

*Radio and Television*

It is true, I suppose, that one could have brought forward a certain piece of legislation and set it ahead of another and perhaps this could have been brought on a little earlier, but very little earlier. If that had been the case, other legislation which to many people would have been equally important would have been delayed. In other words, I do not seriously accept for one moment—and I do not think hon. members opposite expected me to accept it seriously—the suggestion that there has been any delay in bringing forward the legislation. I doubt that there has been any great uncertainty in the minds of those associated with the corporation because of that.

As one hon. gentleman pointed out, the report of the Fowler commission was brought forward in the early spring of 1957, I believe in February or March. The government of that day did not proceed with legislation at that time. This was natural because an election was pending and the government delayed action on it until after the election. That government was not returned; we were. But I suspect that if the government had been returned—I am fairly certain of this although I cannot be sure of it—last year with a full majority it would have been inclined to look upon the session as sort of a windup of the earlier part of the session and if hon. gentlemen opposite had formed the government last summer I doubt if they would have brought in legislation dealing with the C.B.C. last fall. I am certainly sure they would not have done it if they had been returned in a minority position as we were wherein they would not have known how long they might be in office.

This government was returned last year under circumstances wherein it had a cleanup of legislative matters and details left from the previous session and not being in a majority position I do not think it was expected of us that we would bring in legislation which obviously would be contentious and is of tremendous importance and attempt to deal with it at that time.

I say there can be no possible suggestion of delay in this matter on the part of the government and the same delay would have occurred if hon. gentlemen opposite had been in power until after parliament was called together this spring. I feel I have dealt with that point adequately and I say again that there has been in my opinion, and I think in the opinion of all hon. members of this house regardless of what position they may feel they should assume on the vote, that there has been no great delay in this connection.

This is a very important matter and one could discuss it at considerable length. I

could take all the time that is available to me and more in dealing with the points which have been raised but, as I said, I do not think this is the time for me to do it. I cannot believe that hon. gentlemen opposite expect from me a preview of the government legislation which is to be brought down. I could not properly do that even if I wanted to because it would be contrary to all the rules and accepted principles of legislation. But I can say this to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) who raised the question—and certainly properly so—that it is proposed to bring down the legislation at this session of parliament and I hope it will be done in the very near future.

This is not an easy matter upon which to legislate. The hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill) quite properly pointed out what he considered were the three problems in connection with it. I wish there were only three. Two of the problems to which he referred will come into being after the legislation is brought down, the matter of licensing and of regulation. There are many problems in trying to bring into being a workable scheme different in conception from that which has applied heretofore. Assume for the sake of argument that the government did decide to establish some sort of independent regulatory board such as is recommended by the Fowler commission and that the board were given the powers heretofore exercised by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Assuming that were done, when you come to draft working arrangements whereby that could be accommodated, I think the ingenuity of the draftsmen would be taxed to a considerable extent and whatever system the government may decide to introduce presents many problems.

Perhaps what I am about to say should not be said but I think it is a fair observation. I think quite frankly that whatever the legislation is and whatever the regulations are we are not going to make a system like this work by referring, let us say, to section 475, subsection 2, subparagraph (g) and saying, "That is the answer". The success of this endeavour is going to depend on the men who are administering it, on the personnel, on common sense, on practice, on goodwill and all the other factors which enter into arrangements such as this. Whatever system may be introduced and whatever similarities or changes it may embody, it will be very similar to the British constitution. There will be more which will be unwritten and which will have to develop with practice than will be set down in black and white and capitals as the legislative enactments of the Medes and Persians. I doubt if a system