

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

their role as best they can, and there are still others that are overextending their capacities with the result that in the process the communities they are serving are put at a disadvantage.

The best course for dealing with the private broadcasters is to judge them individually on the basis of the performance that can reasonably be expected of them, and penalize them severely if they do not reach such standards. Whether this means that they should be penalized to the extent of \$100,000 is a matter on which I am sure there is less than unanimous agreement in the house. But the point is there in the bill as we have it that private broadcasters are to perform well or suffer. There is certainly nothing wrong with this concept.

The strength that has been assigned to the new Canadian radio commission should ensure that this policy is carried out. The commission—I do not propose to examine whether or not this name is suitable; that seems to me the least important of all the bill's aspects—is empowered not only to regulate with teeth the operations of the private broadcasters but has also some additional responsibilities which I am very pleased to see added.

First, the commission will have the sole authority for the granting of licences. While the government may refuse the recommendations of the commission it cannot, as is the case with the B.B.G., award the licences to someone else. This removes the stigma of political patronage or the allegation of political patronage from the granting of what are, after all, one of the most lucrative of all plums in this country. One can only applaud this step. While it might have been desirable for the bill to carry this principle to its full conclusion and remove power over licences entirely from government veto, it might also be argued that to do so would be to place too much power in the hands of the commission and eliminate any possibility of reversing what could be a bad decision. On occasion boards and commissions have been known to make mistakes. However, certainly any government is now forced to have very solid reasons for rejecting any recommendation from the commission.

• (3:30 p.m.)

Second, and of crucial importance, the C.R.C. is to have control over cable television. Had this not been included in the bill I for one could not have accepted it, because in the past we have grossly underestimated the

potential role cable may play in the future of Canadian broadcasting. At the present time cable television serves to bring to the communities of Canada the signals of television transmission stations that, without cable, Canadians could not receive. What that means essentially is that cable brings United States television to Canadians. With such a function we cannot argue, whatever our personal preferences may be. Canadians want United States television and it is unfair that some should receive it while others cannot. So long as all Canadian signals are carried by community antenna services we shall have to accept the fact that more and more Canadians will have access to United States channels through cable.

In referring to the tremendous recognition of cable television we must look at the field of educational television. If educational television moves into the ultra high frequency channels, it will be unavailable to Canadians with regular television sets. It is possible that the only means through which they will be able to receive e.t.v. signals will be cable which can transfer the u.h.f. signal to the v.h.f. home receiver channel. Conversion adapters are available, but the experience in the United States in the last decade does not lend optimism to the belief that the public will necessarily pay for them. Even if it is made mandatory, as it should be, that all set manufacturers include u.h.f. in all new sets, it will still be some years before Canadians will be fully able to receive u.h.f. signals without assistance of some kind, and cable is the most likely helper.

Given all these points and many others of a similar nature it seems to me it would be wise and forward-looking to include all cable operations under the terms of reference of a broadcasting commission. In all the private areas of concern, then, the C.R.C. is to have wide-ranging powers. I have yet to read of any real opposition to this principle. Indeed, I have been encouraged by the very favourable reaction which this bill has received from editorial writers across the country and from private broadcasters who, while disagreeing with minor provisions of the bill, have nevertheless greeted it without the severe words which they have employed on other occasions.

I repeat, however, that important as all these aspects are it remains that the singular feature of this bill around which our system is to be built is the role of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the public system. To it has been assigned the challenge of