

Canadian Broadcasting Policy

well be applied not only to our public broadcasting corporation but to our entire broadcasting system, both public and private elements.

I think the challenge before us as we approach this legislation was well stated in an editorial in the *Ottawa Journal* of July 5, 1966, and I leave hon. members with this quotation from it:

Broadcasting is perhaps the most important single influence in our nation today: let us all give this new consideration of it the care it deserves.

Mr. McCleave: Mr. Chairman, first of all I would like to throw a bouquet to the minister, and since she has moved her seat somewhat it will be a little farther to toss it.

Miss LaMarsh: Go ahead.

Mr. McCleave: And since one seldom throws bouquets to ministers I suppose it is only fair to attach a piece of string to it so I may yank it back—

An hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. McCleave:—should some surprise appear in the legislation. However, I do not think that will happen. I believe that the minister in her six-minute speech fairly placed before us what we may expect in the new broadcasting act. It was a speech that can be commended for the three or four major points it made. It was a speech that can be commended for its brevity, and I shall try to match it in that regard. On reflection, at this point I suppose I should make the throwing of the bouquet unconditional and so I cut the string and the bouquet is her's 100 per cent.

I should like to spell out the attitude of the official opposition with regard to possible future hearings by the broadcasting committee with respect to the new legislation. We do not feel that committee hearings will be necessary if there are no matters in the bill other than those contained in the white paper which the committee has already had a chance to consider and to hear witnesses testify in regard thereto. If there is no new material in the bill we do not think it necessary to hear old arguments repeated again. I think the standing committee did an outstanding job and spent a long time in assessing the points of view that were presented to it. But if there is something new that has not been considered by the committee we think it should at least have the right to consider the legislation and hear witnesses on the new points introduced.

[Mr. Stanbury.]

● (5:00 p.m.)

The other point I should like to make concerns the five year financing plan suggested by the minister. I realize that this matter is to be dealt with in separate legislation, but there are four thoughts that come to mind in this connection. First, we on this side of the house will be very zealous to guard against massive control by government of the affairs of even a state-owned broadcasting corporation. Controls perhaps, but they must be controls properly exercised at arm's length. Second, we will be jealous about the measure of parliamentary control over a large amount of public spending. Third, we will be very cautious in our approach to how the money is doled out. One might ask, as the hon. member for Peace River did behind the curtain a few minutes ago, and I hope I deliver the line as successfully as he did: How many years would it take the C.B.C. to spend a five year grant?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. McCleave: Thank you. Fourth, the government's record in the field of inflation would probably make any five year system of grants unrealizable and the grants program would have to be reviewed from time to time during that period.

The minister made one point that I think deserves a brief comment. I refer to the suggestion that we set forth in statutory form the objectives of Canadianism. I think the obvious failure of broadcasting legislation in the past has been due to the fact that while we in the House of Commons and in the other place have expressed our sentiments about a Canadian system, we have not been able to translate those sentiments into effective legislation. I believe we must be pretty specific in this broadcasting legislation to ensure that the objectives of Canadianism are reached.

As one artist wrote me this morning, "Under our current set-up we are really the fifty-first American state." I think the point of view of that Halifax lady is well expressed. In the entertainment field, as noted by previous speakers, there is a feeling among the actors' groups that they do not enjoy the access to broadcasting that other Canadians enjoy, for example, in the field of sports, public affairs broadcasts and the like. It would be a pity if our good, Canadian artistic talent had to go to the United States or abroad to express itself. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I am thoroughly in favour of statutory direction toward obtaining the Canadianism that we all want.