

*Broadcasting*

As I have said before and I repeat it now, the C.B.C. is doing a wonderful job in providing cultural programs, programs which in many instances private enterprise cannot really afford. I hope the day will perhaps come when private enterprise will be able to do so, but today we have this situation and I think it is only right that members of parliament should ask about the cost. After all, the Canadian people are paying for these programs.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I have heard it said by many Canadians that they hope to see the day, perhaps in the not too distant future, when private radio and television stations will become so financially sound that they will be able to undertake in a responsible way under the board of broadcast governors some of the cultural programming that the C.B.C. is doing today. In a very objective way many people are seriously asking themselves about the advisability of too much state radio and television in a democratic society under a parliamentary system. In a very sensible and serene way many people are asking this question, which makes it even more desirable that in a common sense manner a corporation of this nature be examined as this resolution proposes.

I know that it perhaps embarrasses a lot of people to talk too openly about political interference, and that it is something we should all admit that we talk about too much privately and not often enough in public. I am a politician, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to be a politician. I fight hard and I am partisan, but suppose I am looking at the television news one night, before New Year's, for instance, and suppose various Canadians are wishing the people of the country a happy New Year and the Leader of the Opposition appears on television and the Prime Minister does not. Of course I would squawk. I am a human being. But let us not call that political interference. I am naturally going to ask somebody, whether in the C.B.C. or outside the C.B.C., why the Leader of the Opposition appeared on television and the Prime Minister did not. If the official opposition had a convention and the C.B.C. did not cover it at all on television I am sure their party frontbenchers would also say: "My goodness, something is going wrong", and they would squawk too.

We just heard an hon. member of the C.C.F. party speak, and he suggested that something constituted political interference. As long as there are politicians and as long as we have state owned radio and television there are going to be charges and counter-charges involving what we call political interference. But let us be very sensible about the whole matter, Mr. Speaker. Let us analyse

[Mr. Graftey.]

it in a cool-headed and serene way. Members of parliament often receive letters complaining about certain programs. The Minister of National Revenue perhaps knows that better than anyone else. But when we bring these matters to the attention of officials we are only expressing the voice of the people. When a member of parliament makes known the views of his constituents regarding various programs, at no time is he doing anything that constitutes political interference.

I know this is a very delicate subject, but it is one that is often on the minds of all of us and I think it should be analysed in a cool-headed and sensible way. At the same time I think the individuals who work for this wonderful corporation must realize that public funds are involved, that the voice of the people does mean something, and that while cultural leadership is most important sometimes the desires of the people are important too.

I think, sir, that nothing is to be gained when ill-considered attacks regarding political interference are levelled against the C.B.C. I also believe that nothing is to be gained when people are criticized because they have, either before a committee or outside a committee, levelled objective and constructive criticism against the corporation. I do not believe this criticism should be brushed aside on the ground that it is anti-cultural or that these legislators do not know what they are talking about. I think the whole thing should be brought into balance. I am sure, sir, this committee, in a cool-headed, sensible way, is going to do just that.

I have, therefore, brought before the house today what I consider are two important points which underline the desirability of setting up this committee. Point No. 1 is the desirability, in a free society like Canada, of examining crown agencies. We have a great many of them already in this young country which has gone through emergency periods and two world wars. I am not very clear in my thinking here, but I am sure of one thing. These crown agencies must be examined very carefully in a free democratic society; otherwise the true principles of democracy as we understand them, both inside and outside of parliament, will be tampered with. The price of democracy is eternal vigilance, and that is what this committee is going to do.

I have not done a very good job this morning of explaining the other point, but I do hope this committee, in a very gradual, common sense way, is going to do something to show us the real difference between political interference on the one hand, as so many people irresponsibly call it, and on the