

*Canadian Policy on Broadcasting*

York-Humber has taken with regard to cable television is absolutely and emphatically the right one, the only honest one and the only legitimate one. This is a subject on which I have expressed myself in the past. I see no legitimacy, no democracy and no morality in discriminating against Canadians because of the particular area in which they live. I say that Canadians, no matter where they live in Canada, can read American newspapers and magazines, can go to American movies and can drive American cars, but if they live out of range of the United States connected microwave, a little too far north of the border, they cannot watch American television because it will corrupt them, and it is not Canadian to do that sort of thing. I say this is hypocrisy and poppycock. We have a great northern half of the continent to populate, to cultivate and to develop, and one of the little luxuries and comforts of life nowadays is television.

Television brings us many forms of entertainment, excitement and information, and if we want to encourage people to go to the northern part of our country, to dig for the riches of our northland and to develop the vast expanse of territory which lies fallow and ignored at the present time and on which our very future in this world depends—if we want people to go into these areas and to live under conditions of relative hardship, why should we deny them the one or two simple pleasures and luxuries which can be made available to them so easily through the system of communication which exists, or could exist, in this country linking us with the communications media in the United States?

I know the hon. member for York-Humber was talking about a slightly different matter when he spoke about people living in areas served at the present time by C.A.T.V., who made their choice as to what they want to watch by paying a fee. I am going a little further than that and saying that in the northland—and one does not need to go to the far north; he can go as far as the cities of Calgary or Edmonton, or indeed any city which is out of range of the United States connected microwave—the people cannot watch and be entertained by, and have the range of choice of, the same king of television entertainment as is available to those Canadians who live in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal and even my own city of Winnipeg, which is served by one United States outlet.

[Mr. Sherman.]

This is discrimination and hypocrisy of a dangerous form. Why is it that when it is technically feasible, and when our Canadian brethren in all the major centres along the border are free to tune in to American television with great frequency and regularity, as is borne out by the ratings, a person in Calgary, Edmonton, McMurray, Churchill, Aklavik or anywhere in the north is denied the same opportunity?

So in sharing the position that the hon. member for York-Humber has taken, I go further geographically in my appeal for some kind of reasonable, fair and equitable approach by the Secretary of State and by the authorities in the C.B.C and the Canadian broadcasting system to all the other Canadians who are penalized by virtue of their place of habitation.

It has often been argued that if two Canadian channels are available in a given area, Canadians have the necessary choice and are given the necessary opportunity to express their preference. This kind of argument is semantical nonsense when examined in the light of the situation in areas served by C.A.T.V., such as have been mentioned by the hon. member for York-Humber this afternoon; because as he stated, the decision is made in very clear, articulate and unarguable fashion by the viewers in that area when they sign up for a C.A.T.V. subscription and pay their fee. That is the casting of the ballot. If the C.B.C. needed a clearer expression of choice or preference, I am sure the exercise would be purely academic because it is clearly stated, by viewers who subscribe to that service, that their preference is for variety and freedom of choice, not that they are going to watch United States entertainment all the time, but that they want to have the option and the choice in the swing of the dial.

There are a number of other areas on which I should like to comment at this stage of the debate, but I will not have the opportunity. I can see by the clock that I am down to the last minute and a half of my time in this sitting of the house, and under the orders that have been adopted for the Christmas recess I realize that I will not have an opportunity, nor will other hon. members, to speak on this subject until some time in January. At that time I will make some other suggestions and interpolations, and I intend to press for the two amendments to clause 2 that I have mentioned are being prepared by us.