a national context.

The impetus to start a soap opera based in and promoting the concept of the Midlands came from Lew Grade, who wanted to see a daily programme to be broadcast at 4.30 pm, which would reflect the life of the region, whilst also being accepted in the rest of the country. It was Grade's idea that this programme was to have been about two sisters, and was to be called 'Midland Road'. The soap's original writers, Hazel Adair and Peter Ling, rejected this suggestion, and instead renamed the soap 'Crossroads' to signify the name of the motel where the programme would be set, the point at which the lives of the two sisters who were intended to be the main characters would meet, and an identification with the Midlands as a crossroads for the country as a whole. In the event, *Crossroads* became a vehicle for the talents of its star, Noele Gordon, whose association with ATV began in 1956 when she was one of the company's original producers in the Midlands (along with Ned Sherrin and *Crossroads*' first producer, Reg Watson). It is fair comment to

suggest that there were strong similarities between Noele Gordon and her character, Meg Richardson (later Meg Mortimer), leading to an intertwining between the actor and her character over the years (Hobson, 1982: 36-39).

It was in the 1970s that *Crossroads* reached a peak in its influence and popularity, and it was at this time that the soap became synonymous with the Midlands in the eyes of many people around the country, as a result of being one of the most important programmes to be broadcast by the ITV network as a whole. This situation arose as a result of the motel being situated in a fictional village called 'King's Oak' (lying between Birmingham and Stratford-upon Avon), a deliberate move that was doubtless meant to contrast with *Coronation Street*, which was set in inner-city Manchester. The main legacy of *Crossroads* at this time was that it raised the concept of the Midlands in the public consciousness in a way that would never have occurred otherwise, even though it was criticised for reflecting the West Midlands and the Birmingham area only, which was exactly the same criticism ATV faced over its regional news programming (see Chapter Six for further details). On the other hand, the soap acted as a force for social change, with the most notable development in this respect being the creation of the 'Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme', which was developed from one of the characters in the soap being confined to a wheelchair. This scheme was first introduced in Rugby on an experimental basis before it was accepted at a national level, and ensured that disabled people would be cared for if their relatives chose to take a holiday or a break of any nature (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 9 February 1981).

Although large sections of the general public saw *Crossroads* as 'the Midlands broadcasting to the nation', this view was not shared by people involved with the

programme itself, who believed that there was no distinctive regional identity as such, with the only character with an authentic Birmingham accent being 'Amy Turtle' (played by Ann George). As the rest of the cast (including Noele Gordon) came from outside the Midlands, there were calls for more characters who would represent the region, but this did not happen, and the soap was one of the ATV programmes that Central inherited when it started broadcasting to the region in 1982, before it was finally axed in 1988. One of the reasons for the programme's demise was the perception that Central was embarrassed about *Crossroads*' popularity and was therefore not committed to it, in contrast to *Coronation Street*, which Granada used as its 'flagship' programme (Interview with Tony Adams, 2002).

The decision to finish the original version of *Crossroads* was taken by Central's then Director of Programmes, Andy Allan, who wanted to introduce new drama series, but was unable to do this, as the major ITV companies had a quota of programmes that could be shown on the network under a points system, and with *Crossroads* taking up Central's drama points, there was no opportunity for these new programmes to be made. In addition, the audience for the soap was ageing, with younger people not replacing the original audience, which was dying out by the mid-1980s, and any attempts to modernise it were resisted by the old audience, who wanted it to continue in the same way that it had done since the mid-1960s. As a result of these problems, the decision was taken to finish the original *Crossroads*, which allowed Central to make new drama series such as *Inspector Morse*, despite the effect on the Birmingham studios, where the soap was made (Interview with Andy Allan, 2001).

As an example of Donald Read's 'outward-looking regionalism' (see Chapter Four for further details), *Crossroads* enjoyed a level of success and influence, especially at its peak in the 1970s, when it attracted viewing figures of around 16 or 17 million people, that nobody, including Lord Grade himself, could have predicted. From ATV's point of view, the idea that *Crossroads* was to be regarded as a 'Midlands interest' programme, which had a strong Midlands influence, but was also intended to appeal to as wide an audience as possible, was one that was accepted by its viewers, and as such it provided effective competition for Granada's *Coronation Street* in the 1960s and 1970s. This emphasis on attempting to combine the soap with the concept of the Midlands in general did not find favour with its critics, who argued that more resources should have been allocated to making programmes that would have promoted the concept of regional identity, instead of concentrating on a fictitious entity, whose imaginary capital was the Crossroads Motel (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). Unfortunately, the 1980s saw the soap fall into a terminal decline, with some of the reasons for this including Noele Gordon's departure in the early 1980s, and Central's alleged failure to accept *Crossroads* as one of its own programmes, believing it to be an ATV production instead (Interview with Tony Adams, 2002). It was the lack of any regional perspectives that was one of the most notable features of the 'new' version of *Crossroads* (which started broadcasting in March 2001), and this version of the soap (which was made by Carlton) concentrated its efforts on trying to attract an audience consisting of young people, in attempting to create a British version of *Neighbours* or *Home And Away*.¹⁶ It was probably inevitable that the regional dimension played no part in the new *Crossroads*, and it therefore seems highly unlikely that there will be another programme in the future

¹⁶ *Crossroads* was 'relaunched' at the end of 2002, but due to poor ratings, it was axed in 2003 (*Daily Mirror*, 11 March 2003).

that will bring the concept of the Midlands to the attention of a national audience in the same way that *Crossroads* was able to do, especially in the 1970s. Finally, although *Crossroads* failed in its intention of creating a definite regional identity for the Midlands, the soap will still be remembered, amongst other factors, for the special role it played as ‘the Midlands broadcasting to the nation’

(vi) Conclusion

The role that the various regional programmes broadcast by ITV in the Midlands have played over the years has been a crucial factor in the channel’s overall success from the 1950s to date. There is a strong case for the argument that these regional programmes are more important today than ever before, and Carlton Central has made every effort to produce programmes that ensure that there is ‘something for everyone’, ranging from the weekly political review *It’s Your Shout* to the motoring magazine *Pulling Power*, and from the multi-cultural programmes *Drumbeat* and *Soul Music* to the local history showcase *Heart Of The Country* (made by the independent company Kingfisher Productions). (*Blue Book of British Broadcasting 2001*, 2001: 101.) A review of these programmes has revealed a change in emphasis from the traditional ‘leisure and lifestyle’ shows produced by ATV, such as *Angling Today* and *Gardening Today*, which were based in specific locations and emphasised the idea of ‘sense of place’, and Central and Carlton’s programmes listed above, in which the concept of ‘sense of region’ is more prevalent and noticeable than was the case in the past, and therefore the regional programmes attempt to cover the region in full, rather than concentrating on one particular location.

The subject of regional programmes for the Midlands in general is one that has been discussed in detail over the years. One of the most passionate supporters of these

programmes is Carlton's former Head of Regional Programmes in Birmingham, who is currently the Editor of Central News East based in Nottingham, Mike Blair:

'I think we've got to be very clear about regional programming... If a programme goes out specifically for the East, West, or South [Midlands], they are about those areas, whereas the pan-regional programmes go out everywhere, but to me what was always important about any kind of programmes we made were that they reflected the region, but they had [to have] a universal appeal, which is why so many of our regional programmes have been sold on to other parts of the country, and indeed Carlton International, which is the distribution arm, has sold them to different parts of the world, because they have a universal appeal, they were about people or they were human stories...The [element] that makes programmes work, whether they are regional, sub-regional, or network, is to make sure that they have a universal appeal to the viewer, and we tried to do that, sometimes extremely successfully, sometimes not so successfully, with any series we did in the region, whether it was pan-[regional] or sub-regional.

'In terms of regionality, Carlton reflects the differences, but celebrates the similarities with the regional programmes, which goes back to finding the common threads that unites the Midlands, so the job of regional programmes is to do that. You wouldn't make an entire series about one tiny place in the East or West Midlands, unless there was something that was common to everybody. People in the East Midlands wouldn't be particularly interested in the Bull Ring [in Birmingham city centre] being knocked down, but if you made a series about the people who work in the Bull Ring and the lives of the Birmingham market traders, people would understand what was happening, you could do a story

about Birmingham Children's Hospital, because there is a common thread there, the experiences of people going into a maternity unit in Birmingham are the same as the experiences of people going into a maternity unit in Nottingham, Leicester, or Oxford. The best way of saying it is that the [regional] news reflects the diversity, whilst pan-regional programming celebrates what brings the whole of the Midlands together'. (Interview, 2001)

Another view on Carlton Central's regional programmes for the Midlands came from the company's Controller of News and Operations in Birmingham, Laurie Upshon:

'It is a delight to see [all these] programmes [on screen] such as *Waterworld*, *Heart Of The Country*, and *Motorway*, but one of the problems is that they are so well produced that the viewers don't realise that they are regional, and the feeling is that they are [ITV] network programmes. We felt it necessary to capitalise on the fact that these are programmes that are thought up, made, and transmitted within the region'. (Interview, 2001)

Finally, Central and Carlton's contribution to regional programmes for the Midlands was assessed by Central's former Chairman and Chief Executive, Leslie Hill:

'Central's programmes in the region were very much appreciated, we put a lot of money into our [regional] programmes, and a lot of hours, more hours than any of the other ITV companies, and we knew from our research that the audience liked our programmes...When I looked at [regional] programmes around the country, and where I lived near Bristol in the HTV area, I never watched too much of HTV, but I recognised that when I joined Central, how

much better on the whole Central's programmes in the Midlands were than HTV's programmes in the west of England, and so we were very strong in that regard. I think that Carlton has maintained that strength; some research was done post-Carlton's acquisition of Central, which illustrated that the appreciation of the regional service had gone up...I think that Carlton has built on what Central did, and it is probably an even better service [in 2001] than it was in 1993/94'. (Interview, 2001)

In the light of the above comments, it is to be hoped that the tradition of programmes made for the Midlands only by all the companies that have represented ITV in the region since the mid-1950s will continue into the future, as this is by far the best and easiest way for the people of the Midlands to see that their lives, interests, ambitions, and leisure pursuits are being reflected by their regional television provider. It is also to be hoped that whoever represents ITV in the Midlands in the future will have the bravery and foresight to produce programmes such as *Drumbeat* and (especially) *Soul Music*, which have been made with the clear intention of breaking down any barriers that might exist between different communities living in the region. This in turn would help to keep alive Sir Robert Fraser's vision of regional broadcasting, in which people would have a platform to express their views that would not have existed elsewhere.

CHAPTER SIX: 'NEWS AND VIEWS': NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS, AND SPORTS PROGRAMMES MADE BY ITV IN THE MIDLANDS

(i) Introduction

The history of ITV in the twentieth century was closely connected with the concept of regional broadcasting in general, and with programmes reflecting a wide range of regional concerns in particular. Although there have been regional programmes covering numerous subjects over the years, undoubtedly the most important programmes in this field have been the daily evening 'regional news' magazines, all of which have prospered during the last 40 years, with the Midlands being no exception in this regard. It will therefore be necessary to look at the regional news and associated programmes, including current affairs and sport, to determine the extent to which the ITV companies in the Midlands were able to create or reflect regional identity through this 'factual' programming. As with the previous chapter, the information to be found here has been derived from a mixture of research, secondary sources, and the interviews that have been undertaken for this project, with contributions coming from the people responsible for these programmes, featuring presenters, producers, and outside observers.

(ii) Regional news programmes made by ITV in the Midlands

As has already been noted, ATV was responsible for introducing the first regional news bulletin in the ITV system when it started *ATV Midlands News* in 1956, with the intention of covering as much of the region as was possible.¹ When the other ITV regions around the country started broadcasting, they also began their own regional news programmes, so in effect a network of regional news was created by all the ITV companies by the mid-1960s. The importance of regional news to the companies

¹ See Chapter Five (p. 166) for further details.

increased over the years as a result of the connection between these programmes and the various corporate and commercial contexts in which they have supported many corporate and programming roles. These have included the position of regional news as a 'flagship' for ITV in general and individual corporate identity, with the news providing the viewers with an introduction to the various companies around the country; these companies using regional news in their attempts to retain their licences, in that they could show broadcasting authorities such as the IBA and the ITC their commitment to their regions by providing excerpts from the programmes; the ability of regional news to act as a 'schedule tool', with regional news being broadcast in the hour from 6.00pm to 7.00 pm; the part played by regional news in helping to build a 'mass audience', which has led to increases in the ratings, more interest from the advertisers, and larger profits being made as a result; and the 'inheritance' factor, based on the concept that people watching a particular channel from 6.00 pm to 7.00 pm will remain with that channel for the rest of the evening's viewing. In addition, the Broadcasting Act 1990 stated that the ITV companies had to produce 'quality regional programming', with regional news regarded as a crucial element in this area; and this emphasis on regionalism was also adopted by the ITC, whose guidelines to the licence holders of the 1990s included the provision of a strong regional service and a thorough knowledge of the regions, with a commitment to the regions' needs being provided through the companies' programmes and other activities (Cottle, 1993: 37-41, 67-68). Before this time, any commitments to regional programming were structured in a more generalised form, with the position in the 1970s being that the IBA was to ensure 'proper proportions' of material of British origin for ITV, with each region creating a 'suitable proportion' of material to appeal to the aims and interests of viewers in the regions, which would in turn lead to this material

contributing to the overall 'tone' of ITV as experienced by ordinary viewers around the country (IBA, 1973-74: 29).

It was inevitable that the ITV regions would have different experiences around the country, and for the 'regional' companies such as Anglia Television, who had few responsibilities regarding the ITV network as a whole, it was a relatively simple task to produce a wide range of regional programmes, with special emphasis on creating an effective news service for their regions. In the cases of the 'network' companies such as ATV and ABC in the Midlands in the 1960s, the regional dimension played a secondary role compared to the requirement to produce programmes for, and to operate, the ITV network at weekends.² The geographical dimension is also important in this regard, as regions with clearly defined boundaries could target their programmes at specific audiences, as opposed to the ITV companies in the Midlands, who were surrounded by rivals from around the country, and ATV became the 'test case' in being the first ITV company to provide regional news on a regular basis, which meant that the other companies around the country were able to learn from ATV's treatment of regional news, and develop their own views on their regions accordingly (Interview with Ned Sherrin, 2001). Probably the most important aspect of ITV in the Midlands in the 1960s, however, was the 'split franchise', which resulted in ATV being restricted in its regional news coverage to weekdays, and ABC having to cover the North as well as the Midlands at weekends, so a cohesive approach to the region became almost impossible at this time (Interview with Bob Gillman, 2001).

² See Chapter Two (p.84) for further details.

In ATV's case, the *ATV Midlands News* bulletin, which had been running since 1956, continued into the 1960s, but following the first renewal of the ITV franchise in 1963, the ITA criticised ATV over its programmes for the Midlands only, which were not considered to have adequately reflected the region and its needs. In particular, the company was accused by the Authority of making no attempt to improve its overall structure of programming, as well as criticising ATV for its proposal to place all 'programmes of Midland interest' between 6.00 and 7.00 pm, a time slot that would have made it impossible to deal with subjects that were unsuitable for children³ (ITA, 1963c: 4-5). As a result of this criticism, the company was obliged to make various changes to its regional programmes, which were described by the former News Editor of *ATV Midlands News*, Bob Gillman:

'We started off with *ATV Midlands News*, and we had a "magazine" programme called *Midland Montage*, and we then decided to put both these programmes together and call [the new programme] *ATV Today*...It was a necessity to do everything from Birmingham at that time, because there wasn't anywhere else, we didn't have film crews out and about in the region...In those days, there were no electronic cameras around, we had to cover most of the region by film, which we did fairly comprehensively, it was a big area to cover, but we felt we covered it satisfactorily, and certainly better than any competition'. (Interview, 2001)

At about the same time as *ATV Today* started (in the autumn of 1964), ABC was also determined to raise its profile in the Midlands, as Roy Bottomley remembered:

³ See Chapter Five (p. 171) for further details.

‘This was a pretty tough assignment, because ATV broadcast to the Midlands on weekdays, and I had to come into Aston [Birmingham] and run the newsdesk on Saturdays. Apart from sport, as most journalists know, Saturday is a notoriously slow news day, and so I backed up the newscast with “mini-features”, rather like running a Sunday newspaper, so that if there no big stories breaking, then at least you had something to show for twenty minutes, so I had these stories that I could always drop if a big news story started to break, which happened on various occasions. It meant that we were the only people presenting “hard news” on air over the weekend, because in those days news coverage stopped at weekends, people packed up and went home, but when that happened, ABC was only just starting on news.

‘ATV had a fairly limitless supply of breaking news during the week, whether it was about industrial disputes or council meetings, whereas at the weekend that all came to a halt. We [at ABC] had to concentrate more on features, but we were able to bring breaking news, especially relating to sport’.
(Interview, 2001)

The success of the various news and current affairs programmes made by the ITV companies serving the Midlands in the 1960s, and *ATV Today* in particular, can be seen in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, which provide evidence of the most popular factual programmes broadcast in the region during this decade, in which programmes made by both ATV and ABC appear.

TABLE 6.1

AUDIENCES FOR 'SERIOUS' PROGRAMMES IN ITV MIDLANDS REGION,
1963-66⁴

1963 (most popular serious programmes during two weeks ended 31 March 1963)

Details of programmes	Programmes made by	Percentage of homes viewing
<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	ITN	43
<i>Your Life In Their Hands</i>	BBC	40
<i>All Our Yesterdays</i>	Granada	35
<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	BBC	35
<i>Look Around</i>	ATV	33
<i>Sabotage In South Africa</i>	BBC	32
<i>This Week</i>	Associated-Rediffusion	32
<i>Roving Report</i>	ITN	31
<i>How To Run A Railway</i>	Granada	31
<i>Come Into The Garden</i>	ATV	31

1964 (most popular serious programmes during two weeks ended 29 March 1964)

Details of programmes	Programmes made by	Percentage of homes viewing
<i>Unmarried Mothers</i>	Granada	49
<i>All Our Yesterdays</i>	Granada	45
<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	ITN	44
<i>Look Around</i>	ATV	43
<i>World In Action (on</i>	Granada	42
Great Train Robbery)		

⁴ This table represents the only occasion in which viewing figures are provided for programmes made for the ITV Midlands region only.

<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	BBC	40
<i>This Week</i>	Rediffusion	38
<i>On The Braden Beat</i>	ATV	37
<i>Death In The Morning</i>	BBC	35
<i>Second City Reports</i>	Granada	35

1965 (most popular serious programmes during two weeks ended 21 March 1965)

Details of programmes	Programmes made by	Percentage of homes viewing
<i>This Week</i>	Rediffusion	56
<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	ITN	54
<i>All Our Yesterdays</i>	Granada	49
<i>Cinema</i>	Granada	47
<i>ATV Today</i>	ATV	43
<i>World In Action</i>	Granada	39
<i>A Face In The Crowd</i>	Rediffusion	33
<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	BBC	31
<i>The Strange Case Of Rudolph Hess</i>	ATV	30
<i>Voyage Into England</i>	BBC	29

1966 (most popular serious programmes during two weeks ended 6 March 1966)

Details of programmes	Programmes made by	Percentage of homes viewing
<i>Cinema</i>	Granada	47
<i>Survival</i>	Anglia	43
<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	ITN	43

<i>ATV Today</i>	ATV	43
<i>The World Tomorrow</i>	Granada	36
<i>South Of Suez</i>	ATV	35
<i>Main News (Weekdays)</i>	BBC	35
<i>This Week</i>	Rediffusion	31
<i>What Price Peace?</i>	Granada	29
<i>ABC Weekend</i>	ABC	28

(This information has been taken from the following ITA annual reports: 1962-63: 33; 1963-64: 12; 1964-65: 9; 1965-66: 9.)

TABLE 6.2

AUDIENCES FOR NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES IN ITV
MIDLANDS REGION, 1967-69

1967 (most popular news and current affairs programmes in week ended 12 March)

Details of programmes	Days of Transmission	Times of Transmission	Percentage of Homes Viewing	Number of Homes (000s)
<i>ITN News</i>	Weekdays	8.55 pm	50	1, 210
<i>ATV Today</i>	Weekdays	6.15 pm	40	970
<i>[ATV] Midlands News</i>	Weekdays	6.05 pm	37	900
<i>ITN News</i>	Weekdays	5.55 pm	34	820
<i>This Week</i>	Thursday	9.15 pm	34	820

1968 (most popular news and current affairs programmes in week ended 31 March)

Details of programmes	Days of Transmission	Times of Transmission	Percentage of Homes Viewing	Number of Homes (000s)
<i>World In Action</i>	Monday	8.00 pm	38	950
<i>ITN News At Ten</i>	Weekdays	10.00 pm	36	900
<i>ATV Today</i>	Weekdays	6.15 pm	33	830
<i>[ATV] Midlands News</i>	Weekdays	6.06 pm	32	800
<i>ITN News</i>	Weekdays	5.55 pm	30	750
<i>This Week</i>	Thursday	8.30 pm	29	730
<i>Midland Member</i>	Friday	11.03 pm	21	530

1969 (most popular news and current affairs programmes in week ended 16 March)

Details of programmes	Days of Transmission	Times of Transmission	Percentage of Homes Viewing	Number of Homes (000s)
<i>World In Action</i>	Monday	8.03 pm	38	960
<i>[ITN] News At Ten</i>	Weekdays	10.00 pm	35	908
<i>ATV Today</i>	Weekdays	6.10 pm	35	902
<i>[ATV] Midlands News</i>	Weekdays	6.01 pm	33	836
<i>ITN News</i>	Weekdays	5.50 pm	30	762
<i>This Week</i>	Thursday	9.30 pm	22	550

(This information has been taken from the following ITA annual reports: 1966-67: 21; 1967-68: 31-32; 1968-69: 24-25.)

