

CBC Programming

provided each day right here in the House of Commons by the representatives who sit in this green chamber from all parts of our nation. I am certain that the CBC has been made fully aware of the concern expressed by the people of Canada to us as their elected representatives. To my way of thinking, the most effective letter any Canadian can write is not to the CBC, the CTV or any other corporate or business enterprise, but to Ottawa to his elected member.

I am sure that if the hon. member for Brandon-Souris would reflect for just a moment, he would find that it does not take much stretching of the imagination to believe that there could appear in this House in the future a motion which would request the tabling of all private members' correspondence, that which each of us receives every day from the citizens we represent. It is not inconceivable that such a thing could happen, and I would like to assure the hon. member that I would oppose such a motion then for the same reasons that I oppose this motion now. It would be then, as it is now, an intrusion into a person's privacy.

Mr. John Roberts (St. Paul's): Mr. Speaker, I would not like you or the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale) to think that during my remarks I would say anything disrespectful of him or attack his sincerity or conviction in bringing this matter before the House. He is one of its most distinguished members. All of us, on all sides, admire his enthusiasm, devotion and integrity. It was impossible not to sympathize with him as he recounted his distress at watching this program "Baptizing". It was obviously an anguishing, agonizing and almost traumatic experience for him. It was impossible not to sympathize. But I was puzzled. It seems to me that some fancy, smooth-talker from Sam Slick territory must have arrived in Brandon and sold a whole parcel of television sets which had no "off" button, because there should have been a handy remedy available for him to avoid this distressing experience. He could have placed his hands firmly on the arms of his chair, stood up, taken a few paces, pushed the button and turned the program off.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Who would turn the CBC off?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. member did not turn it off. He could have read a book or perhaps watched alternative programming. It conjures up a rather strange picture in one's mind to visualize the hon. member for Brandon-Souris turning on the set with that tingling anticipation he usually has when he is about to see a CBC program. He watches the program for a while and says to himself that he is not sure he will like it. Does he turn it off? No, he keeps on watching. He watches a little longer and concludes that he really does not like it. Does he get up and turn it off? No, he keeps on watching. He watches a little longer and thinks that it is very distressing and unpleasant and that he dislikes it intensely. Does he turn it off? No, he keeps watching. Finally, he thinks that the program he is watching is revolting and disgusting. He wonders what to do. Does he turn it off? No, he decides to complain to the House of Commons.

The remedy was in his hands. No one forced him, and no one forces people who feel as he does, to watch this kind of program. So what is he complaining about? He is not

[Mr. Douglas (Bruce-Grey).]

complaining that this program was imposed upon him. He wants to make sure that his values and standards are imposed upon other people. If one reads his remarks, this is his intention. He says that it is wrong to communicate this "distortion of the essential nature of human behaviour" to the Canadian public, which implies that he knows what is the essential nature of human behaviour, a subject which has been speculated upon without conclusion for well over 2,500 years. He knows what essential human nature is, and he doesn't think what he considers to be a distortion of it should be seen on television. He does not feel that what he calls the disintegration of society should be seen on television. One man's disintegration is another man's reformation, a renewal if you like. He does not think the program should include what he believes to be "blasphemy, obscenities, violence and situations at odds with traditional values of Canadian society."

I should not complain that a Conservative believes in protecting the traditional values of Canadian society, but I do suggest that not simply and only the traditional values of Canadian society should be expressed through television programming in this country. It is not a question of values the hon. member does not like being imposed on him; he is concerned with imposing a set of values upon others who may or may not share them. In the case of the particular program he is complaining about, it appears that from the letter and telephone response a very great majority of listeners felt differently about the program than he did.

I object to this kind of splendid assurance that the hon. member for Brandon-Souris or, for that matter me, or any member of this House, is competent to decide what values and moral standards the Canadian public should watch on television. Once we start down that slope, where do we stop? What are we to judge out of court? What sacred cow are we going to establish? Can we watch Elmer Gantry which some people may consider ridiculous certain aspects of religion? Shall we rule out Mary, Queen of Scots because we do not like the portrayal of John Knox? Shall we rule out Tartuffe because we do not like attacks on sanctimony? Shall we rule out the Devils of Loudon because it holds the inquisition up to disrepute? Shall we rule out the Merchant of Venice because people do not like the characterization of Jews? Where do we stop once we decide that television programming in Canada should represent the views of the hon. member for Brandon-Souris, or of me, or of any particular member in this House?

Mr. Baldwin: How about *Reader's Digest* and *Time*?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. member for Brandon-Souris stands for traditional values. I think most of us in this House stand for a tolerant and liberal society. There are not many members of this parliament who would want to act as censors for the arts in this country.

What of accountability to parliament? That was the question the hon. member said he was concerned with. There is an accountability for over-all direction of the programming of Radio Canada. I think the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) properly raised questions in relation to policy concerning advertising related to children's programs on radio. I feel that over-all concerns about CBC programming ought to be raised, but that