

*Supply—National Revenue*

that are bound to be made. There are some issues that are becoming clearer, it seems to me, than ever before; the issues of freedom, of competition, of parliamentary control and some sense of restraint and responsibility in regard to the expenditure of public moneys. I am not going to be so bold as to make excessive predictions, but I shall be a very surprised person, sir, if some quite material changes in government policy do not develop within the next year or year and a half in relation to this whole question of broadcasting and television.

At the present time there are three major issues that are apparent. The first is the issue as to the separate regulatory tribunal. The second is the issue as to the government's policy of monopoly in television; and the third, and by no means least important issue, is the colossal rate at which expenditures, particularly on television, at the expense of the taxpayer are mounting up.

Now, sir, it is not unfair to say that those errors and unsound features in government policy against which we in Her Majesty's loyal opposition have been this long time warning the house are becoming more manifest now than ever; and the system has, because of the weight of its own colossal cost and the unsoundness of certain features of government policy, come to the point where some change must be made. I am convinced that some change will be made. There are other issues, but they do not rank with these three in importance. I should like to touch briefly upon some of the highlights that stand out in connection with these three issues.

First of all in regard to the basis of regulation and control and licensing in the field of radio broadcasting and television, the official opposition sought to place its views in this respect before the committee in the form of an amendment. That amendment was defeated by a vote of 9 to 6. I would point out that in addition to the votes of the Conservative members of the committee, that particular amendment commanded the support of the Social Credit members and also of one Liberal member, the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond. That amendment sets forth the position of the Conservative party in reference to this matter of regulation, control and licensing in the field of radio and television. It reads:

It is unnecessary and unsound that C.B.C. should continue to license, regulate and control privately-owned broadcasting stations. The committee proposes that these functions should be detached from C.B.C., and should be conferred upon a separate regulatory tribunal appointed by the governor-in-council and operating in the public interest. This will leave C.B.C. free to concentrate all its efforts on its own operation of the national system of broadcasting. The separate regulatory

tribunal should deal with all questions of licensing, regulation and control as applied to all forms of broadcasting, whether public or private, and whether of sound or television. This will ensure justice and fair play for all forms of broadcasting.

There are many precedents to support this proposal of an independent regulatory tribunal. The Australian broadcasting system is organized on precisely that basis. Here in Canada we have a board of transport commissioners which regulates the operations of the railways, whether publicly-owned or privately-owned. No one would suggest that the C.N.R., in addition to carrying on its own operations, should be authorized by law to regulate and control the operations of the C.P.R. and other privately-owned railways in Canada. Yet that would be the counterpart of the present system of radio broadcasting control in Canada today. Similarly, the air transport board licenses and regulates all forms of civil aviation in Canada. No one would suggest that the publicly-owned Trans-Canada Air Lines, in addition to carrying on its own operations, should have complete power to license and control all privately-owned forms of civil aviation in Canada. Yet that also would be the counterpart of our present system of radio broadcasting in Canada.

The danger of monopoly is great under any circumstances. It is particularly threatening when applied to such a vitally important medium for the dissemination of thought and opinion.

To those who say you cannot make a comparison in this regard with two transcontinental railway systems I would reply, Very well. Perhaps a comparison in the field of civil aviation is closer, because there you have a government-owned transcontinental aviation system and a privately-owned system which is not transcontinental in the sense that it is competitive with the publicly-owned system. It seems to me that there you have a fair basis of comparison. No one whom I know of in this house suggests that Trans-Canada Air Lines should be given regulatory power over Canadian Pacific Air Lines. We were told in the committee that about one-third of the time of the board and executive of the corporation is devoted to affairs pertaining to licensing, regulation and control over the privately-owned stations. We contend that if the C.B.C. is relieved of this obligation the public interest will be served, and on the other hand the C.B.C. will have a freer hand to go ahead and make a success of its operation of the national system.

On this matter of licensing I should make this comment, because it engaged the attention of the committee. In all the years the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has been the body which has reviewed applications for licences—the practice is for the Department of Transport to refer every application to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for review—there has been only one instance where the Department of Transport departed from the recommendation of the corporation within recent times and that was in connection with an application from St. John's, Newfoundland.

[Mr. Fleming.]