

Mr. Pelletier: Well, I just saw the results of a serious survey and to my surprise, the survey tends to demonstrate that the credibility of television news for most people is higher than the credibility of the newspapers. I was happy to see that the credibility according to this survey is not going down—it is quite adequate. For instance, the number of people who would say that “That is just a pack of lies and I don’t want to have anything to do with information—it is all manipulated in advance.” Is very, very low, in this survey at least. It is quite an extensive study. It is still not published and that is why I am not referring to it more precisely.

The Chairman: Well, perhaps I should say that this Committee has done a study which shows the exact same thing.

Mr. Pelletier: I was surprised but then I wondered, looking at the results, whether this was not only an indication that more people get their information from television and radio than through the written press. So it might be the fact that they don’t read the newspapers as much as they used to do, that leads them to believe that the credibility of television is better. I am not sure how this comes about.

The Chairman: The other question that I wanted to put to you—and I may return later with some other questions, but for the time being the last question—I think the Committee would welcome any general comments you care to make about the magazine industry in Canada. Perhaps it is not something which has concerned you, but you may have views.

Mr. Pelletier: No I don’t think I would like to comment on this. I have never worked on a magazine and I am not particularly a magazine reader and I don’t think I could contribute anything to it.

The Chairman: I am going to turn to Mr. Fortier who has questions on the Broadcasting Act. Do any of the Senators have questions on things that we have said so far?

Senator Smith: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a question.

The Chairman: Senator Smith?

Senator Smith: I would like to ask the Minister, or first perhaps point out to him, that we have had some evidence, or quite strong suggestions, that a great deal of the power in the electronic media relates to the camera itself; it rests with the fellow that pulls the handle on the camera and can destroy an image, with particular reference to politicians. There was one definite complaint made to the

CBC about the camera angles used on a certain public figure at one time which was, in their opinion, very damaging to him, and therefore was unfair and bad reporting. We have had pretty strong suggestions that there is also a lot of power with the fellow back at the radio news department who cuts the tape—cuts out what comes before and cuts out what comes after, leaving a bald statement which doesn’t tell the whole story. Therefore that is power used in the wrong way. As a very distinguished newspaperman, what kind of power is held in the hands of a night editor, for example, who will, because of his bias, whether it originates with him or whether it comes from what he knows are the publisher’s views on the subject, use his power to position a certain news item, or to make sure that a certain kind of headline is put to that story. Is that power an important power for consideration?

Mr. Pelletier: I think it is a tremendously important power, but there you wake up my instincts as a journalist. I think that generally speaking—let me make a statement which may not be very useful in terms of changes that we can bring about, but that has to be made—I think that the reading public and the listening public have put such demands on the news media that it forces the written press, as well as radio or television, to work at such a pace with so many decisions to make. For instance, in any daily edition of a major newspaper—we once, just for fun, figured out how many decisions were to be taken of the kind that you just referred to. I kept telling people you can’t put everything on the front page; the kind of type you use; and the relative importance of stories. Well, it ran up into the vicinity of 2,000 decisions of that kind that have to be made for just an ordinary edition of a newspaper.

The radio has also a similar problem because in radio all through the day you get news reports and your public wants you to get them on the air before the other station. So you don’t check them and this is another very serious problem. Radio corrects its mistakes, but not to the same audience to whom they send the wrong information first. I think it is tremendous power for this reason.

Because of the demands of the public on the news media, and many times—I disagree with my political colleagues on this because I have lived through it—many faults or biases, that are attributed or traced back by the ordinary reader to some intention or some bias on the part of the journalist, are just due to the fact that he has to work at such a pace that the mistake is almost inevitable. I don’t know if I am making myself clear.

Senator Prowse: You are doing very well.