There can be no doubt that ATV and ABC had real difficulties to contend with in terms of providing an effective regional news service for the whole of the Midlands, especially with reference to the region's large size and the technical limitations that existed in the 1960s. The most serious problem confronting both companies, of course, was the 'split franchise', which ensured that coverage of the region lacked the cohesion and clarity that was essential for it to be successful. In this instance, ATV and ABC were not able to provide the comprehensive coverage of the Midlands that the BBC offered for most of the 1960s, so when ATV took over in the region on a full-time basis in the region from 1968 onwards, the company's news team recognised that it could compete with the BBC on an equal footing in being able to offer a comprehensive service throughout the week, rather than being confined to weekdays only as had been the case (Interview with Bob Gillman, 2001). The news team received a further boost in 1970 when ATV opened its new purpose-built studios at Broad Street in Birmingham city centre, which enabled it to offer an improved news service for the whole of the Midlands as a result of the advances in technical resources in the new studios compared to ATV's old Aston base. By this time, the people of the Midlands had accepted *ATV Today* as the region's most popular evening news show (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2 mentioned above), and the programme's 'magazine' ethos led to a product that was broad in content and reliable in its nature (ITA, 1969-70: 24). It was against this background that a young reporter, Bob Warman, started his illustrious television career:

‘I first joined *ATV Today* back in 1973, and I came from BBC local radio, where I had a stint for about a year. I joined a team, very different from the team we have today, for instance the newsroom was almost all male, there was one female reporter in Sue Jay, and there was another woman who did some features, but it was predominantly a male newsroom. I joined *ATV Today* as a reporter on the road, and we were covering a huge region, it hadn’t been subdivided then, so most of my day was actually spent driving to distant parts of the region, and getting back as quickly as I could to get the film into the laboratories for processing by three o’clock in the afternoon. There was always a “cut-off” point of three o’clock, anything later than that and it couldn’t make the programme that evening, so there was always a desperate race against time. Of course, we’re still up against the time element today, but it was rather different then, my earliest memories of these days are of travelling literally hundreds of miles, with not such a sophisticated motorway network [as today], under severe pressure, always to get the story back’. (Interview, 2001)

When he was asked about how *ATV Today* attempted to cover the whole of the ITV Midlands region in the 1970s, Bob Warman replied:

‘An attempt [to cover the region] was what it was, because we certainly didn’t have the equipment we have today, we didn’t have the technology that allows us to get news reports back from the scene [of the story] and edited up quickly, it was a much slower process, but we did it pretty well under the circumstances of the time. Our reporting strength was good, and I think our reporting qualities were of a very high standard, but it was a different style of programme’. (Interview, 2001)

Bob Warman identified one of the biggest changes to regional news in general and *ATV Today* in particular:

‘I think that the moment we changed from film to tape meant that we were able to speed [everything] up, and also meant that we were able to create a lot of our programmes on location rather than in the studio, it was much less studio based, so those items that we did in the studio couldn’t be done so easily out on site. The technology changed so that we were able to do much shorter, much faster, news reports, and I think that steered us towards a different style of programme’. (Interview, 2001)

Another account of ATV’s news coverage of the Midlands at this time came from a sports reporter who joined the company in the late 1970s, Nick Owen:

‘[The Midlands] was a massive region; it wasn’t split as it is now, so from a personal point of view, I would be travelling all over the place. Some mornings, I might be going to interview the manager of Mansfield [football team], which is a long way north, and then leave that to interview the manager of Swindon, or I would interview the manager of Nottingham Forest, Brian Clough, and then go down to Oxford to interview the manager there. I covered so much mileage, it was absolutely unbelievable, and there were lots of football teams to cover, and that was just football alone, there was also cricket, rugby [union], or whatever. In terms of regional identity, how far is Lincoln [in the East Midlands sub-region] from Cheltenham [in the South Midlands], Shrewsbury and Stoke [in the West Midlands], the centre of Birmingham, completely different places in every

way. I would do a feature in Lincoln and then race back [to Birmingham] to get it edited and on the air that day. It was a fabulous region to cover, there was so much diversity, so much interest, so I think [ATV] did very well, but obviously the stories that got on the air were mostly from Birmingham, Wolverhampton and the Black Country, and Coventry, because they were a bit more immediate and a denser [larger] population, therefore there was likely to be more stories. I'm sure, as is the case now, there is a stronger base of viewers in those conurbations than in places like Hereford, Leamington, Warwick, and so on'. (Interview, 2001)

Although *ATV Today* enjoyed a loyal following throughout the Midlands, there was criticism of the programme in the 1970s, much of which came from the broadcasting authorities at this time, including the ITA, who saw the *ATV Today* title as an attempt by the company not to develop a sense of a distinctive regional identity for the Midlands, but rather to create a viewer loyalty to the company in general. In addition, the programme's aim of covering a variety of subjects from as many areas as possible within the Midlands inevitably led to some of the region's less populous areas being rarely covered, with the pattern of transmitters and economic and geographical factors leading to people in localities as Oxford and Northampton looking to other parts of the country (ITA, 1970-71: 26). It would appear that what the ITA (and the IBA from the early 1970s onwards) wanted ATV to do was to create a Midlands version of 'Granadaland', in which Granada attempted to merge its own identity as a company with the existing identification people had with the north-west, but this was something that ATV failed to achieve during its time in the region (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001).

ATV's reliance on Birmingham and the West Midlands was criticised by people living in other parts of the Midlands, with MPs in the East Midlands complaining about what they believed was ATV's neglect of their area (Potter, 1990: 39), and this led to discussions between ATV and the IBA over *ATV Today* on increasing the coverage given to those parts of the Midlands outside the Birmingham area (IBA, 1973-74: 21). For the IBA's part, it discussed this matter with ATV, and the Authority emphasised the need for the company to avoid concentrating too much on Birmingham, and draw attention to other parts of the Midlands (IBA, 1974-75: 142). This concern over ATV's treatment of the Midlands region as a whole appeared to be well-founded, especially in view of the assertion that ATV remained in the West Midlands only in order to cut costs, and anyone who wanted to travel 25 miles outside Birmingham had to get it authorised by the company's management (Interview with John Mitchell, 2001).

The criticisms of ATV's treatment of the Midlands in the late 1970s came from MPs throughout the region, with MPs in the East Midlands arguing that it had its own distinctive identity that was different to and separate from Birmingham (*Nottingham Evening Post*, 20 October 1977); and MPs in the West Midlands claiming that ATV did not appear to regard itself as a West Midlands television company, as it was based in London, and most of its productions came from Elstree, near London (*Birmingham Evening Post*, 6 January 1978). ATV responded to these criticisms by opening an East Midlands office based in Nottingham in a successful attempt to retain the ITV Midlands franchise, although it was a struggle for the East Midlands to have items accepted in the West Midlands, as the competition for airtime was very fierce, with only one half-hour programme to cover the whole of the region (Interview with John Mitchell, 2001). *Central News* started in Birmingham at the start of 1982, and in

Nottingham a year later, so bringing to an end the practice of one news programme coming from and being based around Birmingham (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001).

Bob Warman explained his views on the 'sub-regions' created by Central in the 1980s:

'The creation of the sub-regions was a development that at first I didn't welcome, because, of course, as the presenter of *Central News*, I was losing a large chunk of my audience. As it turned out, *Central [News] West* has always been the predominant region, and it seems to have the predominant signal. When I go to Leicester, for instance, I am surprised at how many people watch *Central News West*, and the same goes for Derby. We also seem to stretch into parts of the southern region, and so our tentacles stretch out from *Central News West*, which I'm very pleased about. Obviously in commercial terms, it was a very astute move, because one was able to target advertising much more effectively, and put the focus on the sub-regions much more effectively. I think it also worked from the point of view that, as a franchise, and when it came to the last franchise round [in the early 1990s], having created these sub-regions, it was much more difficult for anyone else to take over, and indeed there was no competition for the franchise last time round. As far as the news programme is concerned, we are able to target much more effectively, and we are very fortunate in the West Midlands in having one of the best news areas in the United Kingdom, so there is never any shortage of stories, we don't feel that, just because we've lost the South and East, that we've lost a great source of stories'. (Interview, 2001)

Probably the most notable aspect of Central's treatment of regional news in the 1980s was the development of a 'hard news' approach, which replaced the traditional approach to the genre, in which 'light news' was the dominant factor, and the reasons for this change were described by Central's former Controller of News and Regional Programmes, Robert Southgate:

'I joined Central [in 1985], and I looked at the sub-regions in the East and West Midlands that were being used for news services. I was not convinced that what was being provided was, in fact, news. I joined on 5 November [1985], and I remember going to Nottingham and looking at the news broadcast from Nottingham, and most of the programme consisted of a bonfire being lit and fireworks being set off in the Nottingham studio car park. I looked down the line at what was happening in Birmingham, and there was a similar scene, and having spent ten years with ITN [Independent Television News], I asked myself what this had to do with news. The answer was not a lot, so we set out to change the nature of the programmes that came from the two sub-regions and make them into proper news programmes, rather than the magazines that they had been. There is a huge appetite for local news, as opposed to the magazine values, and this was borne out in all the research we did later, which led to the creation of the third Central "sub-region" [in the South Midlands]. At the time, it was more a gut feeling than a fully researched decision that what was wanted was news and not all these features'. (Interview, 2001)

Central's regional news programmes received a great deal of support from many quarters in the 1980s, but there was some criticism concerning the company's approach to the genre of regional news. This critical approach can be traced back to

the early 1980s, when *Central News* was seen as being a continuation of *ATV Today* in that a 'populist' approach was adopted towards regional news, with characters with specialist interests, such as Shaw Taylor with *Police Five*, and various show business personalities dominating what was supposed to be a news programme for the Midlands. When Robert Southgate took over as Central's Controller of News, the nature of *Central News* changed in that it was transformed into a serious news programme, which worked hard to proclaim itself to be a regional news programme that addressed the diversity of different localities and interests within the region in terms of its stories. The problem with this approach was that it did not have a discernable region that identified with any kind of regional identity, a problem that particularly affected the West Midlands, with its lack of definite localities and distinct identity. In an attempt to solve this problem, *Central News West* placed great emphasis on its determination to cover the whole of the region, rather than just to concentrate on Birmingham as had been the case in the past, a policy that was intended not only to incorporate the people into the region in general, but also indirectly in emphasising the diverse nature of the people living in the region. This was seen as an artificial attempt to construct parts of the community that did not exist in reality, and this policy was closely connected with a tendency to use nostalgia in attempting to recreate the past, with special emphasis on rural rather than urban communities. This resulted in a historicized sense of community being created, which was played out in and through the regional news programme⁵ (Interview with Simon Cottle, 2001).

⁵ Cottle's chapter 'Regional TV news: professionals producing populism' provides a comprehensive account of the production of regional news in the 1980s (Cottle, 1993: 37-68).

The main presenter of *Central News West* in Birmingham, Bob Warman, discussed the question of the extent to which the regional news programmes for the Midlands have attempted to create or reflect feelings of regional identity:

‘I believe that *ATV Today* and *Central News* have created a wonderful regional identity over the years, and we like to think that we are probably more in touch with our viewers than the opposition [the BBC], and I see my job as being the extension of that family that lives in three-up, two-down, Penn, Wolverhampton. I like to think that, in a friendly sort of way, I am bringing them the news every night, being welcomed into their living rooms. I think that’s very important, and, as far as one can nowadays, I would like to think that we were still, in many households, an “appointment to view”, although I think that has gone over the years, I think that is less and less in the households, I don’t think that we are as important as we were many years ago, it’s not important in people’s lives. I think that when I first started on *ATV Today* [in 1973], it really had an importance, and there definitely was an appointment to view, you felt that you were “missing out” if you didn’t see the local news that night. I don’t think that’s the case today, and I think that’s our big challenge’.

(Interview, 2001)

The veteran presenter and reporter on *Central News East* in Nottingham, John Mitchell, also raised the question of regional identity, with regard to his area:

‘You would have to ask the people of the East Midlands as to whether they feel any sense of regional identity, and the answer to that is that [*Central News East*] has had over the years the highest ratings of possibly every local news

programme in the country, apart from Border [Television] with *[Border] News* and *Lookaround*, and we have consistently beaten the BBC for 25 years, it's only been recently that they have caught us up, because of the peculiarities of the time slots, we go on at 6.00 pm, they start at 6.30 pm. There's also the question of national news, which people won't switch over from, it's all affected by that, and that's why we're getting closer to them in terms of audience. Over the years, *Central News East* has beaten our rivals, not just the BBC, but also every other regional programme around the country.

'We try to cover as much of the [East Midlands] region as we possibly can on a daily basis, and we tend to go for the stories that we know are aimed at our largest audience, we don't make any apologies for that. Our audience is effectively [one] that reads the tabloid press, and that's the market we go for. We don't say that we must cover Derby or Northampton or wherever, because we haven't mentioned them for the last three days, the important point is [as follows]: is there a news story there, is that story one that we would cover? [If so] we would go for it'. (Interview, 2001)

The popularity of *Central News* (now renamed *Central News At Six*) is shown in Table 6.3, with the most notable feature being the decline in the programme's audience percentage share following the change in its starting time, from 6.30 pm to 6.00 pm, something it has in common with the other ITV regional news programmes shown throughout the United Kingdom.

TABLE 6.3

**AUDIENCE PERCENTAGE SHARES FOR ITV'S REGIONAL NEWS
PROGRAMMES, 1998-2000**

a) Regions in which programmes ran for 30 minutes from 6.00 pm – 6.30 pm

Regional News Programme	Times of Transmission	Year	Percentage Share
<i>London Tonight</i> (Carlton)	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1998	21.24
<i>London Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1999	17.48
<i>London Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	20.49
<i>Calendar/Calendar News</i> (Yorkshire)	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1998	38.26
<i>Calendar/Calendar News</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1999	32.11
<i>Calendar/Calendar News</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	31.58
<i>Meridian Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1998	42.19
	(Friday: 6pm – 7pm)		
<i>Meridian Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1999	37.56
	(Friday: 6pm – 7pm)		
<i>Meridian Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	36.50
<i>Lookaround</i> (Border)	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1998	48.78
<i>Lookaround</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1999	40.38
<i>Lookaround</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	41.97
<i>Anglia News</i>	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	37.42

<i>Anglia News</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	1999	30 . 10
<i>Anglia News</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	28 . 15

b) Regions in which programmes ran for 30 minutes from 6.30 pm – 7.00 pm

Regional News Programme	Times of Transmission	Year	Percentage Share
<i>Central News</i>	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	35 . 65
<i>Central News</i>	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	28 . 67
<i>Central News At Six</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	28 . 25
<i>North Tonight/Scotland Today</i> (Grampian/Scottish)	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	34 . 17
<i>North Tonight/Scotland Today</i>	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	29 . 10
<i>North Tonight/Scotland Today</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	34 . 63
<i>The West Tonight</i> (HTV)	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	31 . 65
<i>The West Tonight</i>	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	31 . 48
<i>HTV News</i> (Western England)	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	22 . 57
<i>Wales Tonight</i> (HTV)	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	28 . 97
<i>Wales Tonight</i>	6.30 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	26 . 00
<i>HTV News</i> (Wales)	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	23 . 53

c) Regions in which programmes ran for 60 minutes from 6.00 pm – 7.00 pm

Regional News Programme	Times of Transmission	Year	Percentage Share
<i>Granada Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	29 . 27
<i>Granada Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	23 . 96
<i>Granada Tonight</i>	5.30 pm - 6.30 pm	2000	22 . 46
<i>North East Tonight</i> (Tyne Tees)	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	30 . 95
<i>North East Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	23 . 28
<i>North East Tonight</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	25 . 74
<i>Westcountry Live</i>	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	34 . 57
<i>Westcountry Live</i>	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	29 . 45
<i>Westcountry Live</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	29 . 28
<i>UTV Live At Six</i> (Ulster)	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1998	46 . 66
<i>UTV Live At Six</i>	6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	1999	43 . 16
<i>UTV Live At Six</i>	6.00 pm – 6.30 pm	2000	41 . 52

(The above information has been taken from ITC, 2000: 14.)

John Mitchell explained the connections between the other sub-regions (the South and West Midlands), together with the links between *Central News East* and neighbouring ITV companies:

‘*Central News East* now has influences and interactions with not just the other sub-regions, but also with Anglia, Yorkshire, and all the other [ITV]

companies that surround us, but at *Central News East*, we deal with Anglia and Yorkshire on a daily basis, we exchange ideas between each other. That has largely been down to [Carlton Central's Controller of News and Operations] Laurie Upshon, because in the past, we tended to go to the same story, if it was on the borders of our areas, and we covered them individually. Now, we tend to "mix and match", and we exchange stories between ourselves, we give stories to each other'. (Interview, 2001)

Laurie Upshon has brought the story of ITV's regional news coverage in the Midlands up to date:

'There is still a commitment to our news operations, as far as I can see there is no threat to the triple regional [news] structure, because it is enshrined in the legislation, it allows our advertising people to have a vehicle on which to place advertising for local advertisers, which they like, and it's bringing in the audience. It should be remembered that Central South is the smallest of our sub-regions, but in itself it is bigger than five of the other ITV regions (Channel, Westcountry, Border, Ulster, and Grampian) in terms of population.

'The threats that face ITV [regional news] are more to do with network scheduling, programmes that were successful at 6.30 pm [including *Central News*] have not been successful at 6.00 pm, and this is a reflection of the change in the nature of regions. When I first started in Birmingham in 1985, there was still quite a substantial manufacturing base, and the rush hour tended to be from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm. Once the change from manufacturing to the service industries became more universal, the rush hour in Birmingham tends to be from 4.00pm to 7.00 pm. The number of people available to view at 6.00 pm is far

less than it was compared to 1985, and that's true of other industrial centres such as Leeds, Manchester, and Liverpool. I left the Nottingham studio recently to go to a meeting in Derby at 6.00 pm, and I looked at the traffic jam and the people beside me [on the road], and these were people who would be watching the news at home if they could, they were our viewers... The core viewers to regional news are the people who have acquired responsibility, millstones, if you like, mortgages, children, needs for health, education, information about travelling and traffic, these are the people that tend to take an interest in things around them ... Where we used to be on air at 6.30 pm, the move to 6.00 pm has lost us a lot of our audience, and I would dearly love to be back on at 6.30 pm.⁶

'There is a move within ITV to look at more consolidation and more integration of national programming, which I believe would be a mistake, even within the [Carlton] Central region having three separate services, and I stress they are three separate services, they have their own editors, presenters, graphic styles, and music, and I can watch all three from my office in Birmingham, and it's a joy to see the differences between them. Within the [Carlton] Central region, what's interesting to people in Gloucester is not necessarily so interesting to people in Stoke-on-Trent, or [to people] in Nottingham, and so I take great pride in the fact that our three programmes are different, and I would hate to see some sort of homogenised ITV, where we were all brought under one umbrella, with the same graphic style and the same look that the BBC has. The BBC is a first class organisation, that seems to be ploughing massive resources into regional services, including the Internet, but it has an agenda that I don't think ITV should follow. I think ITV should celebrate the differences of the

⁶ See Chapter Two (pp.94-95) for details on the response to this problem from the ITV network.

regions, and not try to create some sort of common link throughout the countries, the nations, and the regions’. (Interview, 2001)

For a final assessment on Carlton’s regional news coverage in the Midlands, it is necessary to examine an edition of *Central News At Six* broadcast from Birmingham and serving the West Midlands sub-region (also known as just the ‘Midlands’ in the programme itself), in which Table 6.4 assesses the extent to which it is possible to measure any attempts to create or reflect feelings of regionalism as a result.

TABLE 6.4

DETAILS ON ITEMS FEATURED IN *CENTRAL NEWS AT SIX* – 21 MAY 2003

- (Programme broadcast from 6.00 pm – 6.30 pm from Birmingham)

Items featured in programme (including details on localities featured)	Duration of items	Percentage share
13,000 new jobs created in ‘Midlands’ (actually in Birmingham suburbs of Fort Dunlop/Longbridge/Digbeth)	3 mins	11.54
Convicted murderer to appeal life sentence (Birmingham)	½ min.	1.92
Ex-police officer not facing charges of abduction (Worcester)	½ min.	1.92
Car identified in hit-and-run accident (Leamington)	1½ mins	5.77
Man charged with murder (Birmingham)	¼ min.	0.96
Vehicle checks in connection with possible Terrorist attacks (General)	¼ min.	0.96

Student found hanged (Shropshire – including Interview with head teacher at student’s school)	1½ mins	5.77
Army officer cross-examined at inquest (Stourport)	1½ mins	5.77
Special feature (on Walsgrave Hospital, Coventry)	3 mins	11.54
‘Pub cricket’ game promoted (Birmingham)	1 min.	3.85
Commercial break	2 mins	7.69
Turtles join Sea Life Centre (Birmingham)	2 mins	7.69
Sports news:		
New manager for Aston Villa Football Club (Birmingham)	2½ mins	9.61
Football fans queue for tickets (Wolverhampton)	1½ mins	5.77
Warwickshire County Cricket Club sign	1 min.	3.85
Pakistan international player (Birmingham)		
Cricket - highlights of Worcestershire County Cricket Club (Worcester - on film)	1 min.	3.85
David Beckham’s new hairstyle – profile of Beckham’s ‘Lookalike twins’ (General)	2 mins	7.69
Florist wins Gold Medal at Chelsea Flower Show (Coventry)	1 min.	3.85
TOTAL	26 mins	100.00

Looking at the lead story in this programme, it is significant that a strong emphasis is placed on the new jobs in question being created in the ‘Midlands’ (actually the West Midlands sub-region), when in fact these vacancies were all located in the Birmingham area. If the headline had stated that the jobs were to be created in

Birmingham, this would not have contributed towards creating any feelings of regionalism, so from the point of view of attempting to create a sense of region, it made sense to emphasise the regional element at Birmingham's expense. In the event, stories either about or connected with Birmingham comprised just over ten minutes, or just under 40 per cent, of this edition of *Central News At Six*, and with the other stories featuring localities such as Coventry, Leamington, and Worcester, the intention here is to feature stories from the West Midlands, in the hope that some form of regional identity will emerge as a result of these stories. Although it is highly unlikely that most people would notice any strong feelings of regionalism in a direct sense, the programme's intention would probably be to create an indirect sense of region, in which people could accept the idea of, in this case, the West Midlands sub-region, without having a full understanding of the issues involved.

The other issue that arises is that of the extent to which people believe themselves to have any regional identity as a result of the regional news programmes broadcast in the three sub-regions of the Midlands. In the case of the West Midlands, it is doubtful as to whether people living in Birmingham would want to watch stories about or based in Coventry or Worcester, but perhaps the reverse applies even more, as people living outside the Birmingham area would probably not be interested in watching a programme such as the one above, with its strong emphasis on Birmingham. The South Midlands would follow a similar pattern, as it is unlikely that people living in Oxford or Milton Keynes would be interested in watching items on Gloucester or Swindon and vice versa, and in Oxford's case, its only connection with the Midlands is as part of ITV in the region, as in the BBC's regional plan, it is part of the South [of England] region based in Southampton. For the East Midlands, this problem would undoubtedly apply, as people living in Nottingham would not be interested in stories

about Leicester, and if anything the opposite would be even more likely, due to the historical rivalries between Leicester and Nottingham (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). In a survey undertaken by the Centre for Mass Communication Research (CMCR) at the University of Leicester in 1984, *Central News* was mentioned by almost half of a sample from across the Midlands as a programme made by Central for the region only, but when these people were asked if they had seen the programme, although 82 per cent said they had done so, only 57 per cent correctly identified it as having been made by Central (CMCR, 1984: 104).

Finally, it is a matter of debate regarding the extent to which people involved with these programmes, and the journalists and reporters in particular, have any feelings of regional identity as a result of working on the various news programmes for the sub-regions, and again the East Midlands appears to be the sub-region that is the most affected in this regard. Since the Nottingham studios opened in 1984, *Central News East* has acted as a 'stepping stone' for people who have subsequently appeared on national and international television, and have carved out successful careers for themselves as a result, but whether these people have ever considered themselves to be 'East Midlanders' is doubtful at best and highly unlikely at worst (Interview with John Mitchell, 2001)

(iii) Current affairs and other factual programmes made by ITV in the Midlands

The field of current affairs is one that has played a significant role in ITV's overall development over the years, and ITV in the Midlands played its part in this regard, with ATV and ABC broadcasting programmes such as *Midland Member* (a review of Members of Parliament in the region) and *ABC At Large* respectively in the 1960s, before ATV came into its own in the 1970s with the weekly political review *Left*,

Right And Centre amongst others. In contrast to these political programmes, the companies' record in respect of other forms of factual programming was rather mixed, with ATV in particular being criticised in certain quarters for not covering the Midlands through local documentaries and similar programmes (Interview with John Mitchell, 2001). ATV's response to this criticism was to make a series of documentaries in the late 1970s called *England Their England*, which featured people and places associated with the Midlands, and when Central took over from ATV, this process was accelerated through series such as *Gi' It Som' Hommer* [Give It Some Hammer]⁷. The most successful and best remembered of all these programmes was the Friday night discussion programme *Central Weekend*, which was adapted from a late night discussion programme broadcast on Tyne Tees Television in the north-east of England in the late 1970s called *Friday Live*,⁸ and initially featured one subject each week that was discussed in detail, before the format was changed to cover three subjects in a 'magazine' format with a studio audience in attendance (Interview with Andy Allan, 2001).

