

*Canadian Policy on Broadcasting*

views on matters of public controversy. That opportunity has been provided since the C.B.C. was created, but this has not made any difference in the programming of public affairs by the C.B.C. The fact that a C.B.C. station exists in a given area is sufficient proof of the provision of reasonable opportunity. All one need do is open a C.B.C. station and then it can be argued that a reasonable opportunity for the expression of these conflicting views has been provided. That is not good enough, sir. I think we have had ample demonstration of that, particularly during the last two years.

What we should like to see is a guarantee that conflicting views will be articulated so that issues and problems of public interest will be aired and examined in a balanced, fair, objective and impartial way so that we do not have just one side of a story, such as has been the case in respect of C.B.C. public affairs programming. This is one area therefore where I intend to move an amendment.

Another area which distinctly disturbs me is that covered by paragraph (h) of clause 2 which reads as follows:

Where any conflict arises between the objectives of the national broadcasting service and the interests of the private element of the Canadian broadcasting system, the objectives of the national broadcasting service must prevail;

I know that my good friend and colleague from the broadcasting industry, the hon. member for Burin-Burgeo, who has made in this house a number of eloquent contributions to the cause of broadcasting since he entered the house, agrees with me in this regard. Perhaps I should put it the other way and say that I agree with him, because I believe he has carried the torch in the area I am discussing, and in respect of the argument I intend to put in the next few moments. He has already carried the torch, and I endorse his position and argument in support of it. In any event, we are agreed that that specific wording contains great danger and peril where private broadcasters are concerned for the future, sir. We know what the drafters of this legislation intended by that wording. We know that philosophically they are giving expression to a principle which, on one certain superficial level, I believe would find support from the majority of Canadians.

• (5:40 p.m.)

What the drafters of this legislation are trying to say, in the event of a national emergency or in the event that the public

[Mr. Sherman.]

good or interest is at stake, is that the conflict shall be resolved in such a way that the objectives of the national broadcasting system shall take precedence over the interests of the private element of the Canadian broadcasting system. But, that is not what the paragraph says, although it may be what it means. It may be what the drafters of the legislation meant, but it is not what they say. Two days from now, two weeks from now and certainly two years from now all this debate will be forgotten, all the argument, all the exchange of views will be buried and forgotten; they will be part of ancient parliamentary history with regard to broadcasting. What will remain, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, will be a codified, rigid, authoritative statement of policy in the sphere of broadcasting to which all parties to a conflict, including the arbiters of the conflict, will turn for the purposes of reaching a decision and coming to a conclusion.

What they will base their decision and conclusion on will be the words of the statute, not the arguments that had taken place in committee of the whole house or the broadcasting committee, not the free, moderate, temperate exchange of views between those of us on all sides of the chambers who are interested in this question. Their decision and conclusion will be based on the codified, rigid words that will be down in black and white, and will say for all time that—

—where any conflict arises between the objectives of the national broadcasting service and the interests of the private element of the Canadian broadcasting system, the objectives of the national broadcasting service must prevail.

I submit that that is unCanadian, it is undemocratic and it is definitely not in the interests of the private enterprise tradition which has played an integral part in building this country and this continent. The objectives of the national broadcasting service can be very broad indeed when it comes to interpretation. What are the objectives of the national broadcasting service? It may be that should a dispute arise in my city or in the constituency of anybody in this chamber between a private company and the national system, with regard to an available television channel or an available radio frequency, the C.B.C. will be competing for that channel, that frequency, that location and that privilege of serving the public and contributing to the broadcasting industry, and in truth also making a profit if it is possible to make one.