

*Canadian Policy on Broadcasting*

in the objectives of the bill. I should like to say also, without equivocation, that I welcome clause 2 which gives legislative authority for providing broadcasting services in both the major languages of this country. This, I think, is good evidence of the earnestness with which many Canadians pursue the objective of national unity. The cost involved is a very small price to pay on a long term basis if these objectives can be reached. I have not heard about the great city of Toronto falling into dust because of the advent of CJBC. I would hope that when the C.B.C.'s French service starts early in November in the city of Vancouver, even that outpost of empire will be able to survive the advent of two languages.

• (4:20 p.m.)

The flexibility of the provisions for Canadian content is a good change. I think the nine years that have elapsed have proven that artificial formulae in that area did not work.

As to public affairs broadcasts in prime time, speaking for myself I say, Amen, and repeat, Amen. I hope that the new provisions will bring to an end the scandalous absence of public affairs programming, particularly on the national broadcasting system, during those hours. Even the president of the C.B.C. had to admit a very minute amount of public affairs broadcasting in prime time when he appeared before our committee.

I feel we will have to improve the system for the reporting of infractions by the C.B.C. I think the minister is following her well known generous disposition in thinking that once a report is made parliament will go into high gear and deal with it. I have been here only five years but I have waited a long time for high gear on most matters. I suppose it would be a reform if the minister would agree that there be a reference to the broadcasting committee to deal with such a report. Other speakers will probably have better ideas.

As the minister said, the white paper recommended that licensing be the responsibility of the regulatory authority and the broadcasting committee concurred. But I think we will want the broadcasting committee to examine the minister's words on this aspect in the light of Bill C-163.

I add just one word about the mandate of the C.B.C., the object of which I am sure we all share, and the progress of national unity. I think that this summer the corporation did

a very remarkable job in trying to fulfil that mandate. The minister herself, many agencies of government and private people have helped in this evocation of national unity, and I would like publicly to pay tribute to the C.B.C. and the private networks for responding to this surprising evidence of our assurance that suddenly has come upon Canadians. They found it was not such a bad idea every once in a while to look inward on themselves and see that there is indeed a bit of purpose to our nation.

"The most remarkable and most poorly utilized invention since the printing press is television"—so said Walter Lippmann. Douglas M. MacDonald in a recent thesis entitled, "A History of Broadcasting Regulation in Canada," had this to say:

Generally speaking one can safely state that the first and prime problem of Canadian broadcasting has been solved, that of providing the technical facilities necessary to blanket the nation with an effective Canadian voice. The more difficult one is giving it something to say.

Giving broadcasting something to say has absorbed the time and talents of countless Canadians from the advent of radio through the addition of television, past countless columns, commissions and committees until this juncture in the on-going search for quality. There have been great moments, and many more times a shallowness of performance and emptiness of content. Bill C-163 is not the final word on the subject, as the minister herself admits. In fact, because of a curious absence of study—and I attach no blame here—on such topics as what one commentator has called the potential avalanche of cable television and satellites, it may be dated even before its purposes get fully under way.

I myself rather find that these comprehensive bills—and here I speak as a lawyer—which attempt to amend several acts as well as to invoke new principles, are a somewhat awkward way of dealing with legislation, but that is just a passing comment. I would now like to make a general observation or two about the bill and then discuss television and pay a passing tribute to radio, a much neglected feature of our culture.

I regret that the sensitivities of French speaking and English speaking Canadians are such that the name of the new regulating body is to be the Canadian radio commission. The minister says we can think up a new name, and I will follow her suggestion. As a