

*The Address—Mr. Jamieson*

in answer to the comment of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin), there is public anxiety to get virtually all their news in capsule form. This has led to a tendency to compact news almost out of recognition in many respects. In addition, perhaps more importantly and in direct answer to the hon. member's question, there has been the growth of what has come to be called interpretative or personal journalism.

So we have a situation where the media do not report what the hon. member for Peace River said, but what somebody thought he said; or, even twice removed from the fact, what they thought he meant. Not content with that, the media go on to say that what they thought the hon. member meant does not really make sense, and then the bulk of the comment becomes what the writer concerned really feels is the truth about the subject.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, this is one of the problems. Having practised this intricate art with as much skill as most, I suspect, I do know all the pitfalls. Basically, I think the problem arises not so much from any personal desire on the part of the commentator, columnist, or whoever it is, to do this kind of thing as from the necessity to respond to what is a very fundamental and basic public demand these days for capsule views, for instant opinion and the like.

I think it is perfectly legitimate for us in this house to say that since the media have very carefully safeguarded their right over the years to be recognized as the so-called fourth estate, as an integral part of the democratic or parliamentary process, so is it perfectly legitimate for them to comment in any way that they choose and to report in any way that they choose upon the activities of this honourable House, any members of it or on the government of the day. No one is questioning that right. But I do suggest, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps this is now becoming something of a one-way street and that we ought to ask a little more often than we do whether there is not also a contrary right on the part of members of the House and those to whom and about whom I have spoken to make known when in fact the media are wrong. In other words, is it appropriate for us simply to endure, to a degree in silence, distortion or an obvious and demonstrable error of fact? I do not think it is necessary for us to do this, and it is very unhealthy when it occurs.

Furthermore, lest this be construed as some kind of suggestion of a new imposition on the media, I know from my own experience that

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the great majority of responsible journalists would welcome this kind of confrontation. I suggest that within this general challenge to inform Canadians in better manner than has been the case up till now, we collectively and as individual members must find the mechanism and the time to reply to obvious and glaring mistakes which occur in even the best regulated families in the journalistic field. I think that what I am trying to achieve goes even beyond, first, the provision of information and, second, the ability of the public to have total access to this information.

The third and perhaps key point in the whole communications process that enables us to do the second part of the job that I discussed at the beginning of my remarks, namely, to try to define goals and objectives and give the Canadian public some form of leadership, is to enable them to use this information in an effective way; for example, to have the widest possible choice of media. This is the basic protection that we can have in this complex field. It will only work if the public is prepared to examine different points of view through whatever media they receive their information, and to add the still essential ingredient of personal judgment. If they do that, and if they examine the whole perspective of opinion they will probably discover, for example, that the truth lies somewhere between Douglas Fisher and Lubor Zink.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, once this occurs and once there is an interested and discerning public, we must ask whether it too will achieve what we are trying to achieve by way of participation and understanding. I do not believe that it will unless we can also in some way exert influence on all media, and on those who make use of the media, to correct what is now a glaring imbalance in our sense of values nationally.

I think that our market oriented economy, however useful it has been in providing us with a very amazing array of consumer goods and with affluence, has in fact generated a new kind of discernment—not a very deep-rooted kind of discernment of that—among the Canadian public. The media have been much more successful in selling the marketplace than in selling ideas. What people are really being challenged to do far more today than at any previous time is to make a value judgment, for example, between car A and car B, or between the whole range of consumer goods to which I have referred. The result of this enormous impact by the media is that value judgments in regard to those things