

Broadcasting

I must disagree with that portion of the remarks of the member for Port Arthur.

I believe that any time the house is confronted with expenditures in the neighbourhood of some \$80 million by a crown corporation and we have the estimates before us involving the approval or otherwise by the house of such an amount of money, neither the house nor the committee on broadcasting should in any way, shape or form rubber-stamp estimates of this nature. I agree that there should not be political interference but I also believe that in many respects direction should be given by the house through the broadcasting committee as to what the house believes should be done. Whether or not these recommendations are carried out is in my opinion a matter for the house to deal with.

I should like to speak very briefly on a subject which I mentioned and which I hope will be gone into very thoroughly by the members of the broadcasting committee. I refer to the extension of services which I regard as a most important subject. To the best of my knowledge at this time I believe that from 82 to 86 per cent of the population of Canada are now serviced by C.B.C. television. My interest at this time mainly concerns that portion of the population of Canada which still remains to be serviced.

As the house well knows, I have made representations over the past three years with respect to the area I represent for consideration to be given to the provision of network television services in northern Manitoba. These representations have the full support of every resident of that area. I should like to take hon. members back a bit in the history of these representations just to put before the house a point with which I believe the committee should deal. Over the years we have requested the C.B.C. to provide network service to the areas of Dauphin, Swan River, The Pas and Flin Flon.

We made these representations to the very best of our ability. We made them in every quarter we thought would receive them. We have received very good co-operation from the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. Nowlan), the minister responsible for the C.B.C. We have received excellent co-operation from the officials of the C.B.C. We have even taken up the question with the Manitoba government and have received excellent co-operation from the Manitoba cabinet ministers concerned. However, we are not yet receiving the network facilities of the C.B.C. I am given to understand that it may be some time before we can expect to receive those services.

Hon. members may be aware of the fact that some time ago we had planned to have the C.B.C. investigate the possibility of servicing this area consisting of Dauphin,

[Mr. Simpson.]

Swan River, The Pas and Flin Flon. A private television station at Yorkton, Saskatchewan, was interested at that time in extending its coverage and made application to the board of broadcast governors for permission to construct a satellite station in Manitoba which would increase the coverage of the Yorkton station and provide service for Dauphin and Swan River. The board of broadcast governors accepted this application and studied it very carefully. They dealt with it on two different occasions, and on each occasion they deferred it. Finally there was really no justification for deferring the matter further and, it is my understanding, the board of broadcast governors communicated with the C.B.C. to ascertain if its corporation had any immediate plans to service northern Manitoba with network facilities. The board received an answer to that specific question, and I understand they were informed the C.B.C. had no immediate plans. The board of broadcast governors therefore authorized the application of the Yorkton television station for the construction of this satellite station. At the moment the areas of Dauphin and Swan River are receiving television programs through this satellite station.

Immediately after that we made further representations to the C.B.C. but we were told that we had a good case when we had Dauphin and Swan River along with us. Those areas are serviced now. We are faced with the problem of jumping this gap and trying to get service into The Pas and Flin Flon. I think these are some of the things with which the committee should deal. I do not believe there was a sufficiently thorough study made by the board of broadcast governors and the C.B.C. in relation to this situation. I believe that if these two bodies had discussed the matter fully the C.B.C. would be planning now to provide network facilities for these areas in Manitoba. This result might have worked to the detriment of the Yorkton station, because I do not believe it would have been given a licence for that satellite. I say that a big mistake was made at that time. I am not being critical of the Yorkton television station, because I believe it is doing its best to provide adequate service. However, I have been in both of these areas and, despite the fact Yorkton is doing its utmost to give them the best service, the people in those areas generally are not satisfied.

In some areas the service provided by Yorkton is good, possibly as good as they would receive on the A contour of any station. However, in other areas the reception is certainly not adequate. I believe, therefore, the C.B.C. should take another look at that