

Television

sympathize with the hon. member for Churchill, and I recognize the merit of his request.

Indeed, in northeastern New Brunswick and in two constituencies of Gaspesia, a population of over 240,000 is deprived of all television facilities. Among that population, more than 165,000 French speaking Canadians would like to get their share of such a service, through the medium of the C.B.C. French network.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, I am entirely in favour of the resolution. I am certain that the voters in my riding, as well as those of the constituencies of Northumberland-Miramichi, Restigouche-Madawaska, Bonaventure and Gaspé, would be most interested in getting from the C.B.C. the share of service to which they are entitled. The people in my riding are contributing their share in taxes and therefore, like those in other areas, are paying part of the cost of the C.B.C.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that when the board of governors of the C.B.C. studies the request of the hon. member for Churchill, it will also favourably consider the wishes of the people in my riding who have sent him a great many requests and letters, as well as to the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Nowlan).

(Text):

Mr. G. E. Halpenny (London): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the terms of the motion of my very good friend, the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Simpson), which is before this house will meet with the sympathy of all hon. members on both sides of this house. The importance of the welfare and general happiness of those Canadians who live far from metropolitan areas, especially the people who live in areas similar to those represented by the hon. members for Churchill and Dauphin, is a matter of real concern to the government and to broadcasters. In spite of what some of us may think of it, television with its tremendous capacity for entertainment, information and education can do much to relieve the isolation of the north and provide a living link with the great metropolitan centres, indeed with the whole world. In fact, a good case can be made for providing television to the more remote areas—because of the peculiar advantages it offers. In urban and rural areas particularly, these advantages are often available from several other sources; but in the north television may be the only source of any one or all of them. In such amount of homework I have been able to do on this subject, I have contacted and talked with members of the C.A.R.T.B. and with the

C.B.C. As you know, the C.A.R.T.B. are the private broadcasters. I discussed the question of extending television as quickly as possible to those areas of low population density which do not enjoy television service.

To better understand the present situation it might be well if I briefly reviewed the development of television since it first came to Canada in September, 1952. In 1951 the report of the royal commission—that is the Massey commission—recommended that Canada should have a national television service similar to the national radio system. Specifically it said that the C.B.C. should go ahead with plans to provide national coverage and to produce a program in both French and English. Another suggestion made by the commission was that private stations be required to serve as outlets for national programs. This followed the pattern already established in radio.

In 1952 the former government announced that only the C.B.C. would be allowed to build and operate television stations in the six largest cities of Canada, with each station representing a major geographical division of our country. The then government also announced that applications would be received from private stations to serve areas outside those covered by the C.B.C. transmitters. The intention was that the C.B.C. transmitters would serve as a framework or skeleton for a national television service with production centres in most regions. This would give the national service, made up of independent stations and C.B.C., the chance to reflect the regional as well as the national characteristics of Canada. It would also give opportunities to artists, performers and writers in each region.

Since September 1952 between 85 and 90 per cent of Canadians have been brought within range of a Canadian television station at reasonable cost. This compares very favourably with the United States which have had television for a few years longer than we, and yet reach proportionately fewer of their citizens than we do in Canada. The fact that approximately 90 per cent of Canadians now receive television signals is a creditable achievement in view of the size of our country and its low population density. In fact, I do not know of any other country in the world where the growth of television coverage has been quicker. And let us not underestimate the strain on our resources necessary to build this service. Communication has been one of our major preoccupations since confederation, and each new development in technology throws up new challenges to our ingenuity and financial resources.

[Mr. Robichaud.]