

people have never been willing to let the government have control of the cultural activities of the nation. We have, for instance, kept education as free as possible from all interference by the national government. Nothing is more important than that broadcasting should be kept free from political domination. *In a democracy, freedom of speech is a priceless possession.* No administrative government agency is wise enough to be entrusted with what the people shall hear. Freedom of radio is almost, if not as important, as freedom of the press. If either is curtailed, our political and religious liberties are imperilled. For this reason we believe any attempt to regulate utterances over the radio by an administrative government agency, except within canons of decency, propriety and public safety clearly defined by statute, is dangerous and contrary to public policy. Any threat of non-renewal of a licence on the basis of programs not yet broadcast we would regard as a form of censorship.

In Canada, the position differs a little from that in the United States—but only a little. The principal difference lies in the sparseness of Canadian population and the tremendous extent of Canadian territory. It was reasonably argued that, in the early stages of radio development in this country, certain territories might not be adequately served by private broadcasting interests; and it was also argued that the overwhelming weight of American programs coming from across the line constituted an assault on our peculiarly Canadian national culture, and tended to indoctrinate Canadian people with American ideas. Whether that is bad or not, I do not know. Why anyone should think that the remedy for that was to create a broadcasting monopoly on the broad lines of the British Broadcasting Corporation, no one has yet discovered. There cannot be a radio monopoly in Canada, because programs in English originating in the United States will reach this country no matter what form of organization may be applied. And if these programs are better programs or more palatable programs, they are going to be listened to, regardless of the most sincere efforts of Mr. Brockington or anybody in this committee or any one individual. The individual person still has the power of manipulating that dial, and nobody is going to be so divinely inspired that he can control that.

Mr. Brockington went to great length to explain “equality before the microphone.” At the same time that he denied me the right to speak over a network of private stations which I had already engaged, he was permitting this publicly owned system to be used by Cabinet ministers, free of charge, to express their views. I have no quarrel with that. With the strenuous duties of government work and the modern changes in communication, I think it is a grand thing for them to be able to reach their constituents and bring them some knowledge of their activities. I do not question that principle nor do I question his allowing that at all. May I ask if members of the opposition were given free time so that equality before the microphone might be observed?

Hon. Mr. HOWE: I think the answer to that is “yes.” If you go back over the two years, I think you will find that all parties have had opportunities on the radio. The Cabinet ministers were satisfied with fifteen minutes, and members of other parties have had frequent opportunities to speak over the network.

The WITNESS: Members of the committee who are in the opposition might answer if they have been given free time. This happened at the time of my broadcast. Were they called in?

Hon. Mr. LAWSON: Surely that statement is not correct.

Hon. Mr. HOWE: That people had free time on the radio?