

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

Hon. Arthur Laing (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, I have had a discussion with the chairman of the Indian affairs committee. We hope to see that committee set up soon. I wish to obtain an assessment of the report "Indians and the Law" before referring the report to the committee.

● (5:00 p.m.)

BROADCASTING**IMPLEMENTATION OF CANADIAN POLICY**

The house resumed, from Friday, November 3, consideration of the motion of Miss LaMarsh for the second reading of Bill No. C-163, to implement a broadcasting policy for Canada, to amend the Radio Act in consequence thereof and to enact other consequential and related provisions.

Mr. L. M. Brand (Saskatoon): Mr. Speaker, some days ago when Bill No. C-163 was first introduced I read its provisions carefully. I am sure most other hon. members of the house also did so. With some of its provisions I could not disagree; others, I am afraid, gave me pause for thought.

There has been much talk in this country about whether parliament should continue to allow the existence of the crown corporation known as the C.B.C. or whether we should turn all broadcasting over to private interests. Some suggest that private interests could do a better and more efficient job in the broadcasting field than the C.B.C. could.

To do so, of course, would be to turn against the views of the broadcasting committee which stated that a distinctive Canadian broadcasting system was "essential to our national identity, unity and vitality in our second century", and went on to say that broadcasting might well be regarded as the central nervous system of Canadian nationhood. Although the report does not spell it out, it clearly indicates a desire for the continuance of a national broadcasting system such as the C.B.C. If, therefore, we decide that the C.B.C. should continue—and the bill before us certainly makes this clear—then it is our duty in parliament to try to fashion a bill which will provide adequate direction for those in the broadcasting field together with adequate protection of the public who are, after all, our primary concern.

This is a serious and important task, one which we in the opposition have approached with a concern no less great than that professed by the minister. We do not, of course,

necessarily agree with every provision contained in the bill. My hon. friends, the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Fairweather) and the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), have eloquently expressed some of our doubts and fears with regard to it. But we have offered our criticism in an attempt to improve the measure, to make it a better instrument with which to serve the public in the vital field of broadcasting.

I can assure the minister it was with these aims in mind that proposals have been advanced to have this bill considered in the standing committee on broadcasting prior to second reading. We feel this is a worth-while aim and in this connection I believe it would be useful to refer to what was said by my hon. friend from Royal when he spoke on this bill, as reported at pages 3760 and 3761 of *Hansard*.

I believe this bill should go back to the parliamentary committee because in so many ways it differs from the report of the special committee. Here I should like to suggest, and I do so quite sincerely, that it be sent to committee before approval in principle. The committee has the competence and ability, I say with respect, to improve this bill and make it a more democratic evocation of what the policy of the government should be. I think it would be a landmark in the long and perilous journey toward parliamentary reform if the Secretary of State would agree that what I suggest is an imaginative and proper procedure. If we really mean the parliamentary committee system to be effective, the minister will jump to accept this suggestion. I assure her that it is not a delaying tactic; it is a reforming tactic. It is not a device to kill the bill; it is a genuine attempt to use the latent talent and experience of parliamentarians for the improvement of the bill at an early stage of its passage through the house.

This we in the opposition sincerely believe, and the disturbing events of the past few days have been a powerful force in underlining and reinforcing our suggestion.

I therefore move, seconded by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin):

That all the words after "that" be struck out and the following substituted therefor:

"This bill be not read a second time until the subject matter of the bill has been referred to the standing committee on broadcasting, films and assistance to the arts for review and until the committee has reported to the house."

This amendment has been necessitated by the incredible spectacle of the past few days. On the one hand we see the minister making charges of "rotten management" in the C.B.C. and on the other we find the president of that corporation demanding that the minister substantiate the serious charges she has made against management. Strangely enough,