

Broadcasting

Then the minister goes on to refer to those who think it might be a good thing to sell the C.B.C., and he says this:

Such suggestions have sometimes been specifically associated with this party.

Then with that frankness and directness that we all like in the Minister of National Revenue he states:

Undoubtedly that is true; there are a few of them. There are a few also, I think, in other parties from time to time. The Conservative party has no monopoly of that viewpoint by a long shot. There are people who have been hauled screaming and protesting into the twentieth century and still think they live in the eighteenth.

I like that reference. It seems to me to be right on the target. I should like to quote further:

We respect their views—

That is to say, the views of these eighteenth century people.

—but certainly as far as this government is concerned I want to say again what has been said from time to time, namely that we believe in the C.B.C.; we support the corporation, and as long as this government is in power—and, I hope, as long as any government is in power—that policy will be maintained; because I am quite certain that if any government attempted to destroy that principle they would be heaved out of office so rapidly that they would never know what struck them.

I am glad to read those words. I believe them. As I take my seat I should just like to say this. While we shall be sometimes irritated and while we shall often feel that somebody is gunning at us, we had better remember that we are party politicians and that we are not as independent as all that in our judgment. Furthermore, we had better remember that the nation is poor indeed that has not some organization—we have churches, universities and now the C.B.C.—which is trying to bring to the public the things by which, after all, life is dignified. I refer to the things of the intellect and the things of the spirit. Anyone who listens to the Wednesday evening C.B.C. broadcasts knows that what I say is true. We may not always approve of these programs. We may sometimes think there are on the programs nothing but egg-heads. Nevertheless they are holding up an ideal which none of us can afford to disregard.

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks of the three speakers who have preceded me. This does not mean that I have not appreciated the remarks of the hon. member who spoke initially in this debate, namely the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, who perhaps spoke most closely to the motion and raised a point on which I hope we shall hear from the minister, namely the vagueness of the motion.

I have been reading it over and over again. I suppose the committee could proceed in spite of the vagueness of the motion. I do not know whether I agree with the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate in his contention that the motion might spell out in more particular terms exactly what the committee is going to deal with. I have been a member of the broadcasting committee and I suppose I have been at as many of its meetings in the past as anyone but the chairman of the committee. I am not very sanguine about spelling out beforehand the chores the committee should do, because so much will depend upon the wisdom of the members themselves and the pace they set. I would be tempted to think that we could define a number of problems which the committee could approach on an ad hoc basis. That might be more effective than what the hon. member suggested.

It seems to me we should begin with the Broadcasting Act itself. I agree with the hon. member that we have had what amounts to an undertaking from the minister that this act should be reviewed as soon as possible, that this review should have taken place last year, and that, consequently we might expect it this session. The advantage of reviewing the Broadcasting Act at the beginning of the committee's work would seem to me to be this; that it would familiarize us all with details we tend to forget concerning the various rights and duties of the board of broadcast governors and of the C.B.C.

We expected that last session the committee would deal with the brief and the views of the Canadian association of broadcasters, that is, with the private interests. I know this group is anxious to come before the committee. Whether we should start there or with the board of broadcast governors or with some other problem is, I suggest, a matter which can be left to the wisdom of the committee.

I would be much more appreciative of the attitude of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate if I could feel that on this committee he had been one of the more constructive members. He has taken an active part, and we all have great respect for his intelligence and industry, but it seems to me he has a greater capacity for drawing red herrings in front of the committee's nose than any other member in the house. These herrings usually consist of charges connected with political advantage on the lines of "I suppose this is only what one might expect from the Tories" and everything explodes.

I do not want to suggest that I have a great deal more faith in these wicked Tories than the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate, but I do wonder whether a committee