

*Estimates*

irresponsible blunder by the Conservative Party. To get at the president of the CBC, the Tories are ready to destroy the CBC.

I have some criticism of the CBC, but may I remind the House that over the years it has provided the only radio and television service to many rural parts of our country. Private stations serve primarily those areas where profit can be made; there would be very little service provided to many of our outlying rural areas if it were left entirely to private television and radio. For this reason, I have no intention of voting to scuttle the CBC by supporting the Conservative motion. If the motion of the hon. member for Yukon carries, it will close down the CBC television and radio stations from one end of Canada, to the other, for no money would be voted to operate them. In my opinion it is an irresponsible and negative position taken by the official opposition. Many improvements are needed in the over-all operations and outlook of the CBC, but to destroy it completely is no answer.

**An hon. Member:** Who is trying to do that?

**Mr. Harding:** The motion will do that if it carries. There is no use kidding yourselves, because the motion is on vote 50 which is for the entire budget of the CBC.

**Mr. Atkey:** Read the motion.

**Mr. Harding:** I have some criticism of the operation of the CBC in my area and I intend to take this opportunity to outline briefly where I believe it has been negligent.

**Mr. Nielsen:** This is the last chance you will have.

**Mr. Harding:** To begin with, the area which I represent in the province of British Columbia is very mountainous, the mountains run north and south, and it lies right up against the U.S. boundary. People in certain sections of that area have never had the opportunity of seeing CBC broadcasts despite the fact that it is our national broadcasting system. Radio reception is also extremely poor and has to be brought in by using the telephone lines.

● (2020)

In this particular area many of the small communities have been forced to finance their own little satellites in the mountains. It costs them a great deal of money and effort each month, and all they receive is a poor picture. And where does the picture come from, Mr. Speaker? In nine out of ten cases the only signal they can pick up comes from the United States. In many sections of the riding the people get their television pictures and news only from south of the line. I feel they should have an opportunity at least to see and hear what is going on in their own country.

In the Kootenay area we do get some CBC signals, but here again we have a bone to pick with the CBC. It has been talked about for years and many plans have been suggested: always something is going to be done, but it is never done. The CBC signal we get comes from Calgary, which is east of our area. It is in a different time zone, and when the CBC closes down its station there at midnight that is the end of reception for residents in the Kootenay area despite the fact it is only 11 p.m.

[Mr. Harding.]

Within the last year we have received only one regional news broadcast per day from the CBC. We are interested in what goes on in the rest of Canada but, for example, we are really more interested in getting weather forecasts for British Columbia than for Toronto, and in getting regional news from the capital of British Columbia rather than regional news from other parts of the country. I do not think we are asking too much when we ask the CBC to send its signal in from Vancouver. That signal is received in the Okanagan Valley some 100 to 150 miles to the west, and there is no reason in the world why the whole south-eastern section of British Columbia should not be serviced from the Vancouver station and given B.C. news, weather forecasts and the regular Vancouver programs.

As I say, the mountains run north and south, and in sections of the area there are several communities of 700, 800 or 1,000 people. They have set up their own satellite systems, but currently all they can pick up are signals from American stations. It would not be a costly business for the CBC to use satellites and transmit CBC signals to these communities. Through taxation we have been paying for CBC radio and television service to the rest of Canada. The big cities of Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Vancouver get top priority. I believe that now people in the rural areas should receive some top priority. I bring this matter before the House and through you, Mr. Speaker, to the attention of the minister responsible for the CBC.

I will give another example of poor service. We have a station in Rossland which receives the signal and broadcasts it to the areas around Trail and down the Columbia area. Because of the mountainous terrain there has been a desperate need for a reflector in that area. The reflector was promised back in 1967, before I became a member of this House. They were getting ready to bring it in; they had done all the surveying; the reflector was ready to be put in. But one delay followed another until finally we hit the austerity program and the government clamped down on everything.

We still do not have that reflector. The CBC cannot scratch up enough cash to put it in. Now they tell me it will be installed this summer. It was supposed to be put in last year, and the year before. I repeat that these small rural areas should receive some priority from the corporation and the government, if for no other reason than the people there should have access to at least one Canadian station that broadcasts Canadian views and news. Again I point out that the reflector is not a costly project. All the surveys have been done. Surely they do not have to be done 50 times. If it was on the agenda back in 1967 and 1968, why has it not been installed since then? We have been raising this question in letters to the CBC, but the delays continue. While I am very critical of this aspect of its operations, I am still a supporter of the CBC for the simple reason that if it goes down the drain all Canadian coverage will disappear. Problems like this are to be found in many rural areas in all provinces. I hope they will be overcome.

People living in a border area in the east, say at Windsor, have a choice between American stations and Canadian stations. But in many areas people have no choice at all. If little communities have satellite service and the only