A former research student at the University of Leicester, Simon Cottle, discussed Central's factual programmes in the 1980s, including *Central Weekend*:

'[With regard to factual] programming, [Central] had various documentary strands and current affairs programmes that were beginning to be subject to severe pressures through deregulation and increased commercialisation at that time, and the formats for these programmes were undergoing change.

Nevertheless, some of these formats, such as *Eco* [an environmental

⁷ See Chapter Five (p.184) for further details.

⁸ *Friday Live* was in turn adapted from *ABC Weekend*, which was broadcast to the Midlands and North on Saturday nights in the 1960s, and featured a studio audience discussing the week's main events (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001).

position itself in localities around the region, again as a way of demonstrating Central's relevance and involvement with different localities and peoples to construct a sense of [regional] identity, but it's an identity that's always being used to try and service the aims and the corporate ambitions of Central as a company, rather than actually indulging a valid or a real community in any discernable sense, so that was what was going on at the level of programme form. At a higher level, at corporate level, Central was trying to establish itself as a major ITV franchise, which it was at that time, it incorporated sub-regions, and it was desperately trying to establish in the minds of the viewers that Central was coincident as a television franchise with a geographical regional boundary, and it did that through programme trailers and so on. As far as I was concerned, it was a fairly artificial boundary, with the creation of regions that had no relationship to social demographics; the regional boundaries were determined by the ITV network, and by the pattern of transmitters.

'I looked at other programmes, there was a religious programme shown on Sundays [*Sunday Break*], and there were two variations of this programme, one in Birmingham and the other in Nottingham, trying to demonstrate that they were geographically resident in those areas and responding to local people. These programmes became subject to more powerful forces of change, which were quite strong at that time. The 1980s was the era of Thatcherism, deregulation, [and] liberalisation, leading to an increase in television channels, [which] was generating tremendous pressures on Central at this time to get its commercial and corporate act together, and [the company] introduced separate profit centres, programmes had to become self-financing, had budgets, and had to meet all these costs, both above and below "line costs", as these were known,

[people] had to go to an internal market and pay for various production and programme making costs. This in turn produced attempts to increase programme ratings, and [inevitably] led to a strategy of deliberate populist programme forms. This was how the company responded to commercial pressures from the market in general, it tried to change the programmes and what it would do is that, whereas these programmes used to feature one subject in a half-hour programme, there would be three subjects covered using a magazine format, with young, sexy, female presenters typically being brought in to host these programmes, and it was a pretty crude programme strategy. The actual content of the items that went into the programmes also shifted, so they would become deliberately populist. I remember the religious programme, and interviewing its producer, and he had to try and ensure that his programmes got a higher rating, or else it would be axed, so he had items on Jewish dating agencies and so on, that appealed to a tabloid agenda'. (Interview, 2001)

The above process also impacted on *Central Weekend*, which was originally conceived as a serious current affairs programme, and which devoted a whole two-hour programme on a Friday night to the Handsworth (in inner-city Birmingham) riots of 1985, which articulated a radical agenda in arguing that the riots were about racism rather than criminality and deviance as other programmes claimed. Within a short period of time, however, *Central Weekend* became a magazine format with three or four items in it, based on a variety of subjects designed to appeal to a mass audience. Although some of the items would draw on regional concerns and interesting news stories, the usual approach was to cover national agendas, and then attempt to regionalise the issues in question, with no serious attempts being made to construct a

sense of community, and the main emphasis instead being to try to create a mass rating for the programme (Interview with Simon Cottle, 2001).

Central Weekend's current Editor, Doug Carnegie, explained the programme's role in Central and Carlton's regional programming from the mid-1980s to date:

'My view has always been that *Central Weekend* is not strictly a regional programme, we did twenty network versions of the show a couple of years ago and it didn't skip a beat. If [a subject] is of interest to Midlanders, we have discussed it. It's a difficult area to expect some kind of homogeneity, people in Oxford were very brassed off about stories on Birmingham and vice versa, people in Nottingham had little in common with people in Birmingham, and so [the creation of] a Midlands identity is a difficult thing to do, outside of a coastline, the patch has got everything in it. We tended to look at stories that interested Midlanders, and to that degree I guess the approach was probably national.

'I think the live [aspect of the programme] is crucial, there's not a lot of live television left, and live [programming] is unpredictable, it's happening in front of you, it does create a buzz in the studio and at home, and that's always given the programme a certain element of danger, and Friday night is a good time to be live, I think that's one of the reasons for the programme's longevity. *Central Weekend* always had things to discuss, even if you did some debates again, you did it because it was important, nobody's not going to be doing stories about the war against terrorism, because it's going to run and run. *Central Weekend* has run and run because it addressed things that people wanted addressing.

'I think the regional identity strongly comes from inadvertently addressing things that Midlanders want to talk about. In the week that OJ [Simpson] is on trial, everybody's talking about it, it's a national story, it's not a regional story, regionalism can very easily become parochialism... There is no point in trying to regionalise national stories in that kind of way, if OJ is on trial, we asked, "Does the colour you are determine the justice you get"? That has lots of British resonance, from Stephen Lawrence to the "sus" [suspicious behaviour] laws to the numbers of "stop and search" cases involving black people, there were plenty of things to discuss that made it regionally relevant, without rooting around for somebody in Tamworth [in Staffordshire] who wasn't accused of shooting his wife that week. The approach has always been [to talk about] the things that Midlanders are discussing, and they will be interested. I have never littered the scripts with the word "Midlands", because I think it sounds parochial'. (Interview, 2001)

It is therefore necessary to raise the question of whether *Central Weekend* or a similar programme would have enjoyed the longevity it has done if the programme had chosen not to adopt a policy of attempting to regionalise the most important national and international issues of the day, but decided instead to discuss matters of importance to the people of the Midlands that had no connection with the wider world, and which would have resulted in a product that would have been exclusive to the region and its interests. The chances are that such a programme might only have lasted for one or two years at the most, as it would have been accused by its critics of being too limited in its range of subjects and not taking enough notice of what people wanted to talk about, so from a business point of view, *Central Weekend* benefited from being a forum whereby Midlanders could discuss the main news stories of the

day in a regional context, and the change from discussing one subject in detail to several different stories in the same programme ensured that the programme survived into the new millennium.

The story of *Central Weekend* has also been that of the approach that has been adopted towards the many current affairs and factual programmes that have been produced by the various ITV companies representing the Midlands over the years. The concept of an invited studio audience discussing some of the most important issues of the day as featured on *Central Weekend* has been carried over into the political programmes made for the region only, and especially with regard to the weekly political review *It's Your Shout*, in which leading politicians from the United Kingdom's three main political parties (Labour, Conservative, and the Liberal Democrats) discuss political matters with members of the general public in various locations around the Midlands (Interview with Reg Harcourt, 2001). This formula is one that will almost certainly be continued in the future, and as such will ensure that the current trend of a 'populist' approach to news and current affairs will therefore remain intact.

(iv) Sports programmes made by ITV in the Midlands

The final area of regional programmes to be discussed in this project is that of sports coverage in the region, and in this regard a strong similarity can be detected between the news and sporting programmes in that ATV and ABC found it difficult to cover sport as comprehensively as both companies might have wanted as a result of the shortcomings of the 'split franchise' system of broadcasting that operated in the Midlands until 1968. As with its news coverage, ABC suffered from having to

broadcast to both the Midlands and the North at the same time, with one example of this being that the Sunday afternoon football highlights programme *World Of Soccer* featured teams from both regions, which led to complaints from people in the Midlands that they had to watch matches involving teams from outside the region (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001). ABC's departure from the Midlands in 1968 meant that ATV could show football matches involving teams from the region in its own Sunday afternoon review *Star Soccer* (which had started on ATV in London in 1966), whose senior commentator was Hugh Johns:

‘In the Midlands, we always used to boast that we had a better level of league football than any of the other [ITV] companies, we had a large number of clubs in the First Division [of the old Football League], something like seven or eight clubs in total, it was a tremendous hotbed of quality football...Some of the ITV companies around the country were lucky to have one or two First Division clubs, [but] we could always produce quality football in our Sunday afternoon programmes, we had the clubs, they were strewn all over the place’. (Interview, 2001)

Hugh Johns continued by analysing the ways in which *Star Soccer* represented Midlands football in the 1970s, with special emphasis on the concept of regional identity:

‘There were various seminars [held around the country] in which all the [ITV] football commentators who were regionalised, with our bosses and so on, would meet somewhere, and they would discuss their future plans for football. At that time, you were representing your region, and I was certainly very proud

to represent the Midlands in those occasions, because I felt that [ATV] was a major outfit at that time, we had the quality [of football].

‘With regard to regional identity, at the time and in the years since I left the area, I am constantly meeting people who knew me, who knew *Star Soccer*, who felt that it was something that they wanted to watch on a Sunday afternoon...In the Midlands, I would often be approached by all kinds of people at football matches, telling me that I had got something wrong the previous week, not with their team, but with the team they had been watching, another team altogether, and I had miscalled someone by his first name and so on. [The people] wanted to be involved in all the football that went on in the Midlands, there was something they either liked or hated, but whatever it was, they wanted to be a part of it, to have a feeling and a rapport with it, I think that was more so [for the Midlands] than for any of the other regions...Geographically, I think that they were a tightly knit community of people, they were good people, I loved them, they were very kind to me’! (Interview, 2001)

Star Soccer’s success also extended to national and international levels in the 1970s, with those ITV companies that broadcast football programmes on Sunday afternoons showing their own major games, followed by brief highlights of other games played around the country, and London Weekend Television [LWT] showed excerpts of matches featured in *Star Soccer* on its own football showcase, *The Big Match*. In addition, ATV’s International Division sent *Star Soccer* out to over 40 different countries around the world, so that as of the Wednesday of the following week after

the Sunday, there were television stations around the world that showed the previous Sunday's *Star Soccer* (Interview with Hugh Johns, 2001).⁹

The other main factor behind the success of ATV's sporting coverage in general and *Star Soccer* in particular, was the programme's producer and Head of Sport at ATV, Billy Wright, who first made his name and reputation in the Midlands as captain of Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, before becoming captain of the England football team (Interview with Hugh Johns, 2001). In terms of public relations, Wright was the perfect 'figurehead' for football in the Midlands, a quality that was recognised by his colleagues, who realised that he had a unique range of contacts, especially in respect of attracting advertisers, with Wright's name, presence, and personality being used to clinch deals (Interview with Gary Newbon, 2001).

Gary Newbon was responsible for starting and developing a wide range of sporting programmes for the Midlands in the 1970s and 1980s, and one of his most notable successes from the 1980s was a regional boxing programme, *Fight Night*:

'I fancied doing boxing, and the Head of Sport at Granada Television, Paul Doherty, was also thinking along similar lines, so I went along one day to watch his [boxing] programme in the Liverpool area, and afterwards, we had dinner, and we both agreed we should "get into bed" professionally with each other, and develop this programme called *Fight Night*. It was very successful, to the point where other ITV companies north of London took it on, and so I was introducing the programme, Paul was the boss of it, we were partners, Jim Watt and Reg Gutteridge were the commentators. We used various promoters around

⁹ In the late 1970s, ATV continued to sell *Star Soccer* to countries in Europe, the Commonwealth, and the Middle East (IBA, 1977-78: 20).

the country, including the Lynch brothers in Birmingham...Where it went wrong was that one or two of the companies who pestered us to come in, such as Yorkshire, started dropping out, they had people who didn't like boxing, and we started to run out of money, because you need money for boxing. We persevered just as Granada and Carlton [Central] for as long as we could, but then the audiences started to drop, so we decided to knock it on the head. It was a fantastic programme, and it gave young boxers the chance to get some television coverage'. (Interview, 2001)

Gary Newbon also provided details on another regional sporting programme made by ITV in the Midlands:

'The history of *Central Sports Special* is quite interesting. [We used to show] *Midweek Sport Special* from Thames [in London], they showed [football matches] such as Southampton versus Crystal Palace, which I understood, but it meant nothing here [in the Midlands], people want to see local teams, and the programme was also cheaper to make, without having all the wages of London people, so I took it to my boss, we took a gamble, and we went local, we've always done better business...We have the most prolific and best funded local sport anywhere in the country, [but] you still get complaints when certain [football] teams aren't on. All I would say to people who watch [sport on] television in the Midlands is that you've had a fantastic service on local programmes and in the news bulletins, and if you travelled around the country, you wouldn't find such a line-up of local sport, it's the best'. (Interview, 2001)

In addition, the sub-regions (East, West, and South Midlands) have given more opportunities for Carlton Central's sports department, as more material is available to

be used if necessary for the various sporting programmes (Interview with Gary Newbon, 2001).

The final word on ITV's sports coverage in the Midlands rightly goes to Hugh Johns, who assessed *Star Soccer*'s influence on the region:

'It was an extremely popular programme, so much so that where I live now, in Wales, [if I am] in a supermarket or a pub or on a bus, someone will hear me asking for a [bus] ticket or buying a packet of flour or something, and will say, "I know that voice! Didn't you used to be Hugh Johns, with *Star Soccer*"? These men are in the forties, and claim to have grown up from ten years old, listening to me on a Sunday afternoon, and that was their introduction to football! It's incredible, and also rather sweet. I hope that a lot of it is about me, but I believe sincerely that a lot of it is about *Star Soccer*, about the games we showed, [and] the quality of football that we had in those days'. (Interview, 2001)

(v) Conclusion

The story of ITV's regional news coverage in the Midlands is very similar to the history of ITV in the Midlands in general, in that the early years of this coverage consisted of an attempt to discuss the region as a whole, which was widely regarded to have been unsuccessful, mainly because of the various technical and financial restrictions associated with covering a region as culturally, economically, and geographically diverse as the Midlands. Probably the most important factor in the period from 1956-68 was the 'split franchise', which resulted in ATV and ABC developing their own views on the region, so the Midlands did not receive the complete and cohesive coverage that it deserved at this time, a trend that became even

more serious given that ABC was broadcasting to the North at exactly the same time as the Midlands (Interview with Roy Bottomley, 2001). This situation improved once ATV took over the ITV Midlands franchise on a full-time basis from 1968 onwards, but by the mid-1970s, there were increasing criticisms of the company's treatment of the region in general, and of the East Midlands in particular. At this point, it became clear that there was no way in which the whole of the region could be adequately covered by one programme broadcast from Birmingham, and so steps were taken that resulted in the creation of the original 'sub-regions' of the East and West Midlands.

The 1980s was the decade when ITV's regional news service for the Midlands was at its peak, mainly due to Central's determination to reflect the events that occurred in both sub-regions. In terms of creating a distinctive regional identity through the news programmes, it is fair to say that this could not have happened in the West Midlands due to Birmingham's domination of this area, and whilst it has been claimed that the East Midlands did not exist before Central created it, the deep historical rivalries between the main cities, and especially between Leicester and Nottingham, ensured that regional identity could only be reflected by Central, insofar as this was possible.

There can be no doubt, however, that Central was responsible for creating the South Midlands as the last of the sub-regions (although this version of the South Midlands is one that would not be shared by many geographers), and having succeeded in creating this new entity, the company was therefore able to reflect the events that occurred in this region through the regional news programme. Central South's worth to the company as a whole was clear to many observers as being the crucial factor that enabled it to retain the ITV Midlands franchise unopposed, but this sub-region also succeeded in bringing together such contrasting localities as Oxford and Gloucester,

who would not have had anything in common had it not been for the fact that they shared the same broadcasting area, enabling interaction between both cities to emerge as a result (Interview with Robert Southgate, 2001). The decade of the 1990s in general, and the years following Carlton's takeover of Central in 1994 in particular, have seen these programmes maintain their independence from each other, and from Carlton as a company, with the *Central News* name being maintained, despite the on-screen name of ITV in the Midlands being changed from Central to Carlton (Interview with Ian Squires, 2002). In the period from 1997 to 2000, news contributed around six hours, or one-third of the regional programmes shown by Central and Carlton in the Midlands in each week of this period, which exceeded the weekly licence requirement of just over four hours, or about 28 per cent (ITC: 1997: 77; 1998: 70; 1999: 17; 2000: 97). Whether the regional news programmes will continue to enjoy the level of popularity that they achieved in the twentieth century remains to be seen, especially in view of the increasing competition between all the channels, both terrestrial and satellite, to attract audiences by showing popular programmes in the hour from 6.00 pm to 7.00 pm (Interview with Laurie Upshon, 2001).

The current Editor of *Central News East* based in Nottingham, Mike Blair, explained the differences between regional news and other regional programmes:

'In terms of news, it is slightly different in that it is specifically for a sub-region; for the East [Midlands], there is Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, and Northampton; for the South, there is Oxford and the surrounding areas; for the West, there is Birmingham, Wolverhampton, and so on. The important [point] is to connect with your viewers, and the same skills should apply to your news

stories as would [be the case] with your [regional] programmes, you have to make things that will appeal. The difference with news is that the items are usually shorter, there tends to be more crime, and one huge difference is that the news goes out seven days a week, you have to fill your 25-minute slot every single night from Monday to Friday and your ten-minute slot on Saturday and Sunday, and you have your bulletins to fill, so there is much more pressure on people doing news, to fill that programme every single day. Sometimes, people would say that some news stories could not be turned into a documentary, and that's right, because it's a story that's happening today, and it's gone tomorrow. That's probably the biggest difference, whereas with most regional programmes, even in current affairs, they have a greater longevity about them...The fact that Carlton Central is split into three [sub-] regions gives some indication of how first Central, and now Carlton, regard the differences in the areas, it is true to say that people in the East Midlands have different interests, whether in football, industry, or whatever, to people in the West Midlands, and to people in the south of the region, they are different areas, and the three newsrooms reflect those differences'. (Interview, 2001)

An indication of the subjects covered in *Central News* is provided in Table 6.5, which gives details on the items featured in percentage terms, and the length of these items as percentages of total time on the programme, from two weeks in both 1986 and 1996 (excluding links, summaries, and the weather), with the 'populist' nature of the programme being reinforced as a result.

TABLE 6.5

ITEMS AND LENGTH OF ITEMS AS PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL TIME ON
CENTRAL NEWS IN 1986 AND 1996

Subject matters	1986 (8 days)	1986 (13 secs)	1996 (8 days)	1996 (11 secs)
Health	5	2	8	6
Sport	9	18	9	22
Exhibits etc.	16	26	11	13
Accidents	10	4	8	5
Human interest	6	5	9	13
Crime	22	8	23	15
Industry/employment	6	8	4	2
Royalty	3	2	-	-
Features	-	-	6	5
Council/local politics	5	4	5	4
Others	19	23	17	15
Total	101	100	100	100

(The above information has been taken from Negrine and Eyre, 1998: 45.)

Although serious criticisms have been laid against ITV in the Midlands with regard to news and current affairs during the period from the 1950s to date, the companies proved to be more successful in their sporting coverage, largely as a result of the Sunday afternoon football highlights programme of the 1970s, *Star Soccer*. This programme probably did more than any other to create feelings of regional identity as a result of showing the leading football clubs in the region, and as such it managed to

succeed where the news and current affairs programmes failed in bringing at least the male population of the Midlands together. In addition, the IBA recognised *Star Soccer*'s worth to the Midlands, with the programme receiving frequent mentions in the Authority's annual reports of the 1970s (IBA: 1973-74, 21; 1974-75, 23; 1975-76, 18; 1976-77, 19). *Star Soccer*'s legacy is one that has been successfully developed and enlarged by both Central and Carlton, who have continued to show football matches involving many of the region's top teams, with some of these games being shown live (Interview with Gary Newbon, 2001). It therefore seems to be a fairly safe assumption that football will continue to be used by any company that takes over the ITV Midlands licence to promote feelings of regionalism in the Midlands.

PART THREE: ITV'S INFLUENCE IN THE MIDLANDS

CHAPTER SEVEN: 'OTHER VOICES': ITV IN THE MIDLANDS AS SEEN BY VARIOUS INTERESTED PARTIES

(i) Introduction

Whenever the subject of ITV's financial position is discussed, it must always be remembered that, unlike the BBC, which is funded by a licence fee for which the viewing population as a whole have to pay, ITV has been funded throughout its history by revenues that have been received from the various advertisers whose products have been displayed on the commercial channel. The main purpose of this chapter will be to assess the extent to which advertising in general and the revenues in particular have had an influence on ITV in the Midlands over the years, with special reference to the advertisements that have originated from the 'sub-regions' (East, South, and West Midlands), and the role they have played in creating a sense of sub-region as a result. In addition, there will be an examination of the various ways in which the companies that have represented ITV in the Midlands (ATV, ABC, Central, and Carlton) have sought to present themselves to the region through promotional devices such as 'roadshows' and other related events. There will also be a discussion on how ITV in the Midlands has existed as part of a pattern of local and regional media in the region, and has been regarded by other media groups, ranging from the BBC to local commercial radio in the region, and this chapter will begin by looking at the various broadcasting authorities and their views on ITV in the Midlands. As with the previous three chapters, the information included in this chapter has come from a combination of research and a series of interviews with a variety of sources, from the advertisers themselves to the presenters and continuity announcers, who played a vital part in the process as a whole.

(ii) 'Authorities and Commissions': how the regulatory bodies have regarded ITV in the Midlands

It is entirely appropriate that the regulatory bodies should be featured in this study, particularly as it was the ITA under Sir Robert Fraser who decided that ITV in the Midlands was to be represented by ATV on weekdays and ABC at weekends. As has already been discussed, both companies were reluctant to commit themselves to the region in the manner that the ITA might have expected, a trend that manifested itself in the case of ATV, whose *Paper of Proposal* to the Pilkington Committee indicated its preference to broadcast seven days a week to London only, which would have resulted in the company leaving the Midlands completely¹ (ATV, 1961: 5, 7). It was therefore inevitable that some members of the Authority would have strong reservations concerning ATV's role in the Midlands, with special emphasis on the company's commitment to the region in both programming and organisational terms. ATV's fiercest critic within the ITA was the Authority's Regional Officer for the Midlands, F.W. Bath, who wrote a report on the company's application for the contract for the region, in which he outlined what he believed to be the problems many people had concerning ATV's treatment of the Midlands:

'Regarded as an application for a regional seven-day contract, this is the most depressing document I have ever read. It is totally lacking in any appreciation of the possibilities of regional television or, indeed, in any enthusiasm for making television as opposed to making money. The entire approach to the contract is financial and administrative rather than creative. This is, of course, in line with ATV's normal approach to programming and particularly to

¹ See Chapter Five (pp.169-170) for further details.

regional programming...This application appears to foresee little change and little need for change in the company's general policy'.² (ITA, 1967: 1.)

