

*Canadian Policy on Broadcasting*

What was true in 1938 is true today. I was a little concerned by some of the statements made by the minister on the same television interview which I heard, and the transcript of which I have studied. I am referring particularly to the statements about separatists. I am opposed to the separatists in this country. Indeed, in order to make the point clear and because I cannot escape the temptation to say "I told you so", I should like to point out that I criticized René Lévesque more than a year ago for the extremist statements he then made. I indicated in my criticism that the statements he made suggested to me that he was travelling the separatist road. This appeared in the public press, particularly in Montreal, in both French and English. Mr. Lévesque replied that he never had heard a more idiotic statement. The idiocy is made clear by the way Mr. Lévesque has gone.

I believe, however, that it would be a travesty of freedom of speech if Mr. Lévesque did not receive an opportunity to express his views to the Canadian people. Only a sense of insecurity and a lack of confidence in the people of Canada would prompt one to suggest that the expression of that opinion would do Canadian unity harm. I have greater confidence than that. But, whether it does one thing or another, I emphasize that we ought not interfere with the expression of opinion and indeed with the selection of entertainment or with the work of people of talent either in the corporation or in the private network agencies.

I should like to come back to where I started. The solution is to appoint good people and let them do the job, to keep a close liaison with the new commission and the C.B.C., to watch carefully what the developing situation is, and to become aware of it in time if anything goes wrong. If those who have been appointed do not do the job, then they must be replaced and we must have the courage to do this quickly without dragging it out for two or three years until the situation becomes almost irremedial. I just pity the man or woman who will have to take over the duties either with the corporation or with the new commission after what we have done.

In the remaining few minutes which I believe are left to me I should like briefly to make two or three points. First, I would hope that the minister would give consideration to the suggestion that the president of the new commission and the president of the C.B.C.

each should appear annually before a parliamentary committee on broadcasting to make a report, just as had been done in the early days of our broadcasting situation in Canada. I am entirely in favour of the five year budgeting for the C.B.C. That, however, need not prevent the president of the C.B.C. appearing before a parliamentary committee every year in order to give an account of his stewardship and to give members of parliament an opportunity to question him as to whether the funds we have voted have been expended efficiently. This would also give us an opportunity to discuss with the president of the C.B.C. particular aspects of his programming and the philosophies of the C.B.C. and to discuss with the president of the new commission the policies of the commission in its day to day operations.

I think it is very important that we do this because when we vote a large sum of money annually or over a period of five years in particular to the C.B.C. and when we vote money to the new commission to carry out a certain function, it seems to me that as a parliament we have a duty to make certain as far as possible that the job which parliament wanted done is in fact being done and that the money which parliament has voted is in fact being expended judiciously and carefully. One way in which to do this is to revert to what I am sure was the situation in the late 1930's; that is, an annual appearance of the head of the corporation and the head of the commission before a parliamentary committee.

The final point I should like to make relates to the use of Canadian talent. Many things have been said about this already, but I suggest that every time one looks at some statistics on this point he cannot help but be extremely depressed. Mr. Fowler in his report makes an analysis of the expenditures directly on talent, both in the private and public sectors. I should like to quote just a sentence or two:

The amounts shown—

This is in reference to the private sector.

—in the analysis for artists' and other talent fees, and especially the trend of these amounts, indicate an alarming situation.

The full details are given, and then he points out that between 1961 and 1963 there was, in respect of private radio stations, an expenditure of over twice as much on advertising, promotion and travel as there was on Canadian talent. He then adds the words, "These figures are a disgrace."