

Adjustment of Accounts Act

proper opportunity in the committees upon which I serve that we may determine exactly how the CBC manages to have accumulated a debt which, it hopes, will not be paid and at the same time run up an annual debt paid for by the taxpayers of Canada in the neighbourhood, certainly in 1979, of \$450 million, an amount almost equivalent to half a billion dollars, at a time when a private enterprise competitor, without the advantage of having all CBC's equipment and its capital assets paid for and acquired at the expense of the taxpayers of Canada, is able not only to operate but also to operate without having that outstretched hand which is constantly being filled on an annual basis by the taxpayers of this country through the generosity of the Government of Canada.

I am inclined to question whether it might not be appropriate if we deferred a determination as to whether or not this amount should be written off and perhaps applied it either in whole or in part against the annual funds which are deposited to the credit of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Why would we take a position of that kind in this House with respect to this creature of the Government of Canada? Aside from the general observations which I made earlier to the effect that a competitor of this Crown corporation not only functions, but also functions profitably without requesting funds from this or former or future Governments of Canada and, not as a consequence of the fact that we are asking the privately-owned television network in Canada in fact to subscribe through its taxes to the well-being of its competitor, but because of the way in which that Crown corporation may well have failed to meet its obligations to the people of Canada, one might ask in the course of this examination how well the CBC has performed. The answer, in a word, might be badly, and I am charitable in using that word.

In 1979 the CRTC, in its endeavour to analyse the functioning of that jewel of Crown corporations, concluded that it had really failed dismally to meet its obligations to the public, and as a consequence of that CRTC analysis, an article appeared in one of the Toronto newspapers of March 15, 1979, making the following observations:

The CRTC has discovered what every person who owns a TV set has known for years—that CBC-TV is doing a rotten job in appealing to Canadians.

Given a choice, most Canadians prefer to watch American or private broadcasting. A CRTC report notes that in ten years between 1967 and 1976 the CBC and its affiliates lost 33 per cent of their audience while the private stations rose by almost 20 per cent. Can there be a greater indictment of CBC quality than the reality that it cannot stand competition and that citizens prefer foreign programming to domestic?

In over-all percentages CBC-TV has 22.5 per cent of the viewing market against 52.3 per cent for private stations. The rest watch foreign stations. CBC is last in its own country!

Yet the CBC, even now, refuses to acknowledge that it is horrendously costly, hugely wasteful, impossibly bureaucratic and, most damning, hopelessly dull, dull, dull!

Has it improved since then? I submit that it has not. In 1979 it cost every Canadian man, woman and child \$22 to float the CBC. That was in 1979. However, because only 22.5 per cent actually use the service—and I am talking about the television service as opposed to the radio service—the cost was more in the neighbourhood of \$90 per man, woman and child

using that service, as opposed to nothing for those who watch the private broadcasting network in Canada.

Miss Jewett: What a laugh.

Mr. Gamble: As to performance, we are led to believe that this great public institution is the protector of the growth and development of the artistic community in Canada, and yet it was not but two years ago that CBC had a strike on its hands when staff and performers at the CBC rebelled at the fact that the CBC was hiring outside, foreign actors to perform.

In 1978 the CBC was accused by a former news broadcaster who said that the news was manipulated and that the CBC management was intimidated by the Prime Minister's office both in terms of covering events that management originally had decided to avoid and in terms of special coverage that the Prime Minister of the day desired to have filmed and broadcast.

However, one of the most heinous acts that the public broadcasting system has committed is with respect to the programming of a series referred to as "Connections". That series depicted the rather strange link between Canadians of Italian ancestry and organized crime in Canada. There was no doubt left in the minds of viewers, as they watched program after program in that series, that an Italian name should be linked somewhat with organized crime, to the effect that as a consequence of the uproar which occurred in the Italian-Canadian community and a specific protest which was lodged by Senator Peter Bosa, the office of the secretary of state commissioned a poll to determine whether watching that series had in fact influenced the decision-making process of the viewer in terms of the association between organized crime and Canadians of Italian heritage.

The conclusion of the poll, commissioned by the then secretary of state and performed by the Gallup organization, was to the effect that a full 40 per cent of those people who had seen the series believed that it was more likely that Italian-Canadians would be associated with organized crime than other groups in Canada, whereas of the group which had not watched the series the percentage was markedly lower, in the range of 25 per cent.

Mr. Anguish: Tories.

● (2120)

Mr. Gamble: Is it not strange that a serious matter of this nature, affecting the well-being of Canadians of a particular ethnic background, should be dealt with in this fashion by members of the NDP? I would have sincerely thought that serious matters dealing with the rights of all Canadians would be regarded by them in the same fashion that they are by other members in the House. But it appears I am not correct.

In the concluding paragraph of a press release, Senator Peter Bosa, on July 13, 1979, made the following plea:

It is my belief that the media has an obligation to correct this false stereotype of the Italian-Canadian community that it has portrayed. Similarly, Italian-Canadians have a major undertaking ahead to bring to the attention of other