

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

The debate on this question was adjourned until tonight.

I would like to make a correction here, Mr. Speaker; I made a mistake when referring to the program "Aujourd'hui". My question was prompted by a news release of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation news service.

Like so many Canadian taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, I raised this question because I am concerned over the attitude of certain C.B.C. officials. We are getting the feeling that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is straying away from its cultural and educational role. This agency is financed by public funds, and taxpayers have a right to wonder once in a while if their money is not being used to promote certain doctrines in complete opposition to the principles and beliefs of the great majority of taxpayers.

I, for one, believe strongly in freedom of the press and independence for the C.B.C.; I also wish to point out that I will fight to prevent this corporation from becoming a political instrument. However, when C.B.C. officials give us the impression that the corporation is conducting socialists, separatist and, in this case, communist propaganda, it is our duty to sound the alarm and ask ourselves a few questions regarding the inclinations and orientation of the management philosophy within the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

When an interview is granted an ex-police-man who says that he has decided to join the Communist party and that, in the future, he will endeavour to convince our youth to share his views on Marxism, I feel we must ask ourselves whether, in this case, the C.B.C. is really fulfilling its mission which consists in bringing into our homes sound ideas and valid opinions, in order to serve the interests of a democratic country such as ours.

• (10:10 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, I am not a McCarthyist, but I think it is time that parliament should consider setting up a board of inquiry into the C.B.C. to examine the thinking, the philosophy and the tendencies of certain employees who seem to have built up an empire, the influence of which represents hardly a marginal sector of our society but which seems to impose upon the majority a unity of thought which currently gives to this crown corporation a completely false concept of its social, cultural and artistic vocation.

[Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix).]

The consoling thought is that the new Broadcasting Act will vest the board of governors with greater authority over the programming of our radio and television stations.

It is time that the minister responsible for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation should be removed from the very awkward position in which she is currently. It is said that the Secretary of State is responsible to parliament for the C.B.C., but that she is powerless to impose the views of parliament on the C.B.C. and that she is simply the C.B.C. messenger. I think that, in the present system, this formula must be changed.

I hope that the minister or her parliamentary secretary who will answer me tonight will forward my quite objective remarks to the C.B.C. in order to correct a situation which is becoming worse every day.

Mr. Albert Bécharde (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, in reply to the question of the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Asselin), I might repeat this evening what I said on February 23 last, when a similar question was put to the Secretary of State (Miss LaMarsh) by the hon. member for Roberval (Mr. Gauthier).

In order to provide a more specific reply, since the case of Mr. Vachon has been mentioned, I must point out, however, without going over the whole story, the circumstances in which that person was accused of being a risk to the security of the state during a recent election campaign in the province of Quebec.

At that time, Mr. Vachon, who was a member of the Provincial Police, I believe, had been charged by the hon. prime minister of Quebec with being, as I already stated, a security risk. Mr. Vachon then denied that allegation of the prime minister, and has since then admitted himself that he had joined the Communist party only recently.

In view of these circumstances, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation decided that it was a matter of public interest to bring Mr. Vachon to clarify his views on this situation on television, owing to the controversy which arose last spring.

I may say to the hon. member for Charlevoix and to this house that, through this appearance of Mr. Vachon on television, the C.B.C. had no intention whatsoever of presenting to the Canadian public the Communist policy or ideology in this country. Such is not the purpose of the C.B.C. and I believe that, in all fairness, although we may