

*Radio Broadcasting*

Operation under the technical plan covered by the bill has been made possible by an arrangement between this country and the government of the United States, by which the necessary channels when required will be made available for effective domestic use.

I desire to acknowledge the friendly spirit which is manifest in this arrangement. I believe that the plan now suggested when in operation will permit Canada to enjoy a scheme of radio broadcasting unexcelled in any other country in the world.

Then there is a third reason to which I might refer, and one which I believe must commend itself to every hon. member in this chamber. The use of the air, or the air itself, whatever you may please to call it, that lies over the soil or land of Canada is a natural resource over which we have complete jurisdiction under the recent decision of the privy council. I believe that there is no government in Canada that does not regret to-day that it has parted with some of these natural resources for considerations wholly inadequate and on terms that do not reflect the principle under which the crown holds the natural resources in trust for all the people. In view of these circumstances and of the further fact that broadcasting is a science that is only yet in its infancy and about which we know little yet, I cannot think that any government would be warranted in leaving the air to private exploitation and not reserving it for development for the use of the people. It well may be that at some future time, when science has made greater achievements than we have yet a record of, it may be desirable to make other or different arrangements in whole or in part, but no one at this moment in the infancy of this great science would, I think, be warranted in suggesting that we should part with the control of this natural resource. I think, Mr. Speaker, that that is a third and adequate reason why we should proceed with the bill.

The bill divides itself roughly into three parts. First, that part which provides for the appointment of a commission. We have been very careful to suggest no salaries for the members of the commission. Inasmuch as the report that came from the committee was a unanimous report, the government thought that it would be the proper thing for the house to consider the qualifications of the commissioners and what would be a fair compensation for them to receive for the services rendered. The commission is clothed with wide powers and with large discretions, as in the very nature of things must be so. There are assistant commissioners in each of

[Mr. Bennett.]

the provinces, nine in all, and provision is made for local advisory committees so that from the small unit up to the dominion there is effective democratic control of broadcasting.

In the second place, we have provided that no large expenditures shall be made, so that in the early stages of the development of this great enterprise the Canadian people might not be led into capital commitments the interest upon which would be too great a burden upon them. We therefore in this measure for the present have provided that capital expenditures and all expenditures shall be within the income derived from the licence fees. That is, if there are five hundred thousand licences at two dollars per licence, the commission would have an income of one million dollars, which sum would not be more than expended by the commission in any one year. It is also provided that if the sum thus collected is not expended in any one year it shall be cumulative and the balance shall inure to the benefit of the commission during the next and succeeding years.

Then there follows, of course, the provision for the commission expropriating stations when it is in a position financially so to do, with the limitations to which I have referred, and those expropriations will be made at such time and under such circumstances as will enable the commission to discharge its duties without incurring large financial obligations.

It will be observed that there are sections in the bill other than those dealing with the salaries to be paid to the commission which have been left blank, in order that the committee of the house when we are in committee on the bill may by appropriate discussion indicate what is thought to be, not in the interests of one party nor of any party but of the people as a whole, the best method with which to deal with these particular matters.

I think that I can say in no boasting spirit that the measure at least endeavours to meet the recommendations of the committee without regard to political considerations of any kind, and we leave to the house at large the determination of the type and kind of service the country shall receive having regard to the compensation it is prepared to pay to those who will be responsible for the administration of the act.

Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Quebec East): I just wish to endorse the views expressed by my right hon. friend the Prime Minister and to say that I am in full accord with the principle embodied in this bill. I have been supporting this principle from the first, more particularly after the work of the Aird com-