

Oral Questions

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): How can the Prime Minister possibly say, in the face of what Mr. Boyle says, in the face of what Mr. Johnson says and in the face of the omission by his own minister, to supply those letters, that there is any truth whatsoever in the assertions made by the Prime Minister in the House today?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, this is a somewhat repetitive debate. Perhaps Mr. Johnson does not agree with Mr. Boyle. That is something for the hon. member to reconcile in the way he wants.

An hon. Member: It is for you to reconcile.

Mr. Trudeau: I have read enough of Mr. Boyle's report to know that he says that the electronic media, and the CBC in particular, have not contributed in a sufficient way to their mandate, nor to the unity of Canada. He said also that they are guilty of malpractice.

An hon. Member: Do you agree?

Mr. Trudeau: Perhaps he uses the word "subversion" in a metaphorical sense in terms of not working toward Canadian unity. If these words have no meaning to the hon. member, I refuse to have any further discussion.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): What do they mean to you?

Mr. Hnatyshyn: You are the Prime Minister.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Yes, you are the Prime Minister. What do they mean to you?

Mr. Paproski: You have to answer that.

ADEQUACY OF BOYLE REPORT—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct a supplementary question to the Prime Minister. Does the Prime Minister feel that Mr. Boyle's commission of inquiry was adequate in terms of the comments made by himself and some of his ministers? Does the Prime Minister know whether it gives a clear direction in terms of the necessary improvements or possible reforms which might be made within the sector of public broadcasting at the present time?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, as to whether the report was adequate or not, from the point of view of the government it was a good job well done. We did not give them much time to make a report. They made that report within time constraints with a great deal of competence. Thus, in that sense it is adequate. I do not think it is adequate in that it would have had to use pictures in order for the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton to understand it. For us it was adequate. It recommends several directions which we have not analysed. As I have said, the Secretary of State for the government will be reporting to Cabinet in a memorandum still to come concerning those directions.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): You are cutting a pretty sorry picture.

POSSIBILITY OF DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN SINS OF OMISSION MENTIONED IN BOYLE REPORT AND ALLEGATIONS OF SEPARATIST BIAS

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister distinguish between the inability to function effectively referred to in the context of the report, or the sins of omission which have been mentioned regarding the provision of information, and his earlier criticism and that of his colleagues concerning a definite political bias—one directed toward a political solution or option for the province of Quebec? Does he distinguish a difference between Mr. Boyle's report and the original criticism by himself and others?

● (1120)

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): It appears to me that Mr. Boyle does not use the word "separatism" although I am informed that several of the cases he analyzes are cases of separatism in which some incompetence was shown. It seems to me it should be of sufficient concern to the opposition, if they want to rely on the report in any sense, that he is making a very severe criticism of the electronic media because they have not contributed, as the mandate would direct them, to national unity. To my mind this is a serious criticism. People on the other side of this House seem to be more interested in knowing whether he used or did not use the word "separatism". If they take the report at its face value I think they should realize there is a severe condemnation there and they should be more constructive as to ways in which the task of the media can be accomplished than in playing with words.

POSSIBILITY OF REFERRING BOYLE AND TOUCHSTONE REPORTS TO COMMITTEE

Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont): The Prime Minister seems to be caught on one note. He seems to have missed the thrust of the report which talks very much of the over-centralization of production, the heavy dependency on American programming and the loss of contact with both parliament and the public which are major issues and which seem not yet to have been recognized. Has the right hon. gentleman consulted with the Secretary of State to determine whether it might be useful to have this report and perhaps the recent Touchstone Report made orders of reference to the appropriate parliamentary committee when we return in the fall?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): I am not sure what the hon. member means when he says I have not recognized these important facets. It seems to me more relevant that not one of his colleagues on the other side of the House has asked questions about them. They have all been concerned about whether separatism had been discovered or not.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!