

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

I urge the government to pack up the C.B.C. and prepare for a new era of usefulness for television in Canada, in fact, for an era of leadership in this new realm of education. We should be world pioneers and world leaders in this field if only because of the very nature of our country and of our culture. I urge the government to give the commercial networks a better opportunity to develop live Canadian programs and to consider folding up the operations of one of the most costly ventures in our history, and divert those funds to the new fields I have mentioned.

Mr. Churchill: Would the hon. member permit a question? In view of the suggestions he has thrown out, all of which deserve consideration, would he now ask the government to withdraw the bill so that it might be redrawn to fit in with his ideas?

Mr. Deachman: Oh, the bill makes some advances and I would hope that upon the basis of the suggestions I have made many more advances will rapidly be made. We shall have to deal with E.T.V. soon, as well as other matters having an impact on national broadcasting, and I am sure these things will come about. I ask the hon. gentleman for his support.

Mr. Churchill: You are leaving things as they are.

Mr. Barry Mather (New Westminster): Despite what I take to be a gallant effort on the part of the previous speaker to draw the attention of the house away from the hassle the government has got into involving the minister and the management of the C.B.C. I shall be extremely brief and confine my remarks to one or two non-controversial points.

I rise to say that in my opinion the best thing we can do with regard to the legislation now before us, embodying a new broadcasting policy for Canada, is to get it to the standing committee on broadcasting immediately.

Miss LaMarsh: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mather: In all fairness, it should be said that this legislation is not the product of any one group in this house. I am a member of the standing committee on broadcasting and I believe other members of that committee will agree with me when I say that many of the basic principles contained in this legislation reflect the thinking of at least the

[Mr. Deachman.]

three major political parties in the house. Several of the recommendations follow very closely the recommendations of the committee on which we were all represented.

For example, the bill acknowledges the truth of the fact that all broadcasting is of public concern, and that the public either hears or watches the broadcasts, and pays for them through grants to the public enterprise, or through that part of money used for the purchase of consumer goods which pays for the advertising essential to the running of the private stations. Then there are recommendations in the bill calling for the stricter regulation of broadcasting, both public and private, and there are provisions which would, in my opinion at least, change and improve the situation with regard to C.B.C. management. For all these reasons I say again that the most sensible thing we could do at this time, having had a good discussion of generalities, would be to send the bill at once to the committee on broadcasting, on which we are all represented, and get down to the real business at hand.

Some of us may be tempted to continue the embarrassment of the government at this time in connection with the unfortunate situation in which it now finds itself as a result of the exchanges between the minister and the C.B.C. However, I am sure it would be more logical to deal with the actual legislation before us, and this we can do in detail only at committee level. In this way some good can be done. As we are proceeding now, we shall not do very much good; we are carrying on a sort of Punch and Judy show and I believe we could employ our time very much better if we passed the legislation at this stage and got the bill into committee.

Mr. R. N. Thompson (Red Deer): It is not my intention to prolong this debate and I respect the words of the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. However, I do think that at this stage it is our responsibility to express our thoughts on the basic principles which underlie the legislation. It is therefore my intention to speak briefly from the point of view of a parent about this broadcasting legislation and the responsibility we all carry, and will carry for a number of years.

During the last three or four years I have received an increasing number of protests from parents in Canada on the subject of broadcasting, particularly television. I am convinced that the basic unity of Canadian life and of the Canadian way of living rests with the Canadian home. It is an old adage