

Canadian Broadcasting Act

going on between the authoritarian concept of life and the democratic concept of life, between those who believe that the individual must be subservient to some elite and those like myself who believe that the inherent dignity of man can find expression only in freedom under law. This difference of opinion seems to be clearly expressed by Mr. George Chandler in a mimeographed statement entitled "The Case for Private Broadcasting". Mr. Chandler states that those who control communications control the thoughts of the people. That is perfectly true. He then goes on to say:

The Massey commission ignores the sound commercial fact that is understood by people in the commercial world that the soundest method that business can use to expand its market is to develop and encourage widespread unity of thought.

What is wanted by the commercial broadcasters is unity of thought, but unity of thought for what? Unity of thought for whom? It was de Tocqueville who said that the greatest threat to democracy is the pressure for conformity. That pressure is on today in no mean way. The strongest attack is being made against the sort of diversity which should be the pride and glory of any democracy. There is nothing but a desire to conform, a desire for orthodoxy. There is the fear now that opinions which challenge our basic values as individuals present a threat to social stability. There is legitimacy for that fear. Undoubtedly it is so. But the answer to that fear is not what has been expressed by so many, that is, suppression. So often today we find that where men differ radically one from the other, one is called a communist or an atheist or anti-Christian or any of these clichés which we use today to destroy men. The answer for those with whom we disagree is not suppression, for that is the tactic of totalitarianism. The answer is reasoned and reasonable argument.

Mr. Blackmore: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North): I would say that the suppression of thought and the suppression of ideas and free speech offers a far greater threat to the stability of the social order than the diversity of opinion in which I believe. I should like to quote now a statement which I am sure is well known to many hon. members. It was enunciated by John Milton in *Areopagitica*. It is still a statement of a vital and basic principle. I do not mean to say that I agree with Milton entirely because there are many things he said with which I disagree and indeed resent. But I agree on this issue when he states:

Censoring of thought implies "grace of infallibility and incorruptibility" in the censors.

"It hinders and retards the importation of our richest merchandise, truth."

[Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North).]

If it came to prohibiting, there is not aught more likely to be prohibited than truth itself, whose first appearance to our eyes, bleared and dimmed with prejudice and custom, is more unsightly and implausible than many errors.

That statement is absolutely valid for today. Let me put it in another way. This is what Thomas Jefferson had to say:

For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead nor to tolerate error so long as reason is left to combat it.

Those are the words of a civilized man; those are the words of a man who realized that if a belief has the validity of truth, then it is imperishable. False ideas cannot prevail against it. The answer today of so many people is to suppress those things with which they do not agree rather than put up a reasonable argument.

I can only conclude that those who desire suppression have very little faith in the reasonableness or the capacity to reason of the Canadian people. If we do not rely upon the ultimate good common sense of the people, then I do not think we have any right to call ourselves democrats. Indeed what we should insist upon is the right of the individual to use his own judgment in these matters. But that right cannot be exercised by minds which are atrophied by prohibition of thought or, what is just as bad, by unity of thought. I said earlier that freedom is under attack as it is bound to be under attack where the answer to opposing views which we dislike is suppression. It reminds me of what the poet Campbell said:

Hope, for a season, bade the world farewell,
And freedom shrieked as Kosciusko fell!

But freedom is not in a position today where it can shriek. After all, it is very difficult to shriek when one is being slowly strangled. We see the unhappy picture to the south of us where men are being attacked and reputations are being wrecked by a disease which I will call McCarthyism. The menace lies not in the attacks on these men but in there being no protest against that iniquity. Every time I have gone to the United States and seen what has happened there I have been proud to say that sort of thing cannot happen here, that it has no place in Canada; but I am not sure I am right, because I have heard men attacked in this house within the last few days for holding views which have been described as poisonous, atheistic, and blasphemous. Why? If those who used those terms had listened to the broadcasts which they disliked so much they would have realized men use a moral basis for hostility, and in this case the moral basis of course is religion and democracy.