Bath continued by examining ATV's structure in general and the scheduling of programmes in particular:

'...all decisions on schedules are taken by Mr [Lew] Grade and Mr Robin Gill, and I have no evidence that there is any influence from the Midlands end of the operation over the structure of the schedules. The Managing Director [Grade] and Deputy Managing Director [Gill] are, in fact, in the position of acting as the company's Programme Controllers...both men appear to spend a great deal of time overseas, buying and selling programmes, and I would like to know how much time they really spend in any creative approach to programme scheduling. Certainly, neither of them spends a significant amount of time in the Midlands, so that the people who make the essential decisions are fundamentally out of touch with the region.

'Len Mathews is Midlands Controller...He is not a Programme Controller and is not supposed to be. He is, in fact, Midlands Operations Manager, concerned almost exclusively with administration.

'It would appear that the acquisition of a seven-day Midlands contract would lead to no alteration in this set-up if it was awarded on the basis of this application'. (ITA, 1967: 1.)

² It was probably inevitable that ATV's attitudes towards the Midlands, which were ambivalent at best and negative at worst, should be matched by Bath's own negativity towards ATV and its activities in the region.

Bath's views on ATV's studio facilities in the Midlands were just as critical, and to this end he discussed subjects ranging from the company's relationship with Alpha Television to its connections with the Midlands as a whole:

'...ATV has full access to the Alpha Studios from Monday to Friday. The only change will be that ABC will not be using the premises at the weekend. This would seem to have no relevance at all to the need for a separate production office, and I very much doubt whether there is any room at all at Alpha for accommodating ATV production staff...There is no room for accommodating even the existing Midlands operation on the same premises...

'This studio is the public image of Independent Television in the Midlands, and as such it is a disgrace. We have many requests from parties wanting to visit the studio, but for something like three years, all such parties have been turned away, because restricted space and intensive usage has made it quite impossible to accommodate them.

'We have always been subject to complaints that ATV has concentrated on Birmingham and the West Midlands. The company has always had an excuse for this, to the effect that if the item is of topical interest, it is not possible to get film back to Birmingham and process it in time for showing the same night. I do not see how the rest of the region can be adequately covered until at least a small interviewing studio is set up in the East Midlands. No mention of this has been made in the application'. (ITA, 1967: 3.)

Bath was particularly scathing in his conclusion to his report:

‘Up to now, the Midlands operation of ATV has been regarded by staff and informed parties alike as the fag end of its London and network commitments. Useful for providing a second showing of programmes bought for the London area. The staff claims that they have been operating on inadequate budgets and inadequate facilities, and that they are cut off from the main company, which does not care about them. I see nothing in this application to suppose that ATV does not intend to continue the Midlands operation as a fag end of the network operation...

‘On page 25 of the [ATV] application, question 24, “What changes in its operations would the applicant see arising as a result of the change in its contract? What resultant change would there be in the location and size of its programme producing activities? What reasons have led it to apply for the present contract in preference to others”? Answer: (a) “ATV currently operates to cover two contract areas and an aggregate total of programmes exceeding 18 hours per week. Neither aspect will continue in the future. The location of our contract area will cause us to adjust our present transmission and selling arrangements very significantly indeed. The reduced production will also have a major effect upon us”. This, if anything, illustrates the financial and administrative approach of ATV. Nothing about identification with the region, nothing about reflecting the life of the region in its major programmes, nothing about increasing its local output. Perhaps the most deadly thing about this company is that making television never appears to excite them in any way.

‘A number of informed people have put it to me that the continuation of ATV as a Midlands contractor would be a disaster for the region. It would

appear from this application that ATV is bent on proving that they are right'.³
(ITA, 1967: 4.)

The period from the late 1960s to the late 1970s proved to be relatively uneventful in the relationship between ATV and the ITA (which became the IBA in the early 1970s, although the Authority was still keen to persuade ATV of calls for it to take the rest of the Midlands more seriously than had been the case. In addition, there was the claim that ATV was still a London-based company at heart, as it maintained its head office in the capital, and its main production studios were still at Elstree (Interview with Clare Mulholland, 2001).

Clare Mulholland continued her account of ATV's relationship with the Midlands, with regard to those people in the region who criticised ATV's treatment of its broadcasting base:

'We couldn't have been unaware, from the moment I hit the territory, we were besieged by lobbying East Midlands MPs, who were then in this grouping of five counties, they took in Derbyshire and Lincolnshire, there was still a notion of overlap on Humberside, so that the strongest lobby was from the East Midlands. As we moved towards preparing for the advertising of the licences in 1979 (or the "contracts", as we called them), it was also the dawning in the IBA of public accountability, so we were into public meetings for the first time on a major basis to do with focusing, we were going to start with meetings in any town of ten thousand people, and coming up to final public meetings, which would involve the members of the Authority, not just the staff. As soon as we

³ See Chapter Five (pp.173-175) for Bath's comments on ATV's regional programmes for the Midlands.

hit the road with these, starting with the “outer rim” [of the region], I can remember going to Stoke, Hereford, and various places, you would realise straightaway that people would complain that they never saw their town or area mentioned in the local news, and I was very struck by the fact that people would say that if they did not see their town mentioned, they thought they were not important. A weight of opinion then built up that, somehow or other, the region was very large to satisfy this demand in any reasonable way, which was how we moved in thinking, that combined with the notion of splitting the East Midlands, we looked very carefully at whether or not that was feasible, to have two separate licences, which was what the East Midlands MPs wanted, [and] what the county councils wanted. There was the “East Midlands Forum” formed with the county councils, and people like John Fairley and John Wilford [who created Mercia Television], who also saw the potential, but it was decided that, because of the overlap in the transmitter coverage, there would not be a clear enough market to make an East Midlands service viable on its own, and so based on our experience of Wales and the West, and the notion of a dual region, we said, “Why couldn’t that work in the Midlands”? We [therefore] floated that idea internally at first to see whether that would be a way around the problem, in an attempt to satisfy both [the East and West Midlands]’. (Interview, 2001)

Although ATV retained the ITV Midlands franchise in the 1980 contract round, due to factors such as the programme services on offer, the management and creative experience within the company, its financial viability, and its knowledge of and commitment to the Midlands, the company had to agree to move its major production centre to the region, which meant that it would have to leave Elstree in the process (Interview with Clare Mulholland, 2001). The problems that many people had over

ATV concerned the fact that it not only continued to use Elstree as its production centre, where programmes were made for the ITV network, but that its headquarters was in London, so the regional obligation placed on it in the Midlands was something it had to do in order to retain the franchise, and therefore the soul of the company was not in the region. The IBA believed that ATV had to demonstrate its commitment to the Midlands by increasing its profile in the region, as well as increasing the number of hours devoted to regional broadcasting, but above all, it had to address the complaints that came from people in both the East and South Midlands by having separate studios and creating separate transmission areas or sub-transmission areas. In addition to the shift of production from Elstree to the Midlands, the other factors leading to the renewal of the ATV contract were the change of name from ATV to Central, the requirement that the Chairman and Chief Executive of the new company should not both come from ATV, and changes to the shareholding, with people in the Midlands being encouraged to buy shares in the new company. This latter requirement proved to be the least successful of the IBA's plans for the Midlands in that the 49 per cent of the shareholding that ATV's parent company, ACC, had to sell went to conglomerates such as Ladbroke's (the bookmakers) and the D.C. Thomson company (Interview with David Glencross, 2001).

In recent years, the relationship between the regulatory bodies and the ITV companies serving the Midlands has been remarkably smooth. In the 1980s, Central's initiative in creating the South Midlands sub-region was supported and encouraged by the IBA, who worked closely with Central to ensure that the service would be successful in terms of transmitter patterns, with relays built to fill in any 'blackspots' that might have arisen (Interview with David Glencross, 2001). In the 1990s, the ITC took the view that Carlton was within its legal rights to take over Central, in that the

former company took over the ownership of the licence, without attempting to vary its terms, as any variation in the terms of the licence required the ITC's approval, with regard to studios and output, as well as maintaining the triple regional structure, and to maintain all the regional programming requirements included in the licence that began at the start of 1993. For the ITC, Carlton's takeover of Central enabled it to take control of all the successful programmes that Central had produced up to the time of the takeover, with these programmes, including the detective drama *Inspector Morse*, being far more popular than the programmes Carlton itself had made, so Carlton could claim credit for all the network programmes that were originally made by Central (Interview with David Glencross, 2001).

(iii) 'Commercial Break': advertising on ITV in the Midlands

As has already been noted, ITV was funded by advertising revenues through a system of 'spot' advertising, in which companies could book their own particular slots, either between two different programmes or within the same programme, with the fees paid by these companies helping to fund the ITV companies that broadcast to the various regions around the country. In the Midlands, there was a mixture of advertisers, with the national advertisers whose products were broadcast around the country being accompanied by regional advertisers, who concentrated their efforts on serving the region only (Interview with Roger Cowper, 2001). This mixture of advertising and advertisers undoubtedly assisted ITV in its attempts to establish itself in the Midlands, and in addition to the regular advertisements that were shown, the early days of ITV were characterised by the emergence of advertising magazines (or 'admags' for short), with the most popular of these programmes being ATV's *Lunch*

Box, which was presented from Birmingham by Noele Gordon⁴ (Interview with Ned Sherrin, 2001). Instead of having advertisements at a certain point within one programme or in between two separate programmes, the admags immediately switched from the items under discussion in the programme to an advertisement for a particular product, before returning to the programme itself. Initially, the ITA took a sympathetic view of the admags, provided it was made clear that the ITV companies ensured that advertising magazines should be described as such in the titles to the programmes and in magazines such as the *TV Times*, but that the names of the advertisers would not be included in the main titles to the programmes. In the ITA's view, these safeguards would ensure that viewers would be able to differentiate between an advertisement and a programme produced by an advertiser, which would also avoid the possibility of contravening the requirement contained in the Television Act 1954 that advertising was to be separate and distinguishable from the rest of a programme (ITA, 1957: 11-12). By the early 1960s, however, critics of the admags claimed that many people were confused by advertisements appearing in the middle of programmes rather than at designated times, and the Pilkington Committee also strongly argued against the admags for similar reasons. As a result of these criticisms, the Television Act 1964 ensured that the ITA would assume direct control of the advertisements and their contents, and the *Independent Television Code of Advertising Standards and Practice* from 1964 stated that advertisements had to be clearly separate and distinguishable from programmes, which had to be independent of all advertisers (ITA, 1964: 46-54). As a result of these changes, the advertising magazines came to an end, with advertisers required to use the designated advertising breaks only.

⁴ See Chapter Five (p.167) for further details.

The main problem concerning ITV in the Midlands over advertising was that the region operated as a 'split franchise' from 1956-68, which meant that the two companies representing ITV in the region, ATV on weekdays and ABC at the weekends, had to compete with each other for advertisers and the revenues created by the advertisements, which was part of Sir Robert Fraser's vision of a 'plural' broadcasting system to provide an alternative to the BBC.⁵ Although this system was successful in London, where the market was large enough to accommodate two separate companies in the manner that Fraser intended, the Midlands found itself in a similar position to the North in that both regions were unable to sustain a situation whereby two companies could perform in a profitable way, as ATV and ABC in the Midlands, and Granada and ABC in the North, found themselves devoting their energies more towards competing with each other, rather than providing a cohesive and coherent service for their regions. When Fraser realised that his vision had not succeeded in the Midlands and North as it had in London, he abandoned the split franchise system (except in London) in favour of companies broadcasting to the Midlands and North (which was divided into Lancashire and Yorkshire) on a full-time basis (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001).

From ATV's point of view, the company was very pleased that it could broadcast to the Midlands for seven days a week, rather than the five days it was restricted to from 1956-68, as it meant that it did not have to compete with ABC or any other company for advertisers and their revenues. Now that this problem had finally been resolved, ATV could devote all its energies towards providing a full service for the region, as well as establishing positive relationships with the advertisers concerned (Interview

⁵ ATV's submission to the Pilkington Committee included a table on 'Expenditure on Advertising with ATV by Product Groups' for the year 1959 (Appendix F), in which the 'Grand Total' of £11.99 million included £6.25 million for the Midlands, with London's share being £5.74 million (ATV, 1960: 61-64).

with Bob Gillman, 2001). This new arrangement was in complete contrast to the scenario that existed up to 1968, when ATV was in competition not only with ABC in the Midlands, but also with Rediffusion in London, where ATV held the old London weekend franchise, which was more profitable to the company than the Midlands weekday licence (Interview with Shaw Taylor, 2001). The main downside of ATV's move to the Midlands was that it lost the revenues provided by London until 1968, so the company found itself with no alternative but to concentrate its efforts on attracting advertisers to promote their products in the Midlands (Interview with Brian Tesler, 2001).

Having taken over the ITV Midlands franchise on a full-time basis, ATV found itself with no alternative but to commit itself to developing close relationships with the region's advertisers from 1968 onwards, and this led some observers to claim that ATV only started to take the Midlands seriously once it severed its broadcasting links with London, even though similar changes did not occur at administrative level.⁶ Whatever the truth of this assertion, ATV was accepted by advertisers and the general public alike in the late 1960s, and one example of the company's commitment to its region in advertising terms can be found in the 'ATV Sunspots' campaign of the late 1960s. This campaign was considered to be a prime example of 'complete package' advertising in that travel agents, holiday companies and charter airlines were given the chance to advertise in discreet sections, with these companies being 'cross referenced' with colour coupons in the television listings magazine *TV Times*. This device alerted viewers to know that the holiday section of the advertisements, or 'Sunspot' was about to be broadcast, as a result of which they could use the *TV Times* coupon to tick off the brochures of interest to them, with the coupons returned to a

⁶ See Chapter Three (p.119) for further details.

central PO (Post Office) Box address, where the brochures were issued by computer. Although ATV did not become ITV's largest company (measured in sales) as the ITA had predicted (that honour went to Thames in London instead), the Sunspots campaign and other projects of a similar nature helped to cement ATV's position as a major outlet for advertisers in the region (Photomusications, 2003, via Transdiffusion website).

Table 7.1 provides an example of the advertising or 'spot' rates for the Sunspots campaign spread out over three successive Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from the weekend ending 29 December 1968 to the weekend ending 12 January 1969, along with brief information on the purposes of this campaign.

TABLE 7.1

SPOT RATES AVAILABLE OVER FRIDAY, SATURDAY, SUNDAY – 27/28/29
DECEMBER 1968 – 3/4/5/10/11/12 JANUARY 1969

Fridays

[Time] Segment	7 secs	15 secs	30 secs
[Rates] Up to 6.00 pm	£115	£200	£280
6.40 pm – 10.00 pm	£220	£385	£550
10.20 pm – closedown	£135	£236	£335

and pro rata for spots of greater length

Saturdays

[Time] Segment	7 secs	15 secs	30 secs
[Rates] Up to 5.45 pm	£120	£210	£300
5.45 pm – closedown	£195	£335	£480

and pro rata for spots of greater length

Sundays

[Time] Segment	7 secs	15 secs	30 secs
[Rates] Up to 6.15 pm	£150	£265	£380
7.30 pm – closedown	£280	£490	£700

and pro rata for spots of greater length

(Sunspots are transmitted within a themed holiday break consisting of a filmed introduction and final references to a *TV Times* advertisement. The offer is made as a “package buy” and includes participation in the break, production of the commercial, a co-ordinated “on air” promotion spot, participation in our *TV Times* colour advertisement with reply coupon and free handling of the first 2,000 replies.)

(The above information has been taken from Photomusications, 2003, via Transdiffusion website.)

It was from the late 1960s onwards that a definite pattern of advertising on ATV emerged, with the national and international advertisers whose products appeared throughout the network being accompanied by a significant number of local and regional advertisers, including Davenport’s beer, whose advertisements were shown on Sunday afternoons, just before the weekly football highlights programme, *Star Soccer* (the slogan used for these commercials was ‘Beer at home means Davenport’s’). It must be remembered, of course, that ATV was broadcasting to the whole of the Midlands from Birmingham in the 1970s, and the advertisements that were shown at this time were also seen throughout the region in exactly the same way that the programmes were. This meant that products such as Brew XI beer, which was only sold in and around Birmingham and the West Midlands during the 1960s

and 1970s, were being advertised across the region, even though there were many parts of the region that were unable to buy these products.⁷ A very strong case could therefore be made for an East Midlands sub-region that would allow advertisers from the eastern part of the ITV Midlands region to promote their services to the East Midlands only, whilst advertisers based in the West Midlands could concentrate on that sub-region at the same time. In effect, this was the position that Central inherited when it took over the ITV Midlands franchise from ATV in the early 1980s, so advertisers could in theory focus on advertising to either the East Midlands only or the West Midlands only, instead of just to the whole of the region as had previously been the case (Interview with David Glencross, 2001).

As the 1980s progressed, and the East Midlands sub-region quickly established itself within the ITV Midlands region in general, history repeated itself in that the frustrations that many people felt about the way in which the East Midlands had been treated in the 1970s by ATV resurfaced in the South Midlands in the 1980s, with some people in this area expressing their concerns over having to watch programmes based in and for Birmingham and the West Midlands, and wanting to watch their own programmes instead. This situation must have struck a chord with the advertisers of the South Midlands, who would have inevitably raised questions about advertisements intended for the West Midlands only being shown in their area as well. Central's decision to start the South Midlands sub-region in the late 1980s was therefore appreciated by the local advertisers, who at last had the chance to concentrate on advertising to their sub-region only, and ignoring the East and West Midlands sub-regions in the process (Interview with David Glencross, 2001).

⁷ This account is based on the author's memories of watching ATV in the early 1970s.

The other factor affecting advertising in the ITV Midlands region from the mid-1970s onwards was the growth of local commercial radio throughout the region, so instead of the 'internal' competition that existed for advertisers and their revenues between ATV and ABC up to the late 1960s, the last 30 years have witnessed an element of 'external' competition, with first ATV, then Central, and now Carlton, having to compete with an ever-increasing number of local commercial stations around the Midlands (Interview with Bob Warman, 2001). The main advantage that these stations have is that they can concentrate their efforts on attracting purely local advertisers, who would have no desire to advertise their products on television, and who in most cases would probably not be able to afford to do so. From the advertisers' point of view, it would certainly make more sense for local advertisers to use commercial radio rather than regional television, and it is now impossible to imagine a situation where a product such as Brew XI could be advertised throughout the Midlands, but would only be available to people living in the Birmingham area. The most recent developments in commercial radio have included the emergence of stations broadcasting to the whole of the Midlands but aiming for certain listeners, such as Saga Radio, which is aimed at the over-50s and broadcasts to the Midlands from its base in Birmingham, thereby serving the whole region in the same way that Carlton has done for television (Interview with Peter Tomlinson, 2001).

The current position regarding advertising on ITV in the Midlands has therefore remained unchanged since the late 1980s, when Central's decision to create a sub-region for the South Midlands has resulted in a situation whereby the advertisers enjoy a high degree of flexibility in the ways in which they can advertise on television. Under the present arrangements, advertisers can reach out to the whole of the ITV Midlands region, a practice favoured by the big national and international

groups, or they can concentrate their efforts on one of the sub-regions only (East, West, or South), or they can target two of the sub-regions at the expense of the other, so companies could choose to advertise either in the East and West Midlands sub-regions, or in the West and South, or even the South and East (*The Power Of Television* video, 2000). It must be stated, however, that of all these sub-regions, the West Midlands is by far the most important, mainly due to the large population base, with special emphasis on Birmingham, which has continued to remain its unofficial status as England's 'second city', and which has retained a large amount of prestige for advertisers in general. It is probably fair to suggest that these advertising arrangements played a crucial part in Carlton's decision to buy Central in 1993/94 (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001).

In advertising terms, the 1990s was the decade in which many local and regional advertisers found themselves in a position where they were no longer able to show their commercials on television in general and ITV in particular, to be replaced by the national and international advertisers, who could afford to spend large amounts of money on campaigns lasting for several weeks or even longer (Interview with Roger Cowper, 2001). This problem affected the Midlands in much the same way as it did the other ITV regions around the country, and in an attempt to tackle the issue, Carlton produced a video called *The Power Of Television*, which recognised the value of local and regional advertising, and the benefits that these companies could enjoy from using television for their campaigns. This video also contained a list of about 40 advertisers based around the Midlands who had advertised on Carlton in the recent past, ranging from local councils to travel agents, with the object of this exercise being to create the impression that anyone could advertise on Carlton if they chose to do so, with these commercials being watched by viewers throughout the sub-regions

and the region as a whole (*The Power Of Television* video, 2000). Table 7.2 provides full details on the advertisers featured in this video.

TABLE 7.2
LIST OF ADVERTISERS FEATURED IN CARLTON VIDEO
THE POWER OF TELEVISION

Apollo 2000, Arthur Price of England, BB Soda, Beds Direct, Biagio Jewellers, Birmingham City Council, Brian James Furniture, Burford Garden Centre, Cadbury World, Cala Homes, Car Finder Promotions, Cheltenham Racecourse, Chiltern Railways, Computeach International, DFS Furniture Co., Direct Specs, Drayton Manor Park, East Midlands Airport, F1 Racing.net, Fosters Garden Centre, Furniture Village, GB Armstrongs, Gloucester Rugby Club, Go Talk! Hartwell Garages, Ilkeston Co-op Travel, Mays Carpets, Merry Hill [Shopping Centre], Mustard UK.com, Nelson Solicitors, One Stop Phone Shop, Royal Air Force, Secure Trust Bank, Silhouette Fairs, Tachbrook Honda, University of Wolverhampton, West Midlands Police, West Midlands Safari Park – 38 advertisers

In respect of the advertisers whose names appeared on the Carlton video, two of these provided details on their campaigns and the experiences they had in advertising on regional television. As Birmingham is the focal point of the ITV Midlands region, and especially with regard to advertising, it is appropriate that the city is a base for many companies in the region, one of these being the gas and electrical superstores Apollo 2000. This company used Carlton as part of an overall communications package, having already tried both newspapers and local radio, with the intention of reaching out to a wider audience than had been the case in the past. As Apollo 2000 had stores throughout the Midlands, ranging from Gloucester in the south of the region to Stoke-on-Trent in the north, the decision was taken to undertake a campaign

that would cover the whole of the ITV Midlands region, and would be aimed at the population of the region as a whole. This campaign lasted for just two weeks, covering the crucial pre-Christmas period from the end of November to the middle of December 2000, with a mixture of 10 and 30-second slots being booked by the company at a total cost of £150,000, which it felt to be a disadvantage. Apollo 2000 considered the campaign to have been unsuccessful, and the company believed there was 'zero chance' that it would advertise on Carlton in the future (Telephone conversation with Paul Keresley, 2001).

In contrast to Apollo 2000, the Burford Garden Company, whose only store is situated in the Oxfordshire town of the same name, has enjoyed a much longer and more successful relationship with Carlton, having started advertising in 1993, and sustaining a campaign throughout the year. When this company first started advertising on Carlton, it was charged £25 for an 'off peak' slot of 10 seconds duration, which it considered to be good value, having already experimented with other forms of media. As 90 per cent of the company's turnover comes from the counties of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, the company has only advertised to the South Midlands sub-region, and has taken the view that it is not important to attract customers outside its area, preferring to keep its name known at a county level instead (Letter from Michelle Butler, 2001). Both Apollo 2000 and the Burford Garden Company stated that they felt no sense of regional identity as a result of their campaigns.

