

Canadian Broadcasting Policy

will come from a growing awareness on the part of an important media and those providing the programming that the task is worth while. If in fact there is this co-operation about which I have spoken, then this can be achieved.

Mr. Mather: Mr. Chairman, in rising to take part briefly in this discussion I want to say that in my opinion at least the statement made by the Secretary of State in introducing this resolution was one of the most unrevealing that I have yet heard in the house. As a matter of fact, when she had finished I heard some members behind the curtain say they really thought they knew more about the government's intentions before she spoke than when she had finished. At one point I almost thought that I was listening to the Secretary of State for External Affairs rather than the Secretary of State.

I imagine that the intention of the minister and the government at this stage is to spend as little time as possible on the resolution and to pass on to the meat of the bill so we can see the business with which we are going to deal. In this regard I think that our group will be as ready as anybody to get to the meat, though we may not be quite as ready to leave it. In our opinion, if the very important legislation that is going to come before us is not going to be referred to the broadcasting committee, we would think it reasonable to spend at least two weeks discussing the bill in detail clause by clause in order to enable interested and affected groups to make further representations to those dealing with this legislation.

I have two or three general observations I wish to make on the general subject of broadcasting. It seems to me that all broadcasting is a matter of public concern. The public pays for it either through parliamentary grants or through that part of the consumer dollar that produces advertising revenue for the broadcasting systems. All radio frequencies and television channels are public property, and surely the public is entitled to exercise control over them. Further, broadcasting is of essential concern to Canadians because of its very key nature in our communications media. Communications are as vital to us as Canadians as national defence. Further, I think our experience of the structure of broadcasting in Canada indicates that the public can best protect and advance its interest in this field by allowing both public and private systems of radio and television to exist, both of these systems ultimately being responsible to the public through an over-all

public agency such as the Board of Broadcast Governors.

In connection with the public sector may I say I am one of those who are public enterprisers and I am a great admirer of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. But I do not think it is evidence of friendship to the C.B.C. to ignore some of its weaknesses or shortcomings. Despite criticisms of cost and over-management and sometimes criticisms of departure from good taste which have been made against it, I think the C.B.C. has provided a national broadcasting service in a very praiseworthy manner and for a minimal per capita cost. The last figure I saw indicated that the cost was less than one cent per day per Canadian. When we consider the vastness of its business, the four networks that it operates and the variety of our people, I believe that its record is a very good one.

It was said by the most recent commission which examined the broadcasting system in Canada, with particular reference to the C.B.C., that the important thing, the thing that mattered in broadcasting, was production and anything else was housekeeping. Some wits have since then pointed out that exactly the opposite point of view should be the finding of the commission on the status of women, that that commission should report that all that matters is housekeeping and anything else is production. However, that may be, I think many members would go along with what I sense is the aim of the minister regarding the extension of the term of financing to a longer period than is now enjoyed by the corporation if certain requirements are met. This group will be very much concerned to check on the performance of the people involved in producing a formula that will extend the financing period of the C.B.C. to, say, five years.

I want to say a few words about the private sector of broadcasting. It seems to me that the record of the private stations in basically placing their interests and the interests of their shareholders first and those of the public last has been repeatedly criticized by investigating bodies over the last ten years. The public's airwaves are being used under licence by private profit-making concerns, and it is only necessary to listen to the average private radio station in particular or to watch some of the private television programs that are screened in this country to realize that their orientation is such that they just might as well be broadcasting in the United States. Their shortcomings in program content are as