

The Address—Mr. F. Côté

is an appropriate role for Canada in the world and, what is more important, it is one that is exactly in tune with our national temperament. I am sure that the policies we are following in this most difficult area meet with the approval of the vast majority of the Canadian people.

The tragedy of Viet Nam and the high emotion it generates reflect what I believe to be a communications crisis. It is one of the supreme ironies of our time that with more ways of communicating than ever before we seem to be talking at each other with little apparent effect. There are many reasons for this, and I think we shall find they exist in our national life as well.

The speech from the throne makes reference to dozens of proposals requiring complex negotiations between various groups of people. The secret of the success of these programs lies in the effectiveness of the ability to communicate. This is the vital element. Yet so frequently prejudice and stubborn singlemindedness as well as a subjective concern with our own desires are blocking the flow of free and full expression. We seem increasingly to be rejecting concepts which do not fit wholly into our preconceived notions and ideas. If this is so there are many contributing factors, and one of these is broadcasting.

We are shortly to introduce new legislation in this field, and I hope to have an opportunity to comment on it in detail at that time. Today let me simply call the attention of the house to the effect of broadcasting upon what I have described as the public mood. I have been involved in broadcasting all my adult life and have grown up in television. I do not pretend to know all the answers by any means. But I want to say to this house with all the conviction at my command, and with the plea that hon. members accept my sincerity, that what we know about television is dangerously little. I am appalled by the comments made so frequently by so many people, and with such conviction, on the basis of so little hard evidence.

I am held in awe sometimes by the power of this medium, by its ability to reach millions of Canadians at the turn of a switch. I shudder at the casual, offhand manner in which television sometimes deals with issues which can affect the survival of mankind. We hear a great deal about television's "hidden persuaders" and their ability to induce people to buy brand A in preference to brand B, a quality which is frequently condemned. What is too often overlooked is that those same

hidden persuaders can also be used to sell ideas and doctrines which are not necessarily in the public interest. I do not suggest that television is being used subversively. The tragedy is that even if it were we do not possess enough knowledge to know.

I urge the government, when it brings in its legislation, to make provision for comprehensive and objective research which will enable us to know not only what broadcasting is doing to our society but will let us know with some certainty how it can be used more effectively to advance national goals.

Unfortunately there is not time in which to deal with all the matters referred to in the speech from the throne. Perhaps hon. members will say that is fortunate. But there is scarcely an aspect of national life which is not affected by broadcasting. Many of the matters we have before us now which deal with the greater recognition of the human being, the individual, are matters in which broadcasting can be of great assistance.

● (3:50 p.m.)

We in this house ought to remind ourselves more often than we do that it is in fact the people's house and that everything we do here affects the lives of people. The great grey, anonymous bureaucracy may have no alternative but to deal with statistics and references to units of population, samples, cells, and all the other jargon of the trade, but as members of parliament we are involved and must be concerned with human beings. The machinations of our political parties, the conflicts that occur between parties and between individuals naturally attract a great deal of attention, but they are really the froth of public life. The substance lies in what we do here and, Mr. Speaker, I can only hope that 100 years from now when this house, as it will, continues and those of that day look at the history of this centennial session they will agree that it was one that made the nation proud.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Florian Côté (Nicolet-Yamaska): Mr. Speaker, I was extremely happy to learn that the right hon. Prime Minister intended to honour the riding of Nicolet-Yamaska by asking its representative here, in this house, to second the mover of the address in reply to the speech from the throne. I am all the more happy to do so because this is the centennial session of our Canadian parliament and it will probably leave a lasting imprint on my memory.