Carlton's Sales Controller in the Midlands, Denver Logan, explained the company's position on those companies who chose to advertise in the region:

‘In terms of links to advertisers, our responsibility is to get as much revenue as we can from local businesses, and we do that through advertising agencies and directly through clients, actively pursuing new business opportunities through advertising sales, and in regular contact with any business that will lend itself to that type of advertising. This, of course, is a finite amount, because only certain levels of companies have the resources to be able to advertise, and secondly a lot of the larger sized, regional based companies, for whatever reason, tend to employ the services either of London or northern-based agencies. If their agency is based outside the [Carlton] Central region, the negotiation on any airtime is undertaken by my colleagues in London or Manchester’.

(Interview, 2001)

The current costs of advertising on the main ITV channel, ITV1, are contained in Table 7.3, in which Carlton Media Sales have estimated the costs an advertiser would be expected to pay for a 30 second spot transmitted in the Carlton regions, including Carlton Central, with the day split into segments or ‘dayparts’, with advertisers being provided with the optimum commercial placement within the best programme environment for the relevant target audience.

TABLE 7.3

ADVERTISING COSTS IN REGIONS COVERED BY CARLTON MEDIA SALES

Dayparts	Daytime (9.25 am - 5.15 pm)	Early Peak (5.16 pm - 7.25 pm)	Late Peak (7.26 pm - 11.30 pm)	Late Night (11.31 pm - closedown)
Carlton Regions				
Carlton Central	£1000 - £2500	£3500 - £13000	£7000 - £28000	£1000 - £6000
Carlton London	£2000 - £4500	£6000 - £23000	£12000 - £49000	£1500 - £10000
West Country	£150 - £550	£550 - £2000	£800 - £3500	£100 - £700
Wales and West	£400 - £1500	£1500 - £5000	£2500 - £10500	£300 - £2000
Scotland	£400 - £1000	£1200 - £5000	£2500 - £10000	£300 - £2000

(The above information has been taken from Carlton Media Sales, 2002, via ITV website.)

The question of how to attract local and regional advertising back to Carlton Central is very difficult in the current economic climate, especially given the dominant position claimed by both national and international advertisers, and the presence of the local commercial radio stations around the region has led to local and regional advertisers choosing to ignore regional television in favour of a cheaper and more

suitable alternative in the medium of radio (Telephone conversation with Paul Keresley, 2001). In addition, the national and international advertisers are in a position to pay the ITV network as a whole more money than could be obtained from their regional counterparts, who would not be able to compete with their rivals on an equal footing. One possible solution to this problem might be to make a programme on a certain part of the region such as the East Midlands, which would be financed by advertisers based in this area, although whether there would be any enthusiasm amongst local and regional advertisers is open to doubt (Interview with Roger Cowper, 2001).

It can therefore be seen that the phenomenon of local and regional advertisers displaying their products on ITV in the Midlands is one that Carlton is very keen to continue in the future, but there is every chance that economic pressures may force these advertisers to seek other media outlets, leading to a situation in which only the multi-national companies would be able to advertise on the channel. If this was to happen, the result would be that the regional dimension to advertising would be reduced to a level whereby local advertisers would only appear on bank holidays and other off-peak times, and ultimately it would ensure that the regional element to ITV in general would disappear completely, to be replaced by a channel run from London or elsewhere.

(iv) 'How we see ourselves': how the companies representing ITV in the Midlands have promoted themselves

One of the most important factors that have united all the companies that have served ITV in the Midlands over the years has been their determination to play a positive role in the region through events such as roadshows and other promotional

devices. The first and best remembered of all these activities, however, was the presence of the continuity announcers who appeared 'on-screen', a practice that dates back to the start of ITV in the mid-1950s. These announcers made such a positive impact on all the ITV companies around the country that many of them became leading personalities in their own right, as well as linking the programmes and selling the idea of the companies to the general public.

In the Midlands, this pattern was repeated, with ATV's announcers, including Jean Morton, Michael Prince, and Peter Tomlinson, establishing themselves as household names in the company's time in the region, from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s. The prestige of being an announcer in this period provided young people who wanted to enter television with an ideal opportunity to carve out a career for themselves, and one example of this in respect of the Midlands was Michael Prince, who joined ATV in 1963 as a researcher on all the company's regional programmes, including local documentaries and farming programmes, and first became a regular announcer in 1965 (Interview with Michael Prince, 2001). This was, of course, the period when the 'split franchise' was in operation, and ABC's desire to provide a contrast to ATV's approach to broadcasting resulted in the former company's announcers wearing jackets featuring the ABC name and logo (Interview with David Hamilton, 2001). From the late 1960s onwards, ATV took over the ITV Midlands franchise on a full-time basis, and the announcers played a large part in the company's success in the region at this time. This applied especially in the 1970s, when announcers such as Peter Tomlinson (who made his reputation as ATV's 'Weekend Host') became popular personalities in their own right throughout the Midlands (Interview with Peter Tomlinson, 2001). In the 1980s, Central attempted to create separate services for the East and West Midlands, and created different teams of announcers for both sub-

regions. One of the announcers based in Nottingham was Linda Cunningham, who explained Central's role in the East Midlands:

'The original purpose of the Nottingham station was to give the East Midlands its own service, to better serve the local community with local news and coverage of local issues. We as announcers lived within the region, and were active in the community from a PR perspective.

'The entire team ran independently of Birmingham to ensure the station had its own personality for the East (and there was quite a bit of friendly rivalry between East and West Midlands)' (e-mail from Linda Cunningham, 2001).

Linda Cunningham saw her main role as filling in the gaps between live feeds from the other ITV stations and Central's own output, with her main activities outside of announcing including personal appearances. By the mid-1980s, however, Central decided to abandon the concept of announcers appearing 'on screen', a change described by Shaw Taylor:

'The whole point about the announcers was that [they were] in vision, and this gave character to the station, people identified the station with the announcers, and it made television much more exciting, much more personal, and much more related to the viewer. I think it is a great loss, now that the announcers have moved out of that role and have simply become anonymous voices, it is a great shame'. (Interview, 2001)

The demise of the on-screen announcers was probably also prompted by Central's desire to create a more 'corporate' image for itself in the Midlands, which would have been far more in keeping with the overall economic, political, and social climate of

the 1980s than would have been the case if the announcers had been allowed to continue (Interview with Simon Cottle, 2001). This meant that the emphasis had changed from using announcers to promote both themselves and the station to directly promoting the companies through the concept of the 'roadshow', which grew in importance over the years. The first roadshows appeared in the ATV era, and were closely connected to many of the company's outside broadcasts, including the Royal Show (at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire), as well as other events, such as public meetings of the *Tingha And Tucker Club*, which gave young children the opportunity to participate in the activities in question (Letter from Jean Morton, 2002). However, it was in the 1980s that Central fully developed the roadshow, a policy that neatly complemented the company's approach to the Midlands as a whole, with many of these being held in the 'fringes' of the region, in localities ranging from Gloucester to Lincoln, in an attempt to gather popular support for Central instead of neighbouring ITV companies such as HTV, Anglia, and Yorkshire (Central, 1986: 29).

Central's Director of Public Affairs, who later became Director of Corporate Strategy, Marshall Stewart, discussed the company's promotional work in the 1980s:

'I joined Central in 1982, and the most important duties and responsibilities at that stage were probably involved with the construction of the company's regional identity, because it had followed ATV, which had a very strong national and regional identity, and as with any new company, it obviously takes a certain amount of time before relationships can be built up. Part of the initial task was to begin, for example, to enable the region to begin to feel a relationship with Central in the way that it had with ATV, so I would have said

that the most important responsibility at that stage [in 1982] was projecting the name and the values of Central [Independent] Television to the whole of the Central region.

‘The *Telethons* had been an ITV operation of enormous success, which had brought together all of the ITV components working together for their communities, so Central, when it began, continued the role that ATV had established for many years. As far as the development of the links between Central and the community organisations of the Midlands was concerned, it was very important for the company, right from the outset, to put down roots [in the region]. One of the things that the company was very clear about was that it wanted to have a series of relationships between itself and the region, and these would have included programme making in the region, and then making programmes also about the region, plus significant links with employment, both in the Birmingham area and the East Midlands, with the Nottingham studios, which were being developed at that stage. [We also looked at] the development of economic activity in the region, because Central was a major business, which brought a great deal of economic activity to the area, and one of the things that it was very keen to do, right from the outset, was to try to develop most of its business relationships with Midlands firms, so that was a very clear decision, it wanted to be part of the Midlands, it wanted to be in the Midlands, and it wanted to belong to the Midlands. From the very earliest days, in 1981/82, the company decided that it wanted to have very visible relationships at every possible level, not just on air, but off air as well’. (Interview, 2001)

During the 1980s, Central made over 500 contributions to worthy causes in the Midlands, which resulted in a wide variety of people benefiting from the company's work in the community (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001). In addition, Central had separate 'regional boards' for the East and West Midlands, with these boards having independent chairmen who arranged lunches and events for different parts of the region, pulling in community leaders and important local figures (Interview with Marshall Stewart, 2001). These boards had individual community budgets, which they were able to spend on individual community causes in both the East and West Midlands, and these boards played a direct role inside the communities that they were involved with (Central, 1986: 29). Central also made every effort to forge positive links between the company and the region's ethnic minority organisations, and to this end it developed a Community Secondment Scheme, where members of Central's staff who had IT or other skills were seconded to community organisations that could not afford such expertise. The relationships that developed between Central and these groups were an important part of the company's overall community operation in both the 1980s and 1990s (Interview with Marshall Stewart, 2001).

Probably the most important project to link Central with community groups across the Midlands was the creation of the 'Licence Campaign Unit' (LCU), which ran for six months from October 1990, with the goal of retaining the ITV Midlands licence under the direction of Marshall Stewart. The LCU's approach to maintaining the licence can be traced back to a joint meeting of Central's board and the two Regional Boards in October 1990, which established a plan identifying key targets at both regional and national levels. As it was clear that the award of the Channel 3 (ITV) licences would only be made by the twelve members of the incoming Independent Television Commission (ITC), an effective strategy would need to be adopted, with

the objectives of this strategy being to articulate the company's vision of regional television and to demonstrate how it would be realised in the new licence period, to support this vision through examples of Central's existing commitment to the region, and to identify and manage any weaknesses. In January 1991, the LCU officially started, with its remit being to run the communications campaign, and the operation covered areas such as advertising, database marketing and public relations, community affairs, regional and national press relations, regional offices and promotions, and regional grants and community sponsorship (Central, 1991: 1-6).

Marshall Stewart explained his role in Central's efforts to retain the ITV Midlands licence through the LCU:

'If the Licence Campaign Unit had not existed, I think it is almost certain that Central would have had competition for its licence, because the most significant dividend to come out of that operation was that Central was unopposed when it applied for its licence, which had very significant implications as far as the financial bid, which the company made to retain its licence, was concerned. It was very important to have a Licence Campaign Unit because, in the climate that existed before the licences were open for competition, there was a good deal of evidence to show that there would be widespread competition for ITV licences throughout the whole of the United Kingdom, many new companies bidding for licences, quite a bit of foreign interest as well, and many of these licences were extremely attractive from a financial point of view.

'The Central licence, being the biggest seven-day licence in the United Kingdom, was clearly a jewel in the crown as far as ITV was concerned, so the

Licence Campaign Unit was formed to make sure, more than anything else, that everyone, not only in the Midlands, but throughout the United Kingdom, had a clear understanding of the value of Central. There is not much point in doing good work, either on or off the air, if people don't know about it! One of the things that was important for the Licence Campaign Unit to do was to make sure that at the highest levels, in government and in Whitehall, and throughout the UK, opinion formers, major people who were of influence, were well aware of Central Television's value, not only to the ITV network as a whole, because of the major programmes it contributed, not only to the region, because of the regional programmes and the regional relationships it had, but because of the fact that its philosophy about television was quite different, we believed, from any other company that might seek to bid for the licence. If you go back to the perception of how Central saw its role in the region in 1982, we believed that no other company would relate itself to the region and serve the region in the way we had done, so we were determined to make sure that people understood exactly what we had achieved over that period, and what we planned to do in the future, so the Licence Campaign Unit was crucial in being able to undertake that role. The regional opinion formers that we worked with, for example, were people who were clearly independent of the company, they were people who were able to make their own judgements on whether Central was doing a valuable and worthwhile job or not. Needless to say, we received support from all of these people and from many community organisations, and one of the most memorable pieces of evidence that I can remember [came in the form of] the number of letters that were received from individual community organisations, from the ethnic minorities and [groups] across the region, which

made it very clear that they were prepared to support Central in any way when it came to the licence renewal process'. (Interview, 2001)

Carlton's current position in promoting itself around the Midlands was explained by the company's sales controller, Denver Logan:

'The Carlton brand name is portrayed quite actively through direct branding as undertaken by the group...In terms of generating business within the [ITV Midlands] region, we are very active on that, we have a lot of links through agencies, other links through direct clients, and we portray the Carlton brand through Kevin Johnson locally, he is responsible as the Regional Affairs Co-ordinator as PR for Carlton. We are actively involved in a lot of trade shows and media groups, and we rely on Carlton to portray the brand name within the [Carlton] Central region to help that cause, and of course ITV promotes itself as a prominent body'. (Interview, 2001)

In the 1990s, first Central and now Carlton have continued with their efforts to forge positive links between themselves and their communities, with Carlton currently offering its support through devices such as donations, sponsorship, programming, resources, and staff involvement to areas including cultural diversity and the environment. In 2001, Carlton Central joined forces with the company's stations in London and Westcountry to stage the social action campaign 'Mind Your Head', which tackled the issue of mental health and people's preconceived ideas on the subject, with each of Carlton's regions showing its own programmes, along with events that were related to the campaign. In the Midlands, Carlton Central launched its 'Midlander Of The Year' scheme, which recognised the achievements of the

region's people, together with supporting arts and media based projects in the region, with special emphasis on attracting young and disadvantaged people to make their own contributions (Carlton, 2001: 22-23).

(v) 'The wider picture': ITV as part of an overall system of local and regional media for the Midlands

As has already been noted, there was a popular and well-established system of local and regional media in the Midlands when ITV made its debut in the region in February 1956, with the commercial channel facing competition from all the local and regional newspapers that were published at this time, as well as the BBC's radio services, including the Midland Region, which had been broadcasting to the Midlands and beyond since the 1930s, and its television service, which had started at the end of 1949 (see Chapter One for further details). It was therefore not surprising to learn that serious doubts were raised as to whether ITV could succeed in the region given such a competitive media environment, and not just with regard to the BBC's radio and television services, as many people also enjoyed regular 'nights out' at their local cinemas and theatres. In addition to this 'external' competition, both of the ITV companies broadcasting to the Midlands in ATV and ABC were subject to 'internal' competition, with the companies competing with each other for audiences, as well as for advertisers and their revenues. In theory, this situation should have worked to the advantage of the BBC, who could claim that it was the only organisation that was able to broadcast on television throughout the week, as opposed to ATV broadcasting on weekdays only and ABC at weekends only. It was therefore to ATV and ABC's credit that ITV became accepted and established in the Midlands as quickly as it did, thereby gaining a loyal and committed audience in the process.

In the 1960s, ITV in the form of ATV and ABC was regarded as a crucial part of the local and regional media scene in the Midlands, but this was the period when serious doubts were raised regarding the 'split franchise' system, especially with regard to whether two ITV companies should be competing with each other, and therefore not be competing effectively with other media in the region. This matter came to a head in the mid-1960s, when the BBC announced its intention to establish a number of local radio stations around the country, the first of these being BBC Radio Leicester in 1967.⁸ It was probably as a result of the BBC's change of thinking on local and regional media that some alterations would have been deemed necessary to the ITV system, and in 1967 the ITA announced that the split franchise would end in the Midlands and North, with the latter region being divided between Granada in the west and Yorkshire on the east, and ATV taking over in the Midlands on a full-time basis.⁹ When ATV started broadcasting permanently to the region from 1968 onwards, the benefits were obvious and immediate, and not only to the advertisers, who were no longer required to choose between two companies competing for their business, but also in terms of the audience, who would no longer be confused by two companies broadcasting to the region during the week, as had been the case from 1956-68, and who now knew that ATV was ITV's Midlands company.¹⁰ With no more internal competition to worry about, the ITV companies that have represented the Midlands since the late 1960s (ATV, Central, and Carlton) have been able to concentrate their efforts on competing effectively with the other television channels, although there have been problems for ITV in this area in recent years.¹¹

⁸ See Chapter One (p.50) for further details.

⁹ See Chapter Two (p.89) for further details.

¹⁰ See Chapter Three (p.116) for further details.

¹¹ See Conclusion (pp.305-312) for further details.

It is very much to the credit of all the companies representing ITV in the Midlands that they have sought, where possible, to recruit people either from the region, or with previous experience of working in the region, including newspapers and local radio. This practice can be dated back to the late 1950s, when ATV and ABC recruited presenters and reporters from the region's local newspapers, an indication of the determination of the companies not to operate 'in a vacuum', whilst using local talent in its programmes to attempt to create a bond with the audience (Interview with Reg Harcourt, 2001). It still remains the case that local radio and regional television stations cannot exist without the region's local newspapers (Interview with Peter Tomlinson, 2001).

Central's former Director of Public Affairs and Corporate Strategy, Marshall Stewart, explained his former company's position on this matter:

'The relationship with local and regional media was quite an important one, obviously it varied from place to place, not every local paper would have always been supportive of the ITV company, because some local and regional media had ambitions of their own to be in television. In the main, there was a good, positive relationship that was established with [the] most important local and regional newspapers at that time [the 1980s], and with local radio as well. That meant that, in many places, there were co-operative initiatives that took place between both Central and local papers, because that was part of the company's core belief that there ought to be an integrated pattern of media relationships inside the Midlands for the greater good of the community'. (Interview, 2001)

The above view was not shared by a number of people connected with ITV in the Midlands, including Peter Tomlinson, who left ATV in 1979 to become Managing Director of Wolverhampton's commercial radio station, Beacon Radio, and he described the relationship between both parties as follows:

'The relationship between ATV and local radio stations was tenuous, [and] there wasn't a great link between Beacon Radio and Central Television. The best link [Beacon Radio] ever had was a "contra deal" in terms of advertising between ATV and the commercial radio stations in the area, after the big [ITV] strike of 1979, advertising the fact that [ATV] was coming back on air. Under the terms of this deal, [ATV] gave [the radio stations] precious commercial time the following year [in 1980], and Beacon Radio used that to good effect'.
(Interview, 2001)

One of Central's announcers of the 1980s, Gary Terzza, was confronted with his own problems in this regard:

'I did some [work for] BRMB [Birmingham's commercial radio station] while I was at Central, and I think there was some mutual distrust, quite odd really, because there was very little symbiosis between local radio and Central. [Both parties] did one or two "simulcasts" [simultaneous broadcasts], rock concerts mainly, which were not too successful, but during my time [at Central], I would say that there was almost animosity between local radio and Central. When I was working at BRMB in the early days [the mid-1980s], I wasn't allowed to mention the fact that I worked for Central, even though [BRMB] employed me because I was working for Central, and vice versa, I wasn't

allowed to mention BRMB on Central. It was understandable, but at the same time there was very little interaction between the two forms of media'.

(Interview, 2001)

The rivalries between ITV and commercial radio in the Midlands contrast sharply with the spirit of co-operation between the various sectors contained within the BBC. It is not surprising to learn that there is a very strong interaction between the BBC's regional television centre at Pebble Mill in Birmingham and its network of local radio stations around the region, which allows both parties the chance to check out any interesting stories on their computers, leading to a 'co-operative' approach towards news gathering. In addition, the two main presenters of the BBC's daily regional news programme, *Midlands Today*, talk 'on air' to several of the local radio stations in the West Midlands every day on the subjects that will appear in the programme, which is an item for the radio stations, whilst for *Midlands Today* it is a way of getting publicity and trying to get people to watch the programme. This spirit of co-operation between regional television and local radio stations also exists, although to a lesser extent, in the relationship between television and the region's local newspapers, with a degree of mutual publicity, rather than direct rivalry, emerging as a result (Interview with Nick Owen, 2001).

Nick Owen's opinion on the relationship between *Midlands Today* and *Central News* in Birmingham is as follows:

'I would say there is a pretty strong rivalry, I think we monitor their figures pretty closely and it's going very well for us, we're thrashing them really, which hasn't always been the case, so that's very pleasing. I know we monitor their

figures, and they do the same with us. The difficulty there is that their area is slightly different from our area, they don't cover Cheltenham and Gloucester, *Central [News] South* does that, they cover Leicester more from Birmingham [than us], and so on. Now we are on at different times, we are on from 6.30 pm to 7.00 pm, and they are on from 6.00 pm to 6.30 pm, so there are good reasons why we shouldn't compare too much, but we do. We are constantly hoping to get a story that they haven't, we are looking at their coverage of a story that we have covered, and we see that we have got an interview with someone that they couldn't get and vice versa, so we are constantly monitoring each other and trying to improve and be better than them. That's very good, because if we had no rivals at all, we would be bound to get sloppy, we could get away with anything, [but] we can't do that, we have to keep on our toes. Competition is good'. (Interview, 2001)

The main presenter of *Central News* in Birmingham, Bob Warman, explained Carlton's current position within a system of local and regional media, including the relationship between *Central News* and the BBC's *Midlands Today*:

'I would still hope and regard *Central News* to be a primary source of information for our viewers in the region, but I accept that radio plays a big part in the news information business, and that probably for most people now, their first source of information is radio. The profile of our audience has changed over the years, [because] at six o'clock in the evening, most of the male members of the family haven't returned home [from work], they are still in their offices, or they are stuck in the motorways, [so] that has changed a lot. In my mind's eye, and I suspect that an audience profiling exercise might confirm this,

I am talking to blue-collar workers and to housewives, or to part-time workers, who are there at six o'clock, with their families and all the mayhem that goes on in the average household, so I am competing for the attention of the viewers. I therefore think that radio is the most important source of information, we are second, and newspapers trail. It is interesting that across the audiences, and the readerships of newspapers, they are all falling slightly.

'In recent times, unfortunately, the rescheduling of our programme [*Central News*] has made a difference, [as] we go on at 6.00 pm, half an hour before [*Midlands Today*]. I believe that the BBC has an enormous advantage starting at 6.30 pm in collecting all the people that have been on the crowded motorways, out of the offices, and so on. I like to think that we "trail blaze", and we have over the years, we have always been the first with a change of style, and I think the BBC has copied us pretty swiftly. I have always thought that we have got the "cutting edge" over the BBC, but what the BBC can do at the moment, much to my real irritation, is to boast that [*Midlands Today*] actually has more viewers [than *Central News*], not a bigger audience share, but more viewers, and that is an irritation, because that was certainly never the case years ago'. (Interview, 2001)

The performance of the respective BBC and ITV regional news programmes can be seen in the figures for 2001, which saw the BBC's *Midlands Today* and *East Midlands Today* achieve a rating of 32 per cent, giving it a clear lead over the three versions of *Central News At Six*, which only received 24 per cent, down from 26 per cent in 2000 (ITC, 2001a: 41).

