

other interested parties, have been working for the last six or eight months developing quite sophisticated technical standards. These are almost complete and within the next two or three months, they will be in effect. At this point, the quality of service provided will be very clearly established and will be a reference for all systems across Canada.

Senator Prowse: Pretty well standardized?

Mr. Chaston: Yes.

Mr. Fortier: That would meet the principal objection.

Mr. Chaston: Right.

Mr. Fortier: Still it is an area where a Government agency has come down in favour of a monopolistic situation.

Mr. Boucher: I suggest perhaps that there is also a time element involved in this situation.

Mr. Fortier: The operator of the system is not competing freely in the market place with another operator.

Mr. Boucher: Not on a day-to-day basis but I would not be at all surprised, if things continue to go as they are today, that you might have competition at hearings for license renewals, for instance.

Mr. Allard: The premium we are going to have to pay for that might be very expensive indeed.

Mr. Boucher: Especially for the customer.

Mr. Allard: For the exclusive license.

Mr. Chaston: To pursue that monopoly question, one does have to ignore the fact that these signals are in the air. This was established earlier on in the conversation and we chose to ignore it. We chose to pursue another point of discussion. In fact, if one attempts to ignore the fact signals are receivable in many cases with a simple antenna, that is ignoring a very great deal.

Mr. Fortier: That is as far as the receiving aspect of the operation is concerned. Insofar as the disturbing aspect is concerned, it is not in the air any more.

Mr. Chaston: As far as the subscriber is concerned the alternative is there.

Mr. Fortier: Is that not your principal interest?

Mr. Chaston: Yes; but the customer has a choice.

Senator Prowse: Once you start to initiate programmes then, of courses, your statement does not apply, does it? In other words, once the cable system itself starts to initiate programmes and to originate programmes within what amounts to a closed-circuit system, then there is not competition insofar as that area is concerned at least.

Mr. Allard: Strictly closed circuit. I think anybody can get in the business.

Mr. Boucher: It happens in a small sense in theatres today. They call them video theatres which is no different in concept really.

Senator Prowse: I think we are wavering both of us. We are on different sides here somewhere and not quite meeting.

The Chairman: Senator McElman?

Senator McElman: Let us move to that area of your operations. It is quite evident now that licensing and licensing renewals are not only established but expected and that cable systems will move from the strictly passive role to cablecasting.

Now what do you envisage as the type of original programming that will come from this development? Will it be largely a local thing, taking in community interests, or will there be professional entertainers involved? Just what do you envisage?

Mr. Boucher: Well, we envisage precisely what you have said—community programming. Some of our members have said it is comparable to an electronic stage for the community. I think that is a very good description.

There is certainly a need in the community for this type of programming. There are very many interested groups across Canada who have been seeking air time on television stations, for instance, and because of economics just have not had an opportunity to express their views. Cablecasting seems to be an ideal tool to explore that very basic area of community programming.

For instance, in your community if you wanted the opportunity to get to the people with a message, it is very difficult to get sufficient air time; but in cablecasting activity, you would not find nearly the restrictions on air time.