

The Chairman: Mr. Minister, I have only three other questions and then perhaps the senators may want to ask some questions on the newspapers and then we will turn to Mr. Fortier who would like to talk to you about broadcasting.

This is a question we put to many publishers. We have asked publishers in French Canada and in Quebec to comment on the way in which events in Quebec and French Canada are covered in the balance of the country, and we have put the reverse question to many people as well—how is English Canada covered in Quebec and French Canada generally? Could you comment on this?

Mr. Pelletier: Well, I think it is inadequate but it has been getting better over the last ten years or so. There used to be almost an airtight frontier along the Ottawa River and it no longer exists. You have, for instance, many correspondents from English-speaking Canada in Quebec; and the Quebec newspapers and radio and television, and the CBC, are maintaining correspondents in other parts of Canada. I think there has been progress.

The Chairman: I believe about a year ago now you spoke at either the CP dinner or the National Newspaper Awards dinner in Toronto, and I think you complained about the inadequacies both ways. Was this a year ago or two years ago?

Mr. Pelletier: I don't think so. I don't think I ever addressed the groups that you mentioned.

The Chairman: The reason I think you did was because I think I have quoted from your speech. However, so be it.

Senator Prowse: The reason you hope he did.

Mr. Pelletier: I didn't really understand what group you mentioned. But yes, I was talking about the amount of information that was being exchanged now and I think there is a tremendous improvement over the last ten years. The quality is not always there. I remember one speech that I made in the west before going into politics, and the comment I made—back at my office when I saw the press coverage—was that the reporter must have entered through the wrong door into a different hall and listened to someone else because he quoted me as having said what someone else actually had been saying.

I think we have much progress to make in this area, particularly. I believe, that you can't have Canadian unity without Canadian

solidarity. This is one of my deepest convictions. And you can't feel solidarity or interdependence with people that you don't know, whose problems you don't grasp, and for whom you can't feel any sympathy because you don't know them. It is also one of my favourite remarks that everybody in Canada is talking about understanding, when we should start with knowledge because understanding can only come afterwards.

The reporting which is being made is not always—and this is an understatement—of the nature to breed understanding; but very often is quite the reverse. I am not advocating that the press, or radio, or television, or the CBC should indulge in propaganda today. But straight information, well presented, I think is the key to a feeling of solidarity between Canadians.

I always like to quote a press conference that I had in the west which illustrates the point. One of the reporters there said "Why the heck should I worry about French in this country? I hardly meet a French-speaking person every month and yet you would like me to concern myself with this problem." And I said "Why the heck should I be concerned about wheat—I don't know how the stuff looks because we don't grow it in the east." There was a little silence and we all agreed that this was what Canada was all about. If they are not to concern themselves with French and we are not to concern ourselves with wheat, there is no Canada.

The Chairman: The last question we put to the publishers was this one. "Do you observe an increase or decrease in the degree of credibility accorded by the public to the news and opinion disseminated by the media? Does the degree of credibility vary between media?"

Mr. Pelletier: It does and I have seen the results.

The Chairman: May I interrupt you long enough—Mr. Fortier has reminded me, and he is perfectly right, that the speech I was referring to in Toronto was by Mr. Claude Ryan. I apologize for that.

Mr. Pelletier: I am reminded that these things happen. This is part of the written press. I am always quoted as having said once that the Liberal party was a trashcan. I had no rights on this quotation, it is Ryan's. We both wrote for the same paper for quite some time, so that is where the confusion lies.

The Chairman: I am sorry I interrupted you.