

Canadian Broadcasting Policy

obvious as their high volume of commercialization. In my opinion we should exercise care when renewing licences for private broadcasting stations. We should take the position that licences will be renewed on the basis that private stations undertake to give a much improved program service, and this undertaking should be reviewed from time to time by the B.B.G.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I reiterate my point of view that the matters which are coming before us are of such importance that unless the proposed legislation is submitted to the standing committee on broadcasting for consideration we should at least have a two week period in this chamber to discuss these proposals in detail.

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Chairman, I have only a few words to say on this resolution. As many members have said before me, there has been considerable investigation into broadcasting in recent years through the Fowler commission, the white paper and the study of the subject by the parliamentary committee. However, I want to make one point and I want to make it very clearly.

I think we must understand that there has been much dissatisfaction in recent years with the C.B.C., with its manner of operating and with its programming. This dissatisfaction has often led to criticism of the C.B.C. itself, even to the extent, I would say, that many Canadians want to rid themselves of it. Many constituents have written to me and suggested that if a referendum were held on whether we should retain the C.B.C. or get rid of it there would be a strong vote in favour of getting rid of it. The ordinary citizen sees large sums of tax money being put into the C.B.C. and many of them see very little return.

I would even go further and say that this dissatisfaction is felt not only by the viewers but also by the employees of the C.B.C. and the artistic talent engaged. For example, we have the recent action of the members of ACTRA who have written to us expressing dissatisfaction with the policy of the C.B.C. in connection with the use of creative talent. Many others have been critical of the lack of direction and the uncertain management of the C.B.C. There is no doubt, as other hon. members have pointed out, that in recent years we have lost a lot of top broadcasting talent.

● (5:40 p.m.)

If there has been criticism of the operation and application of the principle on which the

[Mr. Mather.]

C.B.C. was founded I think that there is, nevertheless, approval of that principle. When I speak of the principle on which the C.B.C. was founded I mean that we need a public broadcasting network in Canada which will reach into all the far areas of the country, present Canadian events, Canadian opinion, Canadian talent, and strive to bring Canadians into touch with each other. This is extremely important in this large, sparsely populated country. We need a broadcasting system which will combat the strong communication forces from our neighbour to the south, the United States.

I think there is agreement on the general principle of a public broadcasting system. Without the C.B.C., no doubt we should be far more submerged than we are now by Americanism. But as I said, Mr. Chairman, while we support this principle we do not support the manner in which the principle has often been put into operation. Very often its purposes, which I have set out, have been twisted and frustrated by those intent on using the C.B.C. to express their own personal politics, personal morals or personal philosophies. Many people watching the C.B.C. feel that it has become the principal sounding-board of anarchy, sensationalism, separatism, socialism and fascism. This is not to say that such opinions should not be heard, but they should be heard in proportion to their importance in the community. As it is now one gets the impression that these are the only opinions we hear.

As an example, in Montreal last Saturday evening on the French network, in the prime viewing time following the hockey game, we saw, in order, Francois Aquin, René Levesque and the hon. member for Lapointe, all separatists. It seems to me that if the C.B.C. is to present properly all the opinions in this constitutional debate it should present interviews with some who have opposing opinions. Not only separatists, who are continually putting forward their opinions, should be interviewed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Allmand: Yet very little is heard from the opposing side. Again, I have received many complaints from French speaking constituents who have telephoned me, written to me and told me that they are fed up with seeing Pierre Bourgault on television. Here is a man who leads a party which has elected no candidates—he has no seat—a party which got less than 5 per cent of the vote, and yet this man is given more time than the leaders