

Television

It fell upon our national system as the instrument for carrying out a broadcasting service to provide a television service in areas which, because of low population density, were not sufficiently attractive to private station operators. The corporation had already gone through a similar experience in providing radio service through the development of the low power relay transmitter. There are now nearly 60 of these located in communities where no other reliable broadcast service is available. I understand the corporation decided some time ago that a similar device might provide a solution in extending television coverage.

In making plans to provide television service to small remote communities it would appear that the C.B.C. applied the same standards that it had devised when the radio service was under development. These standards or criteria were intended to keep planning within practical limits and to ensure that public funds were spent where the most people would benefit.

Where an expensive service is provided through public moneys it is always difficult to know when to stop extending the service to reach more of the people who contribute the funds. Theoretically, because all Canadians contribute to the national television system they are all entitled to roughly the same service. In practice it is not possible to treat everyone in exactly the same way, and the expense of bringing service to all parts of the country is prohibitive and unjustified. This is not new in a sparsely settled country like ours. The provision of public services such as railways, highways, schools and hospitals cannot come at the same time everywhere because the costs may be out of proportion to the number of citizens who benefit. Generally speaking, the more costly the installation, the larger the population must be to justify the extension of the services.

I will briefly outline some of the factors that influence the planning on extending television service to remote areas. I understand that in order to qualify for consideration the population of a town or village should exceed an established minimum. The C.B.C., for instance, would not operate a station in an area covered by an existing or proposed private station. Second, a broadcast channel assigned under international agreement would have to be available in the area. Third, a thorough study of each area to be served would be needed to find the most economic way and most effective transmitters to serve them.

Then further, close study would be given as to how best a signal could be sent to the

transmitter, whether by (a) network connection, (b) off-air pick-up from another transmitter, or (c) television recordings. It would also be necessary to calculate the annual operating costs, including amortization, per television home served, so that we would know the per unit cost of serving each home. Finally, other things being equal, I understand the corporation believes that the transmitter which offered the lowest unit cost service should be installed first.

Now to get down to cases, I am informed that the capital cost of building transmitters at four of the more populated areas in the Churchill and Dauphin constituencies would be approximately \$1 million. The annual operating costs, including the rental charges on a microwave connection from the main transcontinental microwave system, would be approximately—and here I disagree with the hon. member for Churchill—\$450,000 per year. If the stations were to be serviced by television film the operating costs would be about \$600,000 per year. There are, according to the best estimates, about 40,000 homes in the area that would be served by the requested four transmitters.

On this basis the capital and operating costs per thousand homes served comes rather high and I do not feel that any private broadcaster would take a chance faced by these extravagant costs. I think he would be very unwise to set up a private station in these areas. Then we must take into consideration the fact that there are 40 or 50 locations in Canada which are similar to those about which the hon. member for Churchill was speaking. Simple multiplication will show what the ultimate cost to the public treasury will be if we are to make television available in the homes of perhaps 40 or 50 such communities.

In 1956 the corporation submitted to the royal commission on broadcasting, as will be found on page 220 of the Fowler report, a capital program for covering areas not then receiving a television service. This capital program was for a period of seven years and provided for the progressive extension of coverage as well as for other developments in the television and radio field. I am also informed that plans for a further revision of coverage will be reflected in a five-year capital program to be submitted to the government by November of this year. This is done in conformity with section 35 of the Broadcasting Act. Therefore, provided that this parliament approves the corporation's program, we can expect a progressive extension of television service to many remote