

Non-Canadian Publications

time, Mr. R. B. Bennett, who had a great deal to do with the beginning of a public broadcast network in Canada and the beginning of the idea of developing a Canadian nationalism.

In fact, I suppose that when we get back to the traditional question of who were the free traders and who were the protectionists it would seem to me the Tories have a pretty good record in terms of protecting Canadian industry. We in the west never liked that because it meant we had to pay higher prices for products produced in the centre of Canada. But it is rather inconsistent now that we should have had so much debate on the virtue of free enterprise broadcasting when it was the Conservatives who, through George Grant and through R. B. Bennett, had a great deal to do with establishing public broadcasting in Canada, and it is to their eternal credit that they did.

It was only in latter days that we had this continuing attack on the CBC, saying that great monolith should be attacked, but sometimes the attacks get pretty irrational. The CBC has a pretty tough job to do in terms of trying to satisfy the myriads of interests in the country. I wish to quote Prime Minister R. B. Bennett who said on June 6, 1935:

We in this country are in an exceptionally difficult position. We have ten and a half million people and we have to rent several thousand miles of wire to broadcast on an efficient scale. That is very expensive having regard to the existing rates for wire, railways and telephones.

I urge members of the Conservative party to read what R. B. Bennett had to say about public broadcasting in Canada because I think they should not abandon what really was good judgment and good sense expressed by that Prime Minister at that time.

Mr. Towers: If you had listened to what we said you would know different.

Mr. Leggatt: I did listen carefully.

An hon. Member: We did not say anything against the CBC. You started it.

Mr. Leggatt: When we get into broadcasting I want to say something about the fact that the finest channel coming into the lower mainland is not a Canadian channel. It is American channel 9 out of Seattle. It is an educational channel. Again those of us in this House who do not support the amendment also do not support the idea that existing programming should be deleted from the cable.

There is every reason to have full choice in the lower mainland of British Columbia. In fact if we stop thinking of just today's debate and think ahead a little, a converter before long will become standard equipment on television sets. We will go to 36 channels in the foreseeable future, within a few years, and this will provide us with all the variety of programming we need. Commercial programming fulfils a responsibility all right but it does not fulfil the democratic need for variety of programming because stations are at the whim of the advertiser.

Without proper ratings all you can appeal to is either the lowest common denominator or the largest audience. But there is a significant audience out there for something different than Mary Tyler Moore three times a week, plus re-runs, or "I Love Lucy". We will have a chance to reach

all those different audiences under the converter system. We do not need to be narrow about allowing American programs on to the cable system. We could cope with all of them, including a French station in Vancouver, and we could expand our service into areas which do not normally share in television.

Let's have an original play once in a while. Let's have a little educational television which we have not had for a very long time. That is why I want to mention once again channel 9, a public service channel out of Seattle which has used some CBC programming too, because it seems to me to be satisfying an audience which is very unhappy with commercial television programming. I remember when Sunday mornings used to be called a television ghetto hour, when we had a few public discussions and something worth-while in terms of satisfying the intellect. That is gone, because if programs do not measure up under the rating system advertisers will not touch them with a ten foot pole.

As I see it one of the main functions of public broadcasting is to extend to everyone a variety of choice. Then we can protect Canadian nationalism. We do not need to shut off the border or to blank out signals from a certain direction. Nevertheless it is important that we support stations within our own borders, particularly in terms of revenue, and this is the objective of Bill C-58.

● (1530)

As I say, we cannot support the amendment that has been put forward. Television station KVOS is to some extent an innocent victim of this legislation, but we really do not have a solution to the problem. In fact there is no solution for KVOS because it is an FCC licensed station in the Bellingham area. I would be pleased to see them given a CRTC licence and establish themselves in Vancouver so they can go into production with revenues from the Vancouver area. That would be satisfactory. But since it is not licensed for the Vancouver area it is not really under the jurisdiction of the CRTC. I therefore submit the amendment before us should not be supported.

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Madam Speaker, I just want to interject at this time a few comments specifically on the amendment dealing with broadcasting as it comes into Canada from foreign countries. Perhaps I may commence with some remarks with regard to the comments made by the hon. member for New Westminster (Mr. Leggatt). If he had to go back to 1935 to find some difference in consistency in the Conservative party's philosophy, that does not exactly show too much of a threat, especially when it was a period when most people were still using D-type battery radios and did not know television was an instrument that could be used in the home.

I think the particular issue of concern here is that this is another piece of censorship being promoted and put forward by the government of the day. It is another way in which the government has told the people, "We know what is good for you". I agree with the comment of the hon. member for New Westminster that these in many ways are regulatory kinds of concerns. They can be dealt with and handled by regulation. It is not a problem that needs to be