

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

SUGGESTION INQUIRY REPORT DOES NOT SUPPORT ALLEGATIONS OF SEPARATIST BIAS—GOVERNMENT ACTION

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister arising out of the CRTC report which the right hon. gentleman tabled yesterday. In view of the fact the Minister of State for Urban Affairs was quoted in *La Presse* of February 24 to the effect that he had a list of names of Radio Canada employees whose ambition it was "to destroy the country" and as the CRTC report does not substantiate these allegations of any separatist bias in Radio Canada, what action does the right hon. member, as leader of the government, contemplate to dissuade or discourage ministers from making unsubstantiated charges of this kind, not supported by evidence?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): The hon. member has the advantage of me. He says he has read every word of it. I must confess I have not yet read a single word of it, though I propose to do so. I am told by my ministers who have read the report that they are very satisfied with its conclusions.

An hon. Member: That doesn't say anything.

Mr. Trudeau: I am just saying they are very satisfied with the conclusions and that they bear out some of the suspicions they had.

Mr. Fairweather: I am in no position to make any charges, of course, and would not attempt to do so whether the Prime Minister has read the report or not.

Mr. Trudeau: I have just admitted I have not.

Mr. Fairweather: The fact is that those who commented to the right hon. gentleman must agree that charges made by various ministers about separatist bias on the part of Radio Canada are in no way substantiated in the 70 pages of the report. I would hope that as leader of the government the Prime Minister might discourage that type of loose and irresponsible comment.

Some hon. Members: Question!

Mr. Trudeau: I confessed to the hon. member that I had not read the report and therefore he does not need to feel he must make a charge about it. I am simply saying—and this is just hearsay, I know—that the report concluded that the media in general and that the electronic media in particular, the CBC included, had not fulfilled their duty to promote national unity.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: It seems to me that this was the essence of the charge made by the ministers.

Oral Questions

Some hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Trudeau: Hon. members opposite seem to be in doubt about that. If the word "subversion" is used in the report, as I am told it is, surely this is a fairly slight condemnation in line with what members on this side of the House and other people across the country have been saying.

PROPOSAL FOR COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): As the Prime Minister has said, he has not read the report and perhaps when he does the use of the word "subversive" will become clear. I should like to move to another part of the report because the Secretary of State and the President of the CBC, my own leader and others have called for a royal commission into communications and into the national broadcasting systems.

Mr. Ouellet: Where is your leader, anyway? You were complaining the other day because I was not here. Where is your leader?

Mr. Chrétien: He is in Cape Cod. He is reading the report in Cape Cod.

Mr. Speaker: Order!

Mr. Fairweather: The heat is obviously getting to ministers as well as to the rest of us. I wonder what the Prime Minister's reaction was to the recommendation made by various people that a royal commission into the whole area of communications and broadcasting is urgently needed.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): It is my understanding that the recommendation of the CRTC is not to the effect that a royal commission be set up. However, as the hon. gentleman says, a number of people are of a contrary opinion, including his own leader, he says.

Miss MacDonald: And one of your ministers.

Mr. Trudeau: And one of my ministers, she says. I have asked the minister responsible for the CBC, the Secretary of State, to come to cabinet within a month or so with a recommendation on this issue.

SUGGESTED APOLOGY BY PRIME MINISTER FOR ALLEGATIONS OF BIAS

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): May I refresh the Prime Minister's memory? On February 25 he had this to say in the House of Commons with respect to the matter alluded to by the hon. member for Fundy-Royal.

I am telling them with all the candour I can command that almost everyone, including the high officials of the CBC, would be prepared to state that the overwhelming majority of the employees in the CBC are of separatist leaning . . . They are just asking: What can we do about it without infringing freedom of speech.