

Radio and Television

that we should use some device like the 15 per cent excise tax—of course, I was a member of the government that did it; I think I was or, if I was not, I was an adviser of the government that did it.

Mr. Lambert: It is the same thing.

Mr. Pickersgill: I think it is a device that worked very well; I think it was a very fair device in the days when many people did not have television, because it made sure that the building up of the television chain would be paid for by the people who got the benefit and not by the people in Bonavista-Twillin-gate and other areas who cannot receive television programs from anywhere because there is no station near them. If we are to approach 90 per cent coverage, as we hope to do and I think we should, it does seem to me that the problem of discrimination between one form of raising money and another will become less important.

What is important is the problem of determining how much money the C.B.C. should have and how it should be provided. I quite agree with the Fowler commission that it should be voted by parliament. I quite agree that the ultimate responsibility should be with parliament. But we in this party have always agreed that we do not want any direct or indirect pressure from the government upon the national broadcasting system, and I was very pleased indeed to hear certain statements made during this session by the Prime Minister which suggested that he took exactly the same view. The kind of financial control that should be exercised by parliament is the control that is concerned with getting the most for the least money and nothing else. We do not want to have the government setting itself up as a board of censorship nor do I think we even want parliament to do so.

In my opinion the only way you can run a system that is going to have any vitality is to choose good people to run it, trust them to run it and if they do a bad job then do something about them. I was not reassured by hearing the speech of the hon. member for Joliette-L'Assomption-Montcalm because I do not think we in parliament should attempt to be censors. I do not think that most of us have the necessary attributes or the necessary time and I would have the very gravest fears of any attempt to have parliament do that.

At the same time I know that when we were in office we felt greatly concerned about the rapid growth in the cost of this operation and the prospective cost which was even more frightening. We did think that perhaps there might be some faint disposition on the part of people wanting to do a good job,

wanting perhaps to be perfectionists, to feel that there were unlimited funds with which to achieve perfection. I do not say that that attitude was a very prevalent attitude in the C.B.C. but I do not think it was entirely absent either.

While I am not going to endorse every word in the report of the Fowler commission, it does seem to me that its basic view is sound that a certain amount should be allocated to the C.B.C., with safeguards for changes in the value of money, and the C.B.C. should be told that is all it is going to get for the next four or five years and that it must make do with it, choose the things that it thinks are most important and cut out the things that are not quite so important. I know that in the last year or two we were in office we subjected the film board to that regime and I felt it had a very good effect indeed upon their attitude to their expenditures. I believe that something of that kind would indeed be the best way.

The Fowler commission recommends three different methods. As between them I think it would be silly for me to make any observations because the government will probably have a fourth one and we had better debate the actual proposition instead of an academic proposition. But I would hope that the government would never think of bringing in annual estimates which would inevitably turn the C.B.C. into something indistinguishable from a government department. I cannot conceive that it would be possible to do this by the method of annual estimates without bringing directly, and more particularly indirectly, pressures upon this organization which I believe would sooner or later, almost inevitably be political and partisan in their nature.

That brings me, of course, to the third problem the one which I think is by all odds the most important but which I also think is the least difficult. That is the problem of control. While I had some sympathy for the feeling that engendered the propaganda of the Canadian association of broadcasters—its name is somewhat longer now—I think that it was fallacious. It was never intended that we should have two systems like the C.N.R. and the C.P.R. It was never intended at any time by any parliament that there should be more than one system of broadcasting in which the private sector complemented the public sector.

I have never felt that there was anything wrong whatsoever in principle or indeed in practice—the Fowler commission has said so too—about the regulation of the private stations by the board of governors of the