

Broadcasting

order. The fact that it might be a bit controversial does not lead me to think that that would make it improper to mention it in the House of Commons. However, on that particular point—

Mr. Speaker: I think the hon. member would agree with me that it is not a matter for decision by the house now. What we are deciding is whether to set up the committee. In so far as it is a matter that might be discussed in the setting up of the committee, the hon. member will be within his rights in raising it by way of indicating the desirability of the committee, but I would hope he would not pursue it too far.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, along with the hon. member for Port Arthur, I think this is certainly an area to which the committee might direct some attention. I should like the committee also to make some inquiries as to what happened to the program which was being prepared into the workings of the political parties in the country. I might tell you, sir, that I had a very interesting interview with one of the members of the press gallery, which was directed to this program. The information I have is that somewhere along the line the Tories would not show up and the program was then dropped. They did not want to be on the program and the Liberals said, "If they do not want to go on, we do not want a Liberal-C.C.F. affair, so we will not have anything to do with it, either."

Mr. Nowlan: On a point of order, I think the hon. member is speculating now on matters for which, if he is serious, I am sure he has no basis in reality whatsoever. If he has not, he should sit down and let someone else rise and we will get this committee appointed and then we will deal with the truth of these fictions that he is creating.

Mr. Argue: The minister has no point of order; he is taking part in the debate. I suggest that this is not a fiction at all. If there is an inquiry made into this it will be shown that at the Conservative headquarters someone representing the Conservative party said, "We do not want to take part in this particular program that is being undertaken—"

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is introducing a subject which, if it is pursued, will of course give the right to other hon. members to deal with it. Maybe this is something the committee will be well advised to take cognizance of, but I think it should not be pursued here in the form of debate other than to refer to it, as the hon. member has already done. I would hope he would pass to some other matters.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to do that with this concluding sentence on this particular matter. It is perfectly within the right of hon. members opposite or their organizations to say that they will not go on the program. I am not saying that they have not that right; but I would suggest the committee should look into this whole question of setting up such programs. I think the practice might be considered that if one party will not show up the program should be continued with those who are prepared to take part.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer to another area of C.B.C. activities of great importance to Canada and to a great many of the people whom I represent. I refer to the question of an increase in the number of French television outlets in Canada. The C.B.C. has been active in the creation of French radio and television facilities, and I congratulate the corporation on the progress it has made in this direction; but I have felt that parliament itself and the committee should give consideration to providing the necessary funds to speed up the acceleration of this development.

Last fall I had the experience of speaking in one community in my riding which is largely a French speaking community; I refer to the town of Willow Bunch. I endeavoured to say a few words in the French language and made a short reference to the need for French television facilities in the province of Saskatchewan. I indicated that I would support and was supporting this extension of C.B.C. facilities. I was absolutely amazed at the tremendous response that this very short reference has received. I can think of no other item that I have raised in recent months on which I have received more correspondence. I must have had 150 letters or more. I sent out to my mailbox a few moments ago and I now have another letter on this subject. As I say, I have received, I estimate, 150 letters, all of them in support of French television facilities for the province of Saskatchewan and the extension of those facilities to French speaking communities where facilities do not exist at the present time.

I raise this matter in the house at this time to impress upon hon. members the desirability of increasing those facilities within Canada. We in this group feel that those facilities are desirable to emphasize the bilingual and bicultural nature of this country, to give to French speaking Canadians the opportunity to watch and hear programs on television in the French language and to give to our French speaking colleagues all