Having discussed ITV as part of a system of local and regional media in the West Midlands, it is necessary to turn to the East Midlands, where an assessment of the commercial channel's impact was provided by the veteran presenter of *Central News East* based in Nottingham, John Mitchell:

'The pattern of news provision in the East Midlands is that we feed off local newspapers, and television has always tended to do this, we listen to local radio, read the local newspapers, and we have our "stringers" around the region, journalists who have their own offices. These people are completely independent of us, like Raymond's News Service, Leicester News Service, that used to be in Leicester, people like John Naylor, the Northants [Northamptonshire] Press, and so on. It is their job to feed us with local news stories from the region, as they do with other people as well, they feed to national and international press, wire services, the BBC, local radio and newspapers, and so on. From a television point of view, we will beat newspapers on a daily basis, but we are doing different jobs, radio is doing one job, [television] is doing another job, and newspapers are doing a third job, we complement each other.

'I think the audience [for *Central News East*] has always been very loyal over the years, because they know the sort of programme they are going to get, and they like our way of presenting it, too, they like the more informal approach. It is very significant that the BBC has gone desperately hard in recruiting our main presenter, who was Dominic Heale, to *East Midlands Today*, they have recruited an old presenter of ours, Anne Davies, they have taken one of our former producers, Alison Ford, to become one of their senior people, and so on.

The same thing has happened in the West Midlands as well, and that just shows how people like our style, and the “opposition” [the BBC] in order to try and compete with us, has adopted our style and pinched our people in order to compete on level terms. Why is that? I have always said that, if you can make [news] palatable, if you can present your stuff in a style that is simple enough that people who read *The Sun*, the *[Daily] Mirror*, and the *[Daily] Star* will enjoy, then you will get the audience who read the broadsheets, such as *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, and *The Times*. You’re not talking down to your audience, [and] you’re not trying to educate your audience. You’re trying to inform them, but basically you’re trying to entertain them’. (Interview, 2001)

The stage has now been reached where ITV has established itself in the Midlands to such an extent that it enjoys a very privileged position in the system of local and regional media that exists in the region as a whole, and it would be unthinkable to imagine a regional media system without referring to the ITV company that serves the region, something that applies to the Midlands in particular. It is to be hoped that any changes affecting ITV at a national level will not affect the channel’s commitments to the regions as a whole, including the Midlands.

(vi) Conclusion

Having discussed the areas of advertising, promotion, and the system of local and regional media in the Midlands, as well as the attitudes of the regulatory bodies, it can be seen that all the companies that have represented ITV in the region over the years have made considerable efforts to establish themselves by expressing a genuine interest in the people of the Midlands, and in the various interests and activities associated with these people. Amongst all these ITV companies, Central deserves a

special mention for its determination to reflect the Midlands in general by visiting all parts of the region, rather than concentrating on Birmingham and the West Midlands only, as ATV had been accused of doing (Interview with Bob Phillis, 2002). For its part, Carlton adopted a 'high profile' policy in the region, and has continued the work of its predecessors in the process. This is especially the case with regard to the company's position in the regional media system in sales terms, as explained by Carlton's Birmingham-based Sales Controller, Denver Logan:

'The area of regional media is very prominent and relevant to what I do, and local radio and the press are competitors of ours, because there is a finite amount of advertising revenue out there, and we need to try to capture as much of that as we can. We do actively identify who is spending money in the press and on radio, how much is being spent, and actively pursue those individuals to see whether we can try and tempt them to use TV, and address the immediate perception that TV is too expensive for them, because it isn't, and we can offer packages of air-time that will compare favourably to radio in terms of press, and in terms of reach and coverage'. (Interview, 2001)

It is therefore clear that the competition for advertising revenues between ITV in the Midlands and local commercial radio remains as intense as it has been since the mid-1970s, when commercial radio started in the region. However, the recent economic difficulties in the United Kingdom, and the accompanying decline in advertising revenues, has adversely affected all forms of media, leading to a situation in which broadcasting groups have been forced to adopt more of a co-operative approach in their business, with one example of this provided by the former ATV announcer and current Managing Director of Saga Radio in Birmingham, Peter Tomlinson:

‘Saga Radio’s relationship with Carlton in Birmingham is actually very good. Now that the situation has changed, and Carlton exists in its new regional shape, we are using Carlton to spearhead our promotion of the new station, so we have [had] a four-week campaign running on Carlton to promote the start of this radio station [in 2001]. [Carlton] are pleased we have done that, I had lunch with their Head of Local News, Laurie Upshon, and I saw [Carlton Central’s Managing Director] Ian Squires. I think that relationship is going to develop, but it’s interesting that relationships are going to develop with regional newspapers, and this radio station, specifically this radio station, because we are targeted as the first radio station in this country to make programmes for people aged 50 and over. If you look at the newspaper reading public, they tend to be the older person, people aged 50 and over, so there is a link between our listeners and the regional newspapers’. (Interview, 2001)

It seems almost certain that a combination of economic uncertainty and the continued growth of both radio and television, with more radio stations and television channels being made available to the public, will result in further collaborative ventures being undertaken by all forms of media, with the Midlands very much included in this trend. In fact, these projects may be the only way in which the survival of many local newspapers and radio stations can be secured, so it would certainly be in ITV’s interests to pursue the best possible relationships with groups that may have been strong rivals in the past. In respect of the expansion of television in particular, it would undoubtedly make good business sense for ITV to play a leading role in a system of local and regional media for the Midlands. This would not only enhance its reputation throughout the region, but would also convince many of

its critics that it remained totally committed to the Midlands and its people, and that it could serve the region in a far more comprehensive manner than any other television channel would do in the future. Indeed, such a strategy might prove essential if ‘ITV1 Central’ (as it has been known since February 2004) is to continue broadcasting to the Midlands.

CONCLUSION: 'A REGIONAL FUTURE': THE PROSPECTS FOR REGIONAL BROADCASTING IN THE MIDLANDS

(i) Introduction

Having discussed in detail the role that ITV has played in the Midlands in areas ranging from advertising to the companies and their programmes, it remains for the subjects that have been discussed, and the information that has emerged from these subjects, to be incorporated into a final assessment of ITV's part in attempting to create or reflect a distinctive regional identity for the Midlands. This last chapter will concentrate on the main events to have occurred during the Carlton era (from the mid-1990s to date), including the closure of the Broad Street studios in Birmingham, and the adoption of Carlton as the 'on-screen' name for ITV in the Midlands instead of Central. The most important aspect of this chapter, however, concerns the prospects for regional broadcasting in the Midlands, and especially for ITV in the region, with reference to the question of whether the commercial channel will be able to continue to provide a distinctive regional service in the same way that it has done since the mid-1950s, or whether commercial pressures in general, and increasing competition from terrestrial and satellite channels in particular, will force Carlton or its successors to curtail or even abandon all regional responsibilities in the future. This chapter will also review ITV's performance in the Midlands in the twentieth century, and will conclude with some final thoughts on the concept of the region as it relates to regional broadcasting in general, and ITV in the Midlands in particular. As with the previous four chapters, the information contained in this chapter has come from the research that has been undertaken for this project and interviews with a variety of sources, from past and present executives of the various companies, to the presenters who, in many cases, owe their careers to having been involved with ITV in the Midlands.

(ii) The Carlton era: 1994-2000

One of the most significant events to have occurred in ITV's time in the Midlands concerned Carlton's takeover of Central, which was announced in late 1993, before being fully implemented in early 1994.¹ The main effect of this change of ownership was that there was a return to the position that existed from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s, in which ITV companies were broadcasting to the Midlands, but the head offices of these companies were based outside the region, most notably in London. Another problem concerning this takeover was that Carlton was the owner of ITV's London weekday licence (having taken over from Thames at the start of 1993)², which led to criticisms that Carlton would be inclined to use the Midlands as a 'branch' of the company's London base, where all the major decisions concerning the Midlands would be taken, and where the emphasis would be on developing the service in London at the direct expense of the Midlands subsidiary. Despite the Carlton takeover, however, viewers in the Midlands witnessed a 'business as usual' situation, in that Central remained the on-screen name for ITV in the region, with this position continuing until 1999, when the Central brand gave way to Carlton (see below for further details). The Central name also continued to be used for the regional programmes that were broadcast at this time, including *Central News* and *Central Weekend*, a practice that still exists today, whilst other popular regional programmes, such as the local history showcase *Heart Of The Country*, continued to be broadcast in the same way as they had been on Central (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001).

¹ See Chapter Three (pp.133-134) for further details.

² See Chapter Two (p.93) for further details.

Although there were no dramatic changes concerning ITV's performance in the Midlands on screen, the situation behind the scenes was somewhat different, with the decisions that were taken having profound implications for the commercial channel in the region. Probably the most significant of these decisions concerned Carlton's plans for Birmingham and the West Midlands sub-region in general, and the future of the old Broad Street studios in particular, which had played a crucial part in both ATV and Central's operations in the Midlands.³ The question of Birmingham's role within ITV in the Midlands was one that began to be raised in the mid-1980s, especially after the opening of the new studios in Nottingham, which were mainly used for programmes made for the ITV network as a whole, but this matter eventually came to the surface in the mid-1990s following the Carlton takeover, in which the company outlined its future plans for Birmingham. This issue was recalled by one of Carlton's producers in Nottingham, Andrew Fox:

'Carlton's takeover of Central was part of a huge shake-up, which is still going on, in the [television] industry. At first, everyone was very suspicious of Carlton taking over Central, not least because it was recognised immediately that [Carlton] needed to make cutbacks, especially over jobs, and this was part and parcel of the shake-up of the industry as it was adjusting to new technology...What I concentrated on as a union officer [with the National Union of Journalists] as part of the [NUJ] chapel was the fight to save the studios in Birmingham...By the mid-1990s, there was no need to have large studios in both Birmingham and Nottingham, and Central, prior to having its licence renewed [in 1991], said that it was moving out of the big Birmingham studios as it did not need them (*Crossroads* had taken up a lot of studio space in

³ See Chapter Three (p.134) for further details.

Birmingham, but it ended in 1988), it could put the game shows and the drama series in Nottingham, and move to new purpose-built studios in Birmingham [city centre]. That was Central's plan, but Central was still going to have a news studio and a large production studio, instead of in the old building [in Broad Street, Birmingham], where there were three production studios, so there was a rationalisation in Birmingham, which made sense because of the Nottingham studios. What Carlton said, which I fought against very vigorously, was that it was still going to move, but that, in its plan, it would not have a production studio, but would have a large news studio instead. In theory, it was possible to clear out the lighting rig, the cameras, and the set from the new Birmingham studio [in Gas Street], and put in a different type of programme. In theory, you could put *Central Weekend* in there, but you wouldn't do that, because there would be too much [work] involved, and also [the Birmingham studio] is used just for news, sport, *Central Jobfinder* [and so on].

'I fought against that, I wrote to every MP [Member of Parliament] to inform them of what was going on, Birmingham was losing its ability to make independent television programmes in its studios, and West Midlands MPs joined the campaign, and expressed concern about it. [However,] East Midlands MPs didn't give a stuff, the way they saw it was that Carlton Central was closing down its studio in Birmingham, so that meant more work for [people in] Nottingham, so Nottingham would become a bigger production centre for television than Birmingham. Basically, [the MPs] were saying that they had to put up with Birmingham as the main centre of television production in the Midlands for all these years, so now Nottingham was taking over, let's see how Birmingham would like it! The [East Midlands] MPs were taking a very

territorial view of the situation, which was quite interesting, and nobody was taking an overall, objective view. We lost that fight, partly because we didn't even get the support of Birmingham City Council, because the Council was so concerned that Carlton wouldn't build its studio, any studio, in Birmingham, it would move out to the NEC [National Exhibition Centre], or to Solihull [on the outskirts of Birmingham], so that was one of the main reasons why we lost'.
(Interview, 2001)

Having decided Birmingham's broadcasting future, Carlton's next move was to attempt to secure its own identity in the Midlands as a whole, and the most important issue concerned the future of the Central name, which was explained by Carlton's current Managing Director in the Midlands, Ian Squires:

'The reason for the change [of name from Central to Carlton in the Midlands] was a commercial one. What we could clearly see [as was borne out in the period from 1999 to 2001], was the massive proliferation of brands within television, and with the increase in multi-channel television, with over five million subscribers to Sky Television, and the take-up of pay television in the Midlands is very high, about 26 per cent of homes in the Midlands have some sort of pay television, higher than in many places, we could see that, with a platform of brands around, it would be increasingly important for viewers to know where they could find ITV. What you see now on television is that we really don't talk about Carlton very much, we talk about ITV instead, that's the brand under which we trade, and under which we promote programmes to viewers. It was felt that there was too great a proliferation [of names], and that, if we were to make the most commercial sense out of the collective licences that

[Carlton] had at the time, in London, the Midlands, and Westcountry [south-west England], that we would in the end provide a greater mass of people to stay with ITV if they were looking at one brand name rather than three or four different names, so that was the reason. You knew that you would be watching Carlton wherever you were in the Midlands, London, or Westcountry, [you knew] that [Carlton] would be your ITV station.

‘Manifestly, a lot of the programmes would be different within the [Carlton] regions, we would be showing different regional programmes, and that is not just an obligation, it is a commitment that we would readily and happily make, but it was felt at the time that there was a commercial certainty in giving everything the same name. The reason *Central News* was kept, this was where precise science gave way to gut feelings, instincts, and judgement, the feeling was that, because the word “Central” had been specifically attached to a programme, particularly one that was broadcast for one hour each day in *Central News*, it was probably more sensible, in terms of audience loyalty, just to leave the association of Central and news together, not to disturb it, and in the end that what we did was, not only with *Central News*, but with any programme that had previously borne the Central name, such as *Central Weekend* and *Central Sports Special*, we kept the Central title. In the last series of *Central Weekend* [shown in 2001], it was branded and promoted as *Central Weekend Live*, *Central News* was treated in the same way, and the late night midweek football highlights programme is still called *Central Sports Special*, just because it matched audience expectation. I have to say that I was one of those people who believed that it was perfectly possible and manageable to change the name of *Central News* to “Carlton News”, that with a properly managed campaign, with proper

promotion, information, and marketing, it would have been very easily done, but on balance, we decided not to do it, because of the historical associations of the [Central] name'. (Interview, 2002)

It was in September 1999 that the on-screen name of ITV in the Midlands was changed from Central to Carlton, and this arrangement lasted until the autumn of 2002, when the announcement of the merger between Carlton and Granada led to the disappearance of the regional branding for ITV, which was replaced by the introduction of the 'ITV1' logo shown throughout the country.

(iii) The future of regional broadcasting in the Midlands

As has already been noted in this study, the concept of regional broadcasting was started by the BBC in the 1920s and 1930s with radio, but which reached new heights in the 1960s and 1970s, when ITV was at the peak of its powers under a structure of a 'network of regions', in which all the companies in question made their own unique contributions to the ITV system as a whole. The role of the Midlands to ITV in general has been especially significant in that the region was one of the original areas created by Sir Robert Fraser in the mid-1950s (along with London and the North), and all the ITV companies that have broadcast to the Midlands since that time (ATV, ABC, Central, and Carlton) have been designated as 'network' companies, whose main responsibilities have been to produce programmes for the ITV network, rather than the 'regional' companies such as Anglia Television serving eastern England, who have concentrated their efforts on producing programmes for their regions only, whilst making few, if any, contributions in a network context.

It was this emphasis on serving the ITV network that led to the first criticisms emerging on the subject of the companies' failure to serve the Midlands properly by

not providing an acceptable level of regional programming, although ATV and ABC were confronted with their own problems from 1956-68, as both companies broadcast to other regions in this period (ATV to London and ABC to the North at weekends), whilst also being expected to compete with each other for advertisers and their revenues in the Midlands. It is probably fair comment to suggest that, having won the ITV Midlands franchise on a full-time basis to broadcast to the region from 1968 onwards, ATV could and should have made much more of this legacy than was the case, especially in respect of the regional programmes that were produced at this time (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). Probably the most serious mistake made by ATV in the 1970s was the company's failure to move its administrative centre from London to the Midlands, a decision that sent out completely the wrong signals to the television industry in general, but especially to the regulatory body (the IBA), who became increasingly supportive of ATV's critics in the region, particularly with regard to groups in the East Midlands, who wanted their own ITV company instead of ATV. The situation was further compounded by ATV having its main studio production complex at Elstree (to the north of London), which raised more doubts about the company's commitment to the Midlands, so it came as no surprise when the IBA forced ATV to accept an arrangement whereby a new company would be formed that would be based in the region, which became known as Central.

Although ITV in general probably reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s, it was not until the 1980s that it achieved such heights in the Midlands, mainly as a consequence of Central's 'philosophy' for the region, which was fully accepted by critics and the general public alike (Interview with Bob Phillis, 2002). The development of the East Midlands sub-region in this decade, leading to the opening of the studio complex in Nottingham, was generally very much appreciated, and Central

finished the 1980s in a position of unprecedented strength following the creation of the Central South sub-region, leading to the ITV Midlands licence being awarded to the company in 1991 without any opposition.⁴ Sadly for Central, it became a victim of its own success, as changes to the broadcasting regulations led to the Carlton takeover of 1993/94, and eventually to Carlton replacing Central as the on-screen name for ITV in the Midlands (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001).

With ITV having become one company following the merger between Carlton and Granada, questions have been raised concerning the commercial channel's continuing commitment to the concept of regional broadcasting in general, and the production of programmes for the regions in particular. The issue has special relevance in respect of the Midlands, where the companies that have represented ITV in the region over the years, and ATV in particular, have found themselves subject to constant scrutiny concerning their commitment to, and even understanding of, the Midlands. It is at this point that the question 'What if?' emerges with reference to ITV both nationally and regionally, something that can be traced to the start of the channel, especially in relation to Fraser's decision to reallocate the 'weekend-only' franchise in the Midlands and North following the Kemsley-Winnick group's withdrawal from ITV. If Fraser had not approached the Associated British Picture Corporation (ABPC) and asked it to assume responsibility for this franchise under the banner of ABC Television, his regional model would not have been realised in full, but the alternative might have been easier for people to understand. Instead of there being four 'network' companies in charge of ITV, with ATV, Granada and Associated-Rediffusion in control on weekdays, and ABC joining ATV to run the channel at weekends, there could have been just three companies running ITV on a full-time

⁴ See Chapter Three (pp.127-133) for further details.

basis across the three main regions, with ATV serving London at weekends, and Rediffusion taking over in the capital on weekdays, as was the case in reality; Rediffusion would have taken over the weekend franchise for the North, with Granada broadcasting to the region on weekdays; and in the Midlands, ATV would have held the weekday franchise, with Granada coming down from the North to broadcast at weekends. This would have led to Granada becoming the 'provincial' voice amongst the ITV network companies in broadcasting to the North on weekdays and the Midlands at weekends, and as such it could have provided an alternative to the 'metropolitan' approaches of ATV and Rediffusion. The main advantage of this revised model would have been that Granada would have devoted its energies towards serving the Midlands, rather than ABC being required to broadcast to both the Midlands and the North at the same time, with the possibility that Granada might have provided a genuine alternative to ATV's coverage of the region, which was criticised by the ITA amongst other groups. If this system had been adopted, the chances are that Rediffusion would have retained the ITV London weekday franchise from 1968 onwards, rather than being forced into a merger with ABC to form Thames Television as actually occurred, but it would have had to relinquish the weekend franchise for the North, as ABC was required to do; ATV would have taken control in the Midlands on a full-time basis whilst losing London at weekends, which also occurred (with LWT taking over the London weekend franchise); whilst Granada would have left the Midlands to broadcast to the north-west seven days a week, with Yorkshire Television serving the area east of the Pennines. From a financial viewpoint, Granada and Rediffusion would have benefited from this system, as both companies would have been able to broadcast to their various regions for seven days a week, in the same way that ATV did from 1956-68.

With regard to the Midlands itself, there is a strong possibility that had Granada assumed control of the weekend franchise for the region, it might have operated independently of ATV in that it could have developed its own studio complex in Birmingham, rather than share a studio and its facilities, as ATV and ABC did with 'Alpha Television' during the duration of the split franchise; and with its reputation for current affairs programmes such as *World In Action*, Granada could have created a Midlands version of 'Granadaland' that would have promoted the region in a far more comprehensive manner than ATV did at this time, whilst also ensuring that its programmes would have been made for the Midlands only, in contrast to ABC, whose regional remit required it to serve both the Midlands and the North. Granada could therefore have been the first ITV company to develop its own 'philosophy' for the Midlands in the 1960s, and as such it might have persuaded ATV of the need to take the region and its interests more seriously than it did when it shared the franchise with ABC until 1968.

In the 1970s, it can be argued that if ATV had adopted a far more 'proactive' approach to the Midlands than it did, instead of concentrating its efforts on serving the ITV network and developing its international media interests, then it might have received support from the Independent Broadcasting Authority and other groups in the region. With the benefit of hindsight, it might have been a prudent move on ATV's part if it had adopted its own approach to the region in a similar manner to Central in the 1980s, including the start of the 'sub-regions', with, for example, the East Midlands beginning its broadcasts from Nottingham in the early 1970s, and the South Midlands starting in Oxford in the middle of the decade. This development would certainly have found favour with the members of the IBA, who would have

treated ATV far more sympathetically than it did when the company applied for the ITV Midlands franchise in the late 1970s; and if ATV had also decided to base itself in the region by moving its head office from London to Birmingham and leaving its main production studios at Elstree near London, the company would doubtless have received the IBA's full backing against its critics. These groups, probably consisting of regional MPs and local councillors, would have accused ATV of being dishonest and insincere in moving to the Midlands on a full-time basis, a move that would have been interpreted by these critics as being a publicity stunt on the company's part, whilst also accusing the IBA of being an organisation with no spine or backbone in acting as ATV's 'poodle' in giving the company its support. There can be no doubt that a more positive approach towards the Midlands by ATV would have resulted in the company continuing to represent ITV in the Midlands from the early 1980s onwards, whilst also ensuring that there would have been no need for Central or a similar company to have taken over from ATV, which might have continued to broadcast to the region in much the same way that Granada has served the North and north-west England since 1956.

In respect of the programmes that have been shown over the years, it would certainly have been in ATV's interests if it had made more programmes such as *Star Soccer* that actively promoted the concept of regionalism in a way that other regional programmes made in the 1970s were not able to do, and which were recognised by the IBA as a result. It would also have been in ATV's interests if it had made serious efforts to acknowledge the 'multi-cultural' nature of the Midlands by starting a programme such as *Here And Now* in 1970 rather than in 1980, by which time the company's fate in the region had been sealed. By the time Central started broadcasting in 1982, it can be argued that the company's efforts to make

programmes that reflected the aims and interests of the Midlands and its people were in vain, as this task should have been performed by ATV in the 1970s, but it chose not to pursue this course, preferring alternative arrangements instead. For its part, Carlton has made serious efforts to produce quality regional programming since the Central takeover in the mid-1990s, and the emergence of programmes such as *Drumbeat* and *Soul Music* has been highly significant with regard to attempts to combine the concepts of regional identity and cultural diversity.

Despite all the problems and frustrations many critics have had over the years concerning ITV, the popularity of programmes such as *Central News* has resulted in the channel gaining its deserved reputation as the United Kingdom's 'regional' broadcaster, with all the ITV regions contributing to this position through their programmes and other activities, compared to the BBC, whose regional output is limited by comparison. In the case of the Midlands, Carlton Central has shown thirteen regional programmes in a week on one channel, compared to the BBC broadcasting three regional programmes on two channels in this period (Interview with Laurie Upshon, 2001).⁵ Although ITV has been taken over by Carlton and Granada in recent years, the concept of regional programmes made for the regions only has continued to prosper, and when the ITV companies take part in ITC meetings, the companies are represented by their own management teams, with the delegation from the Midlands attending under the Central banner, and so on (Interview with David Glencross, 2001). It remains to be seen whether the merger between Carlton and Granada will result in changes to ITV's regional plan, with reference to the delegations attending ITC meetings.

