

# Bible Hour

Biog. - Manning, Ernest MAY 23 1987

## at turning point

EDMONTON (CP) — A broadcasting institution — former Alberta premier Ernest Manning's weekly religious broadcast — has reached a turning point after 62 years on the air.

The program, known as Canada's National Bible Hour, needs new blood and new ideas to survive, Manning says.

The program, the longest-running religious radio show in Canada, has been aired 3,200 times since it started on CFCN Calgary in 1925. It is currently heard on 45 radio stations from Vancouver Island to Nova Scotia.

Unlike the high-pressure television religion shows in the United States, the Bible Hour has only two paid staff — administrative secretary Jackie Wagstaff and a recording technician.

Manning, his wife and others connected with the program have never been paid for their work and most of the budget of \$350,000 is spent on the \$4,000 a week needed for airtime.

Manning, 78, says he is concerned about his own age and that of others connected with the program. He conducted a poll of listeners last fall to see where the program should be going.

"We found two distinct audiences," he says.

"The core audience is people who have listened for 30, 40 or even 50 years, and they are for the most part elderly.

"A younger group listens to

the program but they are less vocal in their support and are less likely to contribute to its operation."

Manning, elected to the Alberta legislature in the Social Credit sweep of 1935, was a cabinet minister under William Aberhart and succeeded Aberhart as premier in 1943. He resigned as premier and as a member of the legislature in 1968. Two years later, he was appointed to the Senate.

His son, Preston, has taken over his radio broadcast once a month and his contribution appears to be appreciated by listeners.

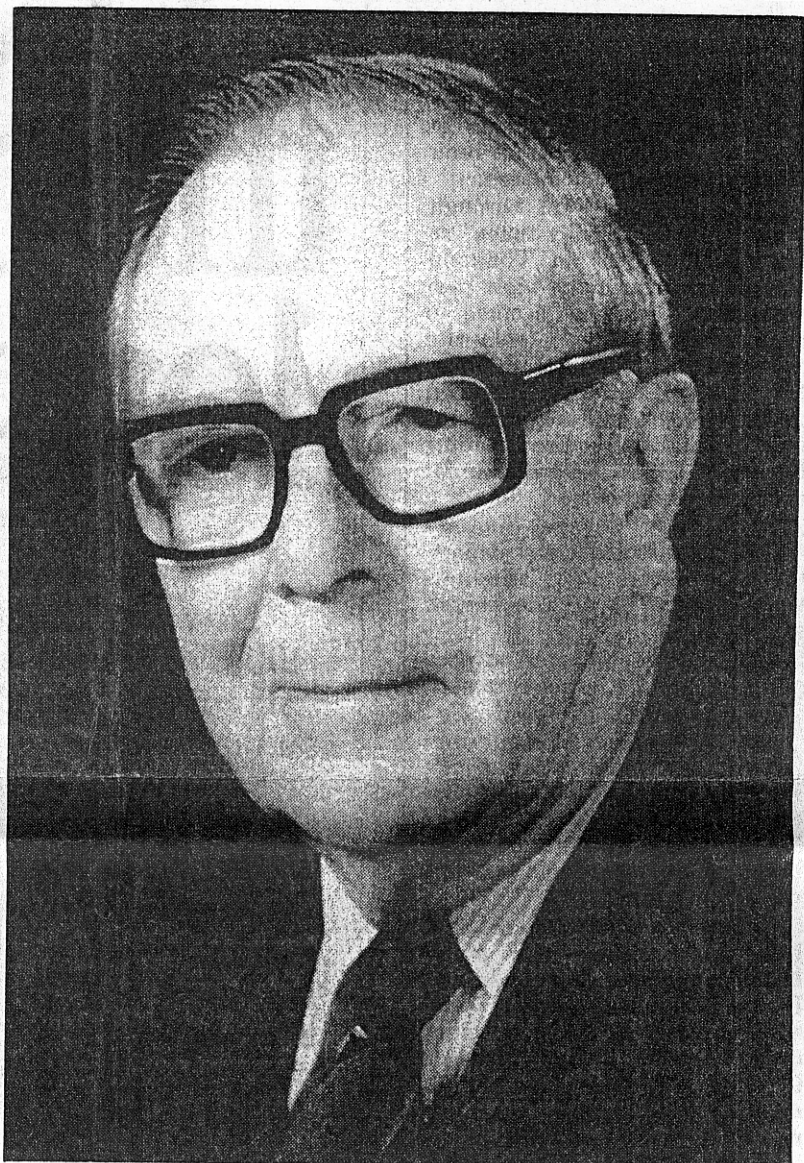
But the program is not adding from the new generation at a rate sufficient to replace the old group, Manning says.

Manning himself was one of the first listeners to the program, started by Aberhart as a broadcast of his successful Sunday school class.

Two years later, Manning was among the first class at Aberhart's Prophetic Bible Institute. In 1930, at the age of 21, he made his first appearance on the radio program.

Aberhart started to promote the Social Credit theories of British major C. H. Douglas on the program, a fact that contributed to the party's landslide electoral victory. Social Credit remained in power in Alberta for 36 years, until Peter Lougheed's Conservative party won the 1971 general election.

Under Manning and his wife Muriel, who has played piano for the program for its entire



File photo, Canadian Press

## Ernest Manning has been on air 62 years

61 years, the Bible Hour expanded across the country between 1948 and 1953. By 1955, Manning had stopped commuting to Calgary and moved production to Edmonton.

Manning hopes to be able to avoid ending the show.

"Canada needs a national media ministry which will con-

tinue to pursue the unique objectives preserved for so long by the Bible Hour."

Those objectives include faith in a divinely inspired and inerrant Bible, winning people to Christ through evangelical Bible teaching, and analysis of world trends through Bible prophecy, he said.