

Radio and Television

that it is not one unified national system. I hope when the government's proposals are matured that that will disappear. I may say—I never thought the day would come when I would say this, but in closing I want to say it—this is one field in which I hope the Tory party goes back to Bennett because on this subject, and on this subject almost alone, Bennett was right.

(Translation):

Mr. H. J. Robichaud (Gloucester): Mr. Speaker, I want to join hon. members who spoke before me and supported the amendment submitted yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson). After listening to severe criticism aimed at the C.B.C. by government members when some of them were sitting in the ranks of the opposition, we are hardly surprised that our leader, the hon. member for Algoma East (Mr. Pearson) should have thought it was time to upbraid the government for delaying a statement explaining its policy with regard to our radio and television systems.

From its timid attitude with regard to the C.B.C. and the delay in revealing their policy to this effect, we may conclude that the government has now realized that our present system, which they so vehemently criticized when they were still in the opposition, managed, though it is not yet quite perfect, to combine public broadcasting and private property by an agreement very suitable to our country, which meets the demands of the great majority of Canadians.

This house certainly regrets that the government has not yet submitted any proposals for the control and financing of radio and television, and it is also important that some decision be announced as soon as possible in order to dispel any uncertainty that may now exist with regard to public and private broadcasting in Canada.

Our radio and television system, as it exists today, is perhaps not perfect and could no doubt be improved in some respects, but we have to realize and to admit that it is to our advantage to keep, as far as possible, our Canadian identity and our Canadian culture.

It is to our advantage to avoid, if possible, in our cultural system, any foreign influences which might affect this Canadian element which is our own, both inside and outside the country.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to delay any further the debate on this important question

upon which depends the future of radio and television in Canada.

I am glad, however, to take this opportunity to associate myself with the remarks made in this house yesterday by the member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) with regard to French language stations in Canada.

We recognize that the Canadian economy cannot by itself take care of a radio and television system depending only on commercial revenues. That is why it is essential that a system such as the C.B.C. should be supported by public funds, and this is all the more necessary if we wish to protect the rights of our various racial groups.

We, as members of a minority group in the maritime provinces, recognize that the principles adopted by the C.B.C., and especially those regulating the operation and control of French language stations, try to be fair towards our minority groups.

Representatives of various French language groups who appeared before the Fowler Royal Commission, were practically unanimous in approving the general quality of the French language programs of the C.B.C. They took the opportunity to pay tribute to the governors of the C.B.C. who endeavour to give the French language population of Canada a service which aims to satisfy the requirements and demands of the French-speaking population.

We should also recognize that, in their briefs, those various groups requested improvements which were then introduced by the C.B.C. as far as financial and technical facilities allowed.

I should like to mention particularly those briefs submitted in French from the maritime provinces, that dealt with the establishment of a television station connected with the French network, having its broadcasting centre in Moncton.

As announced in this house a few weeks ago by the Minister of National Revenue, the request was considered reasonable and the C.B.C. wasted no time in taking the necessary steps for the establishment of this station.

Realizing that most of the French-speaking people of New Brunswick live in the northern constituencies of the province, the C.B.C. promptly acted on our request that French network programs be extended to the new television station planned for New Carlisle, the inauguration of which is anxiously awaited in the northern area of New Brunswick and of the Gaspé peninsula.