⁵ See *The Blue Book of British Broadcasting 2001* (p.101) for full details of Carlton's regional programmes for the Midlands (or 'Central Region') for the year 2000.

The details on ITV's commitment to regional broadcasting can be seen in Table 8.1, in which details are provided on the regional programme hours for the year 2001, in relation to the ITC's annual requirement of hours for the whole year, the number of hours devoted to regional broadcasting in the year, and the differences between the two totals.

TABLE 8.1

CHANNEL 3 [ITV] REGIONAL PROGRAMME HOURS [2001]
(FIRST RUN & REPEATS)

Licensee	Annual	Hours	Variance	Percentage
	Requirement	Achieved	Hours	Variations
Anglia	587	595	8	1.36
Border	308	329	21	6.82
Carlton [London]	419	511	92	21.96
[Carlton] Central	801	920	119	14.86
Channel (First run only)	293	289	-4	-1.37
Grampian	458	630	172	37.55
Granada	457	506	49	10.72
HTV Wales	610	615	5	0.82
HTV West	583	591	8	1.37
LWT	185	191	6	3.24
Meridian	823	827	4	0.49
Scottish	964	1084	120	12.45
Tyne Tees	530	538	8	1.51
UTV (Ulster)	657	683	26	3.96

Westcountry	628	627	-1	-0.16
Yorkshire	743	802	59	7.94

(The above information has been taken from ITC, 2001: 53.)

From the above table, it can be seen that Carlton Central devoted more hours to regional programmes than any of the other English regions, with only Scottish Television devoting more hours to regional programming, and Grampian in north-east Scotland exceeding its annual requirement for these programmes.

One of the most serious challenges that ITV must confront concerns its current position as one of many channels competing for the attention of the viewers, something that would have been unthinkable as recently as the early 1980s, when ITV was the only British commercial television channel, and was in competition with the BBC’s two television channels in BBC 1 and BBC 2. The current situation, however, is one in which ITV must compete not only with terrestrial rivals such as the BBC and commercial opponents in Channel Four and Channel 5, but also with cable and satellite systems, and especially BSkyB, which has grown in its power and influence during the 1990s, and is set to expand even further in future years (Interview with Laurie Upshon, 2001). This multi-channel environment has given rise to a number of questions, including that of who the ‘opposition’ is for these channels. In the twentieth century, the BBC and ITV constantly referred to each other as the opposition, which was inevitable given that there were no other British television stations until Channel Four began broadcasting in 1982. With a multitude of channels to choose from, the question of who the opposition is in British television is one that is becoming increasingly more difficult to answer. It would therefore follow that many BBC and ITV sources would no longer see themselves as opponents in the

traditional sense, with channels such as Sky assuming the role of chief opponent to the terrestrial stations (Interview with Robert Southgate, 2001).

Table 8.2 provides full details on the monthly audience share for the East and West Midlands for the year 2001 for all the major terrestrial channels, including ITV, as well as the audience share for ‘other’ channels (including cable and satellite channels).

TABLE 8.2

SHARE OF VIEWING IN THE EAST AND WEST MIDLANDS IN 2001 (%)

Month	ITV	Channel4/S4C	Channel 5	BBC1	BBC2	Other	Total
January	29.6	9.6	7.2	25.3	11.0	17.3	100.0
February	28.2	9.1	7.5	25.6	11.9	17.7	100.0
March	28.0	9.3	7.5	26.2	10.7	18.2	99.9
April	28.0	9.8	7.0	25.5	10.3	19.3	99.9
May	27.1	9.9	7.4	24.7	10.7	20.2	100.0
June	26.8	10.1	7.2	25.2	9.9	20.6	99.8
July	25.2	10.5	7.6	25.7	10.3	20.6	99.9
August	23.9	10.2	8.2	24.1	10.6	22.9	99.9
September	25.7	9.0	7.8	26.7	10.5	20.5	100.2
October	24.5	9.0	8.4	27.0	10.3	20.9	100.1
November	25.6	8.9	8.1	25.3	10.3	21.8	100.0
December	25.1	8.6	7.2	27.1	11.4	20.6	100.0

(The above information has been taken from BARB, 2003, via website.)

From this table, it can be seen that, in common with the other terrestrial channels, ITV has found itself trying to retain its audience in the Midlands against competition from a variety of cable and satellite channels, and had to accept a market share of between 25 and 30 per cent in the region in all twelve months of the year 2001. The main conclusion to be drawn from this table is that the old concept of 'viewer loyalty', in which people who were watching a particular channel from 6.00 – 7.00 pm would stay with that channel for the rest of that evening, has largely disappeared in the wake of the multitude of channels currently available to viewers, something that has mainly affected the traditional channels such as ITV.

Another problem affecting ITV in recent years has been that of attempting to attract and retain a committed audience for its programmes, especially amongst the 18-35 age group. When ITV first started broadcasting in the mid-1950s, it inherited an audience who wanted to watch the programmes that were being made by the commercial channel at this time, and so a strong 'viewer loyalty' emerged, with people expressing their support for and identification with the channel. This position remained intact until the 1980s, when the opening of stations ranging from Channel 4 to cable and satellite was accompanied by criticisms that ITV had grown old with its original audience, and was not seriously attempting to attract younger viewers to watch the channel's programmes. As a result of the competition ITV faced from Channel Four and Channel 5 (now known as Five) for viewers and advertisers, ITV's share of viewers in terrestrial television fell from 41 per cent in 1991 to just 33 per cent in 1997 (*Financial Times*, 25 November 1997). One programme that suffered very badly in this respect was the original version of *Crossroads*, which was axed by Central because of its alleged failure to attract a new audience to replace the soap's

viewers who had followed it since it started, but who were dying out (Interview with Andy Allan, 2001). ITV's cause has not been helped by the proliferation of channels, which has resulted in potential viewers choosing to watch programmes that would appeal to them far more than those shown on ITV, including Channel 4's late 1990s Friday evening entertainment show *TFI Friday*, which was targeted at the 18-35 age group that many critics wanted ITV to aim for (Interview with Laurie Upshon, 2001). It can therefore be argued that any loyalty that viewers had to one particular channel has long since disappeared, something that would strongly apply to ITV in its continuing attempts to attract new viewers to replace its original core audience.

A further cause of concern surrounds ITV's continuing commitment to the concept of regionalism in general and regional identity in particular. It must be remembered that ITV was originally created by Sir Robert Fraser in the 1950s as a 'network of regions', with the main aim of reflecting the events that occurred within the various regions around the country, as well as giving opportunities to people in the regions, who would not have been given such chances elsewhere (Interview with Roy Bottomley, 2001). As time progressed, ITV found itself with no alternative but to compete with an ever-increasing number of commercial channels in the satellite and terrestrial sectors, something that Fraser could not have predicted, and which ITV was never designed or expected to do (Interview with Robert Southgate, 2001). This had led to a situation in which the regional perspectives have played a far less prominent role in ITV than was previously the case, to be replaced by more corporate activities instead, with one example of this being that of Central's former Director of Public Affairs, Marshall Stewart, who acquired added responsibilities when he was appointed to a new role as the company's Director of Corporate Strategy in the mid-1980s (Interview with Marshall Stewart, 2001).

The most serious problem facing ITV in the future, however, is that of its financial viability, something that has arisen in the light of the collapse of ITV Digital (which was originally known as On Digital) in the spring of 2002. This venture was launched by Carlton and Granada in November 1998 as a 'digital terrestrial' service, in which a multitude of channels were made available through a conventional television aerial, instead of using cable or satellite systems. It was as a result of various problems that arose concerning the platform as a whole, including complaints about poor reception, and a general dissatisfaction with the On Digital name, that Carlton and Granada re-launched this service in April 2001 as ITV Digital, which was meant to reinforce the link to the main ITV channel (*Broadcast*, 3 May 2002).

It was in June 2000 that ITV Digital agreed a three-year deal with the (Nationwide) Football League to broadcast live football matches on the ITV Sport Channel, which meant that it would be directly competing with Sky, which held the contract to show live matches from the Premier League on its own sports channels. In retrospect, it seemed very strange that ITV Digital would want to broadcast live matches such as Darlington versus Rochdale (in the Third Division of the Football League), when such games would have been of very little interest to dedicated football supporters, let alone the general public. With the platform as a whole continuing to lose money, ITV Digital's parent companies, Carlton and Granada, announced in the spring of 2002 that the deal with the Football League would end, with two years still to run. The Football League clubs attempted to sue Carlton and Granada for the remainder of this deal (which came to £178 million), but failed to do this, and the decision was taken to close down ITV Digital completely (*Broadcast*, 3 May 2002). The collapse of ITV Digital was also attributed to the platform having

been formed as an attempt to compete with Rupert Murdoch's Sky system, although it signed an 'output' deal with Murdoch, in which he supplied most of the programmes to it (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). Although ITV entered into an agreement with Channel 4 to attempt to run the successor to ITV Digital, they were defeated by a consortium including Sky and the BBC, whose digital terrestrial venture will operate under the name of 'Freeview' (*Editor* [in *Guardian*], 24 August 2002). The story of ITV Digital can therefore be seen as an example of Carlton and Granada attempting a policy of diversification whilst not paying enough attention to their core businesses, which meant that they made the same mistakes that ITV companies such as Thames made in the 1980s in their attempts to enter the American media market (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001). There can be no doubt, however, that the ITV Digital fiasco has dealt a serious blow to the ITV brand name in general, which has lost a lot of its prestige and credibility as a result.

The above problems have been accompanied by the worst downturn in advertising in ITV's history, which has reflected the economic problems that were prevalent around the world, especially following the attacks on New York's World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001. With network television advertising driven by the leading brands, and the most important decisions being taken at a global level, the crucial factor concerning investment in global brands is confidence in future demand. In his statement to Carlton's Annual Report for 2001, the company's Chief Executive, Gerry Murphy, argued that this confidence had not yet recovered, with ITV's Net Advertising Revenue falling by about 13 per cent, but he believed that when demand picked up again, ITV would be in a strong position to take advantage of the advertisers' need to promote their various products (Carlton, 2001: 4). At a national level, therefore, ITV has been confronted with a variety of problems that need to be

addressed as soon as possible. Although ITV Digital no longer exists, the digital entertainment channel ITV 2 (which started broadcasting in 1997) is still in existence, and in 2001 the main ITV channel was re-branded as 'ITV 1' to distinguish it from ITV 2 and any other station (*Broadcast*, 6 July 2001). It is therefore clear that ITV's senior executives are looking for both ITV 1 and ITV 2 to stage a revival in ITV's fortunes in the coming years.

It is unfortunate, although probably inevitable given the problems mentioned above, especially in terms of advertising, that ITV in the Midlands has experienced difficulties of its own. The most recent of these came in early 2002, when Carlton decided to abandon the early morning news bulletins for the East and South Midlands that appeared as 'opt-outs' on ITV 1's breakfast station, GMTV, in favour of showing the bulletin from Birmingham across the region. This has led to complaints from people living in the East and South Midlands that they have received news from Birmingham about the West Midlands, and nothing about their own sub-regions, which of course was the position that existed in the 1970s, when ATV was criticised for concentrating on Birmingham and the West Midlands at the direct expense of the rest of the region (Telephone conversation with Paul McLoughlin, 2002). Although Carlton continue to broadcast news bulletins throughout the day on weekdays in all the sub-regions, along with *Central News* from Monday to Friday, and *Central Newsweek* on Sunday, questions must be asked over Carlton's continuing commitment to the whole of the Midlands in news terms. One future possibility is that the sub-regions may be used for advertising purposes only, with all the news bulletins and programmes coming from the news studio in Birmingham, and the main news programme would have opt-outs of five minutes for the news for the sub-regions, before returning to the programme itself. In its response to the White Paper

on *A New Future for Communications*, the ITC strongly supported the Paper's emphasis on regionalism, and proposed that the legislation should include a Charter for Nations and Regions, with one part of this Charter being that Ofcom should appoint regionally-based officials for each ITV franchise, which would hopefully avoid problems of this nature (ITC, 2001b: 5-6). Such a move would be totally resisted by a number of people from the East and South Midlands, who would oppose any plans to end the sub-regions, but commercial pressures may lead either Carlton or its successors to centralise their news operations in the region, with Birmingham becoming the news centre for the ITV Midlands region as a whole, in much the same way that Nottingham became the television production centre for the region.⁶

Another potential threat to regional broadcasting lies in the potential expansion of cable, with special reference to stations covering localities only, rather than a more general regional coverage. If this process occurred in television, it would prove to be remarkably similar to the changes experienced by other forms of media in the past. This trend first became apparent in the nineteenth century with local newspapers, which operated on a regional basis to begin with, but as the century progressed, these publications became much more local in their coverage. This happened to such an extent that by 1900 the regional dimension had completely disappeared from these papers, to be replaced by news from the localities concerned, which was the experience of titles such as the *Leicester Chronicle* and the *Birmingham Daily Post* (Wallace, 1994: 45-46). In the case of radio, a similar pattern can be detected in that the BBC ran a regional service to accompany its main national station in the 1930s, and although this regional network continued to broadcast after the Second World

⁶ Following the merger between Carlton and Granada, it is highly likely that many of ITV's studios will be sold, including Carlton's base in Nottingham (*Broadcast*, 5 December 2003).

War, it was not highly regarded within BBC circles, which led to the abandonment of the regional concept for radio, and its replacement by a network of local stations around the country serving the communities in question (see Chapter One for further details). It may well be the case that the change from a regional approach to local initiatives, as experienced by local newspapers in the nineteenth century and radio in the twentieth, could easily affect television in the twenty-first century, especially if lower costs make the concept of local television more financially viable than is currently the case (Interview with John Mitchell, 2001).

The scenario outlined above has led some commentators to speculate on what might happen if ITV decided to abandon its considerable regional commitments completely, in favour of a purely 'national' approach to its programmes, a policy that is pursued by both Channel 4 and Channel 5. Probably the first question that would arise over this matter would be that of who, if anyone, would replace ITV as the United Kingdom's regional broadcaster. For some observers, ITV's regional functions could be taken over by the BBC, which as a public service broadcaster would not be subject to the commercial pressures felt by terrestrial, cable, and satellite channels alike, and who would therefore be in a unique position to develop a regional network that would take over from where ITV would leave off (McCormick in Miller and Allen, 1994: 64-67). From an historical perspective, however, the BBC has always emphasised its special role as a national and international broadcaster, with the regional dimension playing a minor part by comparison (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). This development has continued throughout the 1990s, with the Corporation becoming actively involved in the area of 'new media' through ventures such as its 'rolling news' channel, BBC News 24 (which started in 1997), and the new arts channel, BBC Four (formerly known as BBC Knowledge). Having now taken over ITV Digital's

platform in partnership with Sky to form Freeview, it seems increasingly unlikely that the BBC would want to devote time, money, and resources to regional broadcasting, and if anything the Corporation would probably follow ITV in withdrawing its backing for the regional approach to broadcasting. It therefore follows that if the BBC cannot or will not support the regions, then no other broadcasting organisation would be able to undertake this task.

Another option that has been mentioned in this respect is that of ITV concentrating its efforts on network commitments only, which would result in its not maintaining an expensive regional structure. In this model, ITV's regional system would be replaced by a new arrangement in which the ITC or any future regulatory body would create companies based in regions such as London, Scotland, and the Midlands, that would make regional programmes for their own people, and would be able to reflect the regions back to themselves, in much the same way that the ITV companies did for their regions in the twentieth century. Unlike the established ITV system, there would only be about five regional stations covering the whole of the United Kingdom, all of which would probably be able to run at a profit. In addition to these regional stations, there would be a network of local community television stations run through RSLs (Restricted Service Licences), which would concentrate on particular localities, and would therefore complement the work of the regional companies (Interview with Andy Allan, 2001). A further variation on this theme is that, in addition to running the ITV Midlands licence, it might be possible for Carlton to set up new stations broadcasting to particular localities in the region such as Birmingham, and these local stations would have the advantage of being covered in a far more focused manner than would be the case at regional level (Interview with Ian Squires, 2002). The final point to be made here is that of the rise of digital systems to replace the traditional

analogue signals, and one result of this scenario is that local stations could be better served by being part of a digital operation, where more channels could be accommodated, rather than in an analogue environment (Interview with Reg Harcourt, 2001).

The future of ITV as a whole is therefore inextricably linked with the future of regional broadcasting in the Midlands. This especially applies in view of the British government's recommendation in the Communications White Paper of May 2002 that ITV could be taken over by media groups based outside the European Union (EU), including the major North American conglomerates such as Disney and AOL Time Warner, as well as dominant newspaper groups. This bill also permitted a merger between Carlton and Granada to create a single ITV company, with the system as a whole coming under the control of a 'super-regulator' in Ofcom (Office of Communications), which would have responsibility for British broadcasting as a whole, and would replace groups such as the ITC in the process (*Broadcast*, 10 May 2002). If only one regulator was responsible for British broadcasting in general, there is every chance that it might not be able to deal in an efficient manner with any potential problems that might arise in the future, including the possibility that it would, for example, have to intervene in any future disputes between ITV and the BBC, and face the prospect of favouring one broadcasting organisation over another. Such a development would be likely to have serious consequences for ITV's regional system in general, and criticism of the government's stance has come from various sources, including the former member of the Annan Committee on Broadcasting in the 1970s and current MEP, Phillip Whitehead:

'I am pessimistic about the regional distinctiveness of Channel 3 [ITV] being its strong suit, its mark whereby it is judged or assessed in a regulatory system. I think it is more likely that we will get a variety of offerings more or less spread across the UK, on the digital terrestrial channels, with the costs and rewards shared as far as possible by all of the broadcasters involved...My hope, perversely and perhaps forlornly, is that this commercial system is encouraged to retain its diversity, because that is its distinctive contribution, it was always intended to be so, and where it worked, it showed a clean pair of heels to the opposition [the BBC]. My fear is that what is going to happen, not just in the Midlands but everywhere else, is that there will be a great homogenous lump of programming, in which most of the major players will have a finger [in the pie]. If you look at the way in which the new offshoots that preoccupy Carlton and Granada have started up, such as On Digital [later ITV Digital] with all its troubles, you don't see here a concern with what they would regard as an old battleground of regional terrestrial [television]. What you see [instead] is digital terrestrial, digital satellite platforms, multiplex-type centres, a whole variety of stations being launched, most of them running on the basis of what "niche" markets they can corner and command. There is no such thing as a niche market for the culture of the East or West Midlands; you get that, if you want it, in different ways'. (Interview, 2001)

(iv) 'Under Review': reflections on ITV in the Midlands

Having discussed the possible future prospects for regional broadcasting in the Midlands, and for ITV in the region in particular, it is necessary to look at ITV's

performance in the Midlands from the 1950s to date from the perspectives of a variety of interested parties, the first of which is the veteran camera operator Gary Hughes:

‘I think that human interest demands something that is local, and I think that people, although fascinated by international news and programmes in a shrinking world, will return to their basic instincts, which you will never lose, and I think that regions in television terms will always be maintained, the Yorkshireman will always be the Yorkshireman, the West Midlander will continue to be the West Midlander, and so on. I think that people will maintain that, and I think it would be disastrous for television companies to ever feel they can lose that, and it doesn’t matter any more. I think it’s essential that that basic contact with the regions and with [regional] identity remains, one example being the county of Rutland, which was “taken in” by Leicestershire [in 1974], and then fought for over 20 years to revert to having its own name, it is purely and simply a territorial grouping. Human nature demands that it should be a locally influenced service that they get, and it is very difficult for cable and satellite companies to be economically viable, with its general programming. I believe that [the ITV companies broadcasting to the regions] will have to revert to the fundamentals that we started with, which is the regional news, which is the cheapest, most effective, and quickest contact with the local area, and provided the companies can maintain that, I think to a large extent that will give people some contact with their local area’. (Interview, 2001)

The importance of regional news in the history of ITV in the Midlands has been recognised by the main presenter of *Central News* in Birmingham, Bob Warman:

‘Being in television is like having the best train set in town, it is a great business to be involved with, and I have been very fortunate, because in a sense it is like a paid hobby, and I don’t know what else I would do if I wasn’t doing this job. I have always enjoyed it thoroughly, and I am still enjoying it, I am still able to go into that studio at six o’clock [in the evening], and remain genuinely enthusiastic for the programme. Being in live television is like no other job, it’s always like a bright new pin, every day, and I can’t think of many jobs that are like that. There is an element of danger involved in live programming, and of course we go on air with an imperfect product, it’s imperfect from the point of view that it’s live, and certain items have to be squeezed or expanded, certain things don’t make it on air, they are stuck in editing rooms or whatever. Sometimes, the software on our technology fools us, and there is a problem, that is what gives live programming its edge. My job is to paper over the cracks, and make it look as seamless as possible to the viewer, and if everything goes hopelessly wrong, to “come clean” with a nod and a wink and move on to the next item, my job is to connect and to keep connected to the viewer. My hopes for the future of ITV in the Midlands are that the powers-that-be see the sense of retaining a strong regional [news] programme, [that it will be] the “building block” of early evening programming [on ITV]...[I hope that the new ITV company] will see the sense, rather like the BBC’s *Nationwide* years ago, of having regional television around the country, with regional opt-outs. I also hope that we can use the technology, and there are some wonderful machines out there, to build a better programme, always looking in an imperfect world for a better product’. (Interview, 2001)

The genre of regional news has come under attack from some quarters, and one of its fiercest critics is the former ATV and Central announcer, Michael Prince, who explained the shortcomings of regional news with regard to ITV in the Midlands:

‘I have been of the opinion that it is very difficult for [ITV] companies with very large areas to serve, such as the whole of the Midlands, to sensibly offer a regional news service. In the Midlands, I don’t see how people in Banbury [in Oxfordshire] have anything in common with people in Shrewsbury [in Shropshire], and yet at one time there was one news service covering both localities. It’s taken time for local radio to take up that role, [and] there are localised television services emerging, [but] whether they’ll catch on remains to be seen. I’ve been lucky to spend a lot of time travelling in the United States, and it’s a different system, smaller news operations covering smaller catchment areas have provided a parochial service that has suited that country in its television development. I’ve always been critical that ITV didn’t really take on board the fact that it was trying to observe its Charter by providing local news services, which works in the smaller ITV regions, especially Channel Television, as what happens between the islands is of great interest to those people who live in that group of islands. Certainly ITV in the Midlands is not served well by trying to do too much with its local news, [because] when it did split into the East, West, and South Midlands, I think those areas are still too large, and the type of news, with councillors saying various things, doesn’t address what people want to hear. I still look back fondly to programmes such as *ATV Today*, with presenters such as Terry Thomas (the angling expert, not the actor), programmes like that had much more of a following than, these shows

were more entertainment based than hard news based, and gave the public what they wanted'. (Interview, 2001)

The veteran presenter and reporter of *Central News East* based in Nottingham, John Mitchell, refuted the above views:

'I have seen a lot of changes [over the years], but fundamentally it hasn't changed, I'm still doing the same job now as I was doing back in 1978, and I don't see myself as somebody who has stood still. I am always learning and trying new things, and I think that is one of the reasons that I have stayed in this job for so long, simply because I can keep feeling fresh and go to it, renewed, every day, even though some of the stories that I do are the same ones that I have done for the last 20 years, every year they keep cropping up on the same basis, or even quicker than that. [In my work:] one, you are meeting people; two, it's the actual process of creating something, creating a story that appears very trivial, but then it comes good. I have just done a very simple story with some school children, and I was interviewing Bill Oddie [writer and comedian], and he donated this bird table to help these children with their environmental lessons, to make them feel more eco-friendly. I have done so many stories like that in the past, but you have to put something different into it.

'*Central News* and ITV in the Midlands will carry on despite all the upheavals, and we will continue to grow. Competition gets harder, we have more competition all the time, and that puts strains on everyone, there are probably strains on the fact that there is not as much money as there used to be in the old days, so that means that things have become more stressed, so it's

certainly not the industry I came into over 20 years ago, it's changed, and I wonder whether it's changed for the better. I look back now at some of the old programmes, and the old stories, that Chris Tarrant and John Swallow did on *ATV Today*, these stories still stand up today, and quite honestly, we are still trying to emulate those stories, trying to put some fun back into the programme as well as having an informative element to it, you've got to have the whole lot. [I look back at] some of the stuff that Tony Maycock did, on one day he would be doing a murder story, the next day he would be doing a "light" story. I would do the same thing, on one day I covered a murder, a kid's tea party, and a siege, and that is part of the essence of the job, that's the thing that keeps you going. That was what *ATV Today* did and what *Central News* does today, and for as long as we keep the variety going, but continue to keep in touch with our grass roots, our viewers, then we will survive, despite the competition from Sky, and the expanding number of channels in the television industry. In the end, people want to be entertained, and provided you can do that, and get the news across, and keep it regional, because regional news is what people like, and the figures are always strong for it, we will continue, no doubt about it'. (Interview, 2001)

The broadcasting expert and MEP for Derby, Phillip Whitehead, provided an alternative view on ITV in the Midlands in the twentieth century:

'Overall, I think the record is mixed. ITV in the Midlands contributed to the overall achievement of a new commercially based, but still public service regulated, system that many feared could not be brought about... I think that there was stylishness and a willingness to innovate, from ITN and from the companies, which was stronger in some areas than others, it wasn't as strong in

the East Midlands as it was elsewhere, but inevitably the ATV of Norman Collins picked up some of that ethos, and it was better to have the choice than not. However, it is a story thereafter of promise unfulfilled, because the way in which we periodically regulated the system, and the way in which we chopped and changed it, meant that the primary purpose was never the same as the theoretical objective, which was of a system that incidentally generated high profits and a good life for those who worked in it, but mainly delivered the region back to itself in a way that the BBC was not supposed to do. By the 1970s, it was clear that, in terms of radio, it was the BBC that would be producing “regional identity” programming, with commercial radio running a generic product on their stations, and the ITV companies were going to cluster together on the one channel that they had, making as much money as they could, for as long as they could. Now that doesn’t mean that the regional objectives were entirely negated, and there have been regional initiatives, and I am very glad that, in the end, we did get the East Midlands development [of Central] through Nottingham, it was good for Nottingham, good for the area, but it was always so much less than we could have achieved if there had been a firm commitment to the objectives, and less of a desire to turn to a completely relentless market economy’. (Interview, 2001)

The final word on ITV’s performance in the Midlands comes from the former drummer with the Electric Light Orchestra (ELO), Bev Bevan:

‘I really enjoy the news programmes, and it’s nice to have someone representing your particular region, and letting you know what’s on. I like those

guides where they tell you what's going on at the theatre and what sporting events are going on in your particular region, obviously the regional weather forecast is incredibly helpful, so it's getting better all the time, it's something that I virtually never miss, I always put on the regional news programme...As long as [Carlton] does the job that it is supposed to do, which is to provide quality programmes and give an overall view of what is going on in the Midlands, that is all I ask'. (Interview, 2002)

It is fair comment to suggest that many people living in the Midlands share these views on ITV in the region in general, and Carlton's contribution in particular. The other factor to emerge from all of the above sources is that, whether people realise it or not, there is a genuine groundswell of opinion in favour of regional broadcasting, with special reference to the genre of regional news, which is arguably more popular than it has ever been before. Given all the problems that ITV has experienced at a national level in recent years, with falling advertising revenues and increasing competition contributing to the channel's woes, it may be surprising to some people, but reassuring to many others, to discover that ITV's regional dimension continues to play a crucial role in the channel's output. This is especially true in the Midlands, which is arguably the most diverse region in the United Kingdom in cultural, economic, and geographical terms, and where Central's decision to create three separate sub-regions in the 1980s has proved to be an inspired move, as all of these entities have been accepted by the people who live in the East, West, and South Midlands. Although nobody expected Central or Carlton to create feelings of either regional or sub-regional identity as a result, the Midlands has undoubtedly been reflected through the regional programmes as a whole, and especially through the main evening news bulletins broadcast simultaneously by the three sub-regions. It is

to be hoped that this particular pattern of news provision will be maintained in the future, as it would not only provide popular support for Carlton Central in the Midlands, but would also assist ITV in network terms.

(v) 'End of the line': final thoughts on the concept of the region

As has already been stated, no account of ITV's regional system can be discussed without referring to the question 'What is a region'? and with reference to ITV in the Midlands, the question 'What is the Midlands'? must also be asked. The answers to both of these questions are very difficult to find, especially with regard to the ITV Midlands region, which in addition to the East and West Midlands, also includes the South Midlands, which consists of counties such as Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. This definition of the South Midlands is at odds with that of many geographers, who would claim that this region would consist of counties such as Bedfordshire, even though these counties have not been a part of the ITV Midlands region, and probably never will be for that matter.⁷ An even more difficult question than those of what a region is or what the Midlands is, concerns the subject of what a Midlander is, or what East, West, or South Midlanders are, and this problem was identified in a research project produced by the Centre for Mass Communication Research (CMCR) at the University of Leicester, which attempted to establish the extent to which people living in the East and West Midlands identified with different geographical areas with different social and cultural characteristics, both from each other and from other regions. This led to the suggestion that the East Midlands enjoyed a sense of regional identity strong enough to be taken into account in the planning of broadcasting provision for the region, although it was recognised that it was very difficult to

⁷ See Introduction (p.22) for further details.

establish the nature of such an identity. In a sample devoted to the subject of regional identity, 16 per cent of those people questioned considered themselves to be 'Midlanders', but only seven people (which amounted to less than one per cent of the whole sample) believed themselves to be 'East Midlands' (CMCR, University of Leicester, 1984: 71-81).

From the viewpoint of the broadcasters, there have been occasions when the concept of regional broadcasting has proved to be rather frustrating, and one example of this was provided by the main presenter of the BBC's *Midlands Today* in Birmingham, Nick Owen:

'There are lots of people in Nottingham and Leicester who receive *Midlands Today*, but are not supposed to, and there are loads in Derby, and this is a constant battle that goes on, because strictly speaking, they are not in our area. I go to these places to watch cricket and other things, and people come up to me and tell me that they saw me on television the previous night. I tell these people that they are not supposed to watch my programme, but they tell me that they enjoy it, although they get a bit frustrated that there is nothing about their localities. I tell them that we are not allowed to do it, it's a rule, because they are wasted viewers, they don't count in our ratings. We could have one million people watching our programme in Leicester, Derby, and Nottingham every night, and they wouldn't count towards our viewing figures, they would go down as BBC local television viewers, and therefore they would count for the East Midlands, [so] it's not in our interest to serve them. I don't agree with that, I believe the BBC is there to provide a service, and if people are watching our programme, we should try to serve them.'

‘There is one argument that I have won, and that is [that] we still do cover areas of Derbyshire and Leicestershire, and in cricketing terms, these people are likely to support their counties, and so I believe that it is very important to cover these teams. We also do a little bit about Derby County and Leicester City football teams, because people may live in south Leicestershire, which is in our patch, rather than the city of Leicester, but they may still support Leicester City, and I know there are a lot of people in Staffordshire who support Derby County, let alone Derbyshire people who are in our area, so I think we ought to serve them a bit more. It is the eternal problem, how far do you stretch the rubber band? There are people who live outside the West Midlands who watch the programme, and they will not get a lot of mentions about their specific localities, because we are not meant to cover them, but they can’t get [*East Midlands Today* in] Nottingham for whatever reason, perhaps their aerials don’t point towards Nottingham, or they are in a “dip” whereby they can only receive programmes from the Sutton Coldfield transmitter. It is a dilemma’. (Interview, 2001)

The former Director of the Centre for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester, Professor James Halloran, further explained these reception problems:

‘There are two [television] transmitters [serving the Midlands], one at Sutton Coldfield, and the other at Waltham [in Nottinghamshire]. I still cannot receive [programmes from the] Waltham [transmitter], because there are still three or four “blackspots” in Leicester. Now all the time I was a non-executive [member] of [Central’s] East Midlands [advisory board], there was an argument

between Central and the IBA [over] who was responsible for putting up “booster” transmitters, and they haven’t been put up yet! You can see why I feel a bit cynical about how important [the region] was, [Central] was still producing programmes costing a lot of money, but the commercial considerations always overcame [building the transmitters]. If someone had really been sincere about it, they would have made sure the transmitters were built. The ITC did some testing, Central’s engineers did their own testing, but nothing was done, and I still get [the programmes from] Sutton Coldfield, and so do the people [living] in and around Oadby [on the outskirts of Leicester], based in these blackspots, so who is really concerned [about regional broadcasting]? It wasn’t Central’s responsibility, or Carlton’s job today, but it is the ITC’s responsibility, they are the people who are “banging the drum” about regionalism, and yet they have never really supported it’. (Interview, 2002)

Central’s Director of Public Affairs and Corporate Strategy in the 1980s, Marshall Stewart, explained the special characteristics of the ITV Midlands region, as opposed to both the other ITV regions and other versions of the Midlands:

‘I think the Central region is an unusual one, because if you think of the extent of it, from west to east, for example, including its overlap areas, it runs from mid-Wales through to East Anglia. You can receive a Central signal in parts of Sheffield, and you can receive it in parts of Oxfordshire, and none of those areas have got anything in common at all! From a geographical point of view, the idea that you were able to broadcast to one particular part of the country by itself was clearly false, there was no relationship between people who lived in the Black Country and in parts of the Cotswolds, their lifestyles

were completely different, their interests were in the main quite different, and I think that made Central a particularly interesting area. There is no other region within the United Kingdom, including the London area, which has the same size and diversity that the [Carlton] Central region has'. (Interview, 2001)

This account of regional broadcasting finishes with a brief assessment of regional television in the Netherlands, which only began in 1992, when the first regional television programmes started broadcasting. Until the 1990s, the only regional broadcasting in this country occurred in relation to radio, and was concerned with preserving the country's cultural and linguistic heritage, but following intervention by the government, regional stations were established in almost all of the provinces. In addition to these public service stations, a smaller number of commercial stations broadcast to the more populated areas and metropolitan provinces, with further expansion in both the public and private sectors set to follow. The twelve provinces themselves range in both size and population from Noord-Holland and Zuid-Holland, which contain the main cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, to those provinces to the east and south that are situated on the borders of Belgium and Germany. As with the BBC, national public broadcasting is mainly financed from a licence fee, which is paid by owners of television sets, but is also paid by owners of radios, something that was phased out by the BBC in the late 1960s. At the regional level, the radio stations are financed through part of the licence fee, and feature news and information, music, and cultural activities, along with the promotion of sporting, cultural, and tourist events, with regulation requiring that 50 per cent of the programming be of an educational and cultural nature, as well as being related to people living in the region in question. With regard to regional television, the content of the programmes is dominated by regional news and related subjects ranging from sports to the province

itself, although there is a difference between the public service stations, who cannot broadcast entertainment programming, as that would conflict with the programmes broadcast by the national public service stations, and the commercial stations, who specialise in the field of entertainment. The most popular programmes broadcast by the regional public television stations are those concerned with regional news, with these stations reaching a weekly average of 40 per cent of the viewers in their respective regions (Jankowski and Schoorlemmer in de Moragas Spa, Garitaonandia and Lopez: 281-298).

Finally, ITV's contribution to broadcasting in general was assessed by the former ATV and Central continuity announcer, Michael Prince:

'I think that ITV has probably been trapped at times by its Charter, and the way that the guidelines have been interpreted, but all the people who were behind the Charters and the awarding of [the] franchises have, on the whole, done an excellent job, because it's easy to be critical of regional news, but ITV as a collective has produced some fantastic series and shows over the years, both in entertainment and documentaries. I think what's happening today, with the slow but very definite merge of all the companies into one brand of ITV, is probably right for what the public and the market expect now...I tend to think that Britain is at the moment, and probably will continue to be, a nation that likes its national newspapers, its national broadcasting services, its national feel about other things, whereas in the United States, there is a paradox that, although they pledge allegiance [to the American flag] every morning at school, the media is very much broken down into affiliated radio and television stations across that country. The federal system has delivered many good things for ITV

in this country, the story is by no means over yet, and I look forward to producing more children's programmes to deliver to that worldwide television industry, and hopefully some of those shows will end up on ITV'. (Interview, 2001)

There can be no doubt that a large part of ITV's success can be attributed to its federal framework, which was deliberately created by Sir Robert Fraser to provide a contrast to the BBC's centralised and hierarchical structure, and in this respect the commercial channel has succeeded to an extent that both Fraser, and critics such as Lord Reith, could never have imagined (Interview with Phillip Whitehead, 2001). Although many people have struggled to fully understand the ITV system, based on the network of regions, they have still recognised the contribution that the various companies representing the channel have made to their own regions. This trend definitely applies to the Midlands, where all the companies that have broadcast to the region since the mid-1950s (ATV, ABC, Central, and Carlton) have made genuine efforts to reflect the region back to itself (or 'inward-looking regionalism' as Donald Read described it).⁸ A special mention must be made here to Central, whose 'philosophy' on television in general, and the Midlands in particular, enabled it to cover the region in the manner that Fraser wanted, whilst also making its own distinctive contributions to the network as a whole through programmes such as the satirical puppet show *Spitting Image* (Interview with Bob Phillis, 2002). Central's work has been continued by Carlton from the mid-1990s to date, with the latter company continuing to produce popular regional programmes such as the local history showcase *Heart Of The Country*, as well as ensuring that Carlton Central maintains its own management structure in the Midlands, as opposed to the company

⁸ See Chapter Four (p.149) for further details.

being run from London, as ATV was from the mid-1950s to the early 1980s (Interview with Ian Squires, 2002).

In respect of the future of the ITV regions, there is every chance that whoever is in control of the channel as a whole may seek to change its commitment to and remit for regional programming. One option that might occur, for instance, is for the main ITV channel, ITV 1, to concentrate its efforts on showing popular network programmes throughout the country, with the digital channel, ITV 2, assuming responsibility for all regional output, as well as specialist and minority programming. It would therefore follow that ITV 2 would not only reflect all the regions back to themselves, but might also show the best programmes made in the regions, which would create feelings of 'outward-looking regionalism' that Read believed in and argued for, so ITV 2 would reflect all the regions to the whole country, something that does not occur at present. Whatever happens in the future, the determination of all the companies that have represented ITV in all the regions over the last 50 years to reflect their regions back to themselves is to be admired. Finally, although the most suitable answer to the question 'What is a region'? is that it is whatever people want it to be (and the same answer applies to the question 'What is the Midlands'?), ITV's contribution in promoting and developing its regional structure is by far the best example of English regional identity in the twentieth century, whilst also ensuring that ITV will always be remembered for the special role it has played in the history of British broadcasting.

(vi) Conclusion

One of the principal aims of this thesis has been to critically analyse the relationship between broadcasting and regional identity, with special reference to the debates that

have emerged in this area. Whenever this issue has been discussed in the past, it has almost exclusively been approached from a 'national' or London-based perspective, with the capital's interests dominating those of the regions, who have found themselves unable to make a successful defence of their positions. It was therefore my intention to ensure that this discussion was approached from an explicitly regional perspective, rather than from London, so the region in question, in this case the Midlands, has had the opportunity to express its concerns in full, with the national situation playing a minor role as a result. This objective has been supported by the statements made by the interviewees for this study, with all of these sources emphasising the importance of maintaining a television service that would be relevant to the whole of the Midlands, whilst also giving the people of the region the chance to express their views and opinions on a wide range of issues.

It is also significant that this project is probably the first of its kind in which the region has been promoted in preference to other factors, so the Midlands has dominated the discussion as a whole. This approach is in complete contrast to the alternatives that could have been pursued, such as the 'company history' concept, in which the histories of the companies that have represented ITV in the region assumed the dominant position. If this study had just concentrated on the history of, for example, ATV, it would not only have discussed the company's time in the Midlands, but also analysed its performance in London, from ITV's launch in 1955 until its departure from the capital in 1968, and would therefore not be exclusively confined to discussing issues affecting the Midlands. By the same token, if this project had confined itself to a history of Central, which was the only ITV company representing the Midlands that broadcast to the region only from 1982 until Carlton's takeover in

1994, it is almost certain that the main emphasis of such a study would have been on Central's development as a company during the period in question, with issues of regional identity, including the relationship with broadcasting in the region, playing only a minor part, if these arguments were raised at all. Although a work of this nature would have been of interest to students of economics or business administration, with special reference to Central's transformation into a company that could be run at a profit and could compete successfully in the British commercial television sector (Interview with Leslie Hill, 2001), the regional dimension would not have been anywhere near as significant as it has been for this thesis.

This project has succeeded in describing the relationship between broadcasting and regional identity not only throughout ITV's period in the Midlands from the 1950s onwards, but also with reference to the BBC's regional broadcasting system, which started in the 1920s for radio, and which still exists for television today. It is fair to say that issues of regional identity have never been discussed as seriously as they could and should have been by people who in some cases have played a prominent part in the process, so for that reason alone, the thesis has made a crucial contribution to an understanding of the relationship to broadcasting in the region. The most important advantage of adopting an historical perspective in this regard is that the relationship between regional identity and broadcasting has been analysed since the 1920s, starting with the BBC's approach to this question, and the problems associated with it, especially in relation to London's determination to control this regional system, both financially and in administrative terms; and continuing with the ITV companies, with their various strategies towards the Midlands, ranging from ATV's indifference to the region in the 1960s, to Central's 'philosophy' for the

Midlands in the 1980s. In addition, this study has discussed the future prospects for regional broadcasting in the Midlands, something that is particularly relevant in view of the creation of one company to run the ITV network following the merger between Carlton and Granada in February 2004. It remains to be seen how this new company (known as ITV plc) will approach regional broadcasting in Britain in general and in the Midlands in particular, and the question has to be raised as to whether the regional dimension to ITV will exist at all in the future. This issue is especially relevant with regard to ITV's decision to sell the Nottingham studio complex, with Birmingham once again becoming the commercial channel's main base in the Midlands (*Broadcast*, 13 February 2004).

On a more personal level, the thesis has provided me with a full understanding of all the issues involved in the relationship between broadcasting and regionalism, something that I would never have discovered otherwise, whilst also ensuring that I shall watch television in general, and ITV in particular, in a completely different light than was the case before this project began. This project has undoubtedly filled a gap that has existed in the history of British broadcasting for far too long, and it is to be hoped that some of the other regions within the United Kingdom will eventually enjoy studies of a similar nature to my own. It is also to be hoped that the regional dimension to British broadcasting will remain in the future, as this option is by far the best way of ensuring that some form of diversity will exist in cultural, economic, and geographical terms. This issue is particularly relevant in view of the possibility that ITV might pass into foreign ownership at some future stage (*Broadcast*, 24 October 2003), in which case the major decisions concerning the commercial channel might not even be made in London, let alone the regions. There is every chance that the

regional element to ITV could disappear altogether if one of the media conglomerates was allowed to take it over, which would not only signify the end of an era in broadcasting terms, but also ensure that one of its most distinctive 'selling points' would no longer exist, which would have serious consequences for ITV as a whole.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED FOR PhD THESIS

(i) List of executives interviewed

- Leslie Hill (21 June 2001)
- Charles Denton (5 July 2001)
- Marshall Stewart (16 August 2001)
- Robert Southgate (19 September 2001)
- Brian Tesler (20 September 2001)
- Andy Allan (27 September 2001)
- Laurie Upshon (15 November 2001)
- Ian Squires (11 January 2002)
- Bob Phillis (19/20 February 2002)

(ii) List of presenters/producers etc. interviewed

- Ned Sherrin (29 May 2001)
- Bob Warman (1 August 2001)
- Gary Newbon (16 August 2001)
- Nick Owen (31 August 2001)
- Reg Harcourt (5 September 2001)
- Philip Jones (6 September 2001)
- Dawn Airey (12 September 2001)
- Bruce Grocott (now Lord Grocott – 13 September 2001)
- Peter Tomlinson (19 September 2001)
- Michael Prince (20 September 2001)
- Roy Bottomley (5 October 2001)

- Doug Carnegie (9 October 2001)
- Bob Holness (17 October 2001)
- Bob Gillman (18 October 2001)
- Shaw Taylor (25 October 2001)
- Francis Essex (4 November 2001)
- Gary Terzza (12 November 2001)
- David Hamilton (13 November 2001)
- Duncan Rycroft (15 November 2001 – written report)
- Hugh Johns (21 November 2001)
- John Mitchell (28 November 2001)
- Andrew Fox (7 December 2001)
- Cyril Fletcher (12 December 2001 – telephone conversation)
- Mike Blair (28 December 2001)
- Dicky Leeman (4 January 2002)
- Jean Morton (2 February 2002 – written report)
- Linda Cunningham (7/11 February 2002 – e-mails from Australia)

(iii) Other interested parties interviewed

- Gary Hughes and Roger Cowper (camera operator and sound recordist respectively at ATV/Central/Carlton – 4 May 2001)
- Denver Logan (Sales Controller at Carlton in Birmingham – 16 August 2001)
- Phillip Whitehead MEP (member of Annan Committee on Broadcasting in 1970s) – 22 August 2001)
- David Glencross (former Chief Executive of ITC – 28 August 2001)

- Clare Mulholland (former Regional Officer for IBA in Midlands – 20 September 2001)
- Simon Cottle (wrote PhD thesis on Central's coverage of the inner cities of the Midlands – 30 October 2001)
- Michelle Butler (Administrative Officer at Burford Garden Company, Burford, Oxfordshire – 4 December 2001 – letter)
- Paul Kearsley (Marketing/IT Director at Apollo 2000 [Gas/Electrical Superstores], Middlemoor Road, Birmingham – 7 December 2001 – telephone conversation)
- Frank Harding (former camera operator at ATV and ITN – 10 December 2001)
- Tony Adams (acted in Midlands-based soap opera *Crossroads* – 4 January 2002)
- Bev Bevan (former drummer with the Electric Light Orchestra – 17 January 2002)
- Professor James Halloran (former Director of the Centre for Mass Communication Research [CMCR] at the University of Leicester – 8 May 2002)
- Paul McLaughlin (National Broadcasting Organiser for the National Union of Journalists [NUJ] in London – 4 October 2002 – telephone conversation)

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