

*Radio and Television*

*Free Press* has published a number of pamphlets. It is the contention that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as a regulatory body, as well as being a competitor, was somehow interfering with their basic freedom. The *Free Press* was fond of drawing a parallel between radio and television stations and newspapers, and insisted that freedom of the press was parallel and analogous with the freedom of the air waves. There is no point in discussing in detail the way in which the Fowler commission and other commissions have treated this particular point, but it has been amply proven by the fact that there are such a limited number of both radio and television frequencies available that there is not and cannot be any such thing as freedom of the air.

The point was quite well made yesterday by the hon. member for Kootenay West with respect to freedom of the air and competition. The private broadcasters themselves have proved the point repeatedly, in that every time there has been an application for a new radio or television station before the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation board of governors—and this applies especially to radio—wherever the market area already had a private station, the station in existence instead of welcoming the new competitor into the field as a wonderful example of the benefits of free enterprise and freedom of the air has bucked the application all down the line, frequently using the very argument that there can be no such thing as freedom of the air parallel to freedom of the press.

One of the minor points arising out of the amendment that hit me after talking to a couple of C.B.C. producers in the Toronto-Ottawa region stems from the fact that if some limited competition evolves it could represent a tremendous blow to the amount of Canadian talent that is used. Mr. Ouimet announced last year that 15,000 artists of various kinds did work for the C.B.C. last year. Regardless of what some of us may feel concerning the quality of the work of those artists, the fact that this number were employed is an excellent thing. In any consideration of opening up a licence in a high market area like Toronto or Montreal, the government and any regulatory board it sets up must keep this factor in mind. To bring in a private station may be all right, but it should not be done at the cost of diminishing the amount of Canadian talent and creative effort that goes into these programs.

I spoke to one successful C.B.C. producer recently. He is successful in the sense that one of his series has been sold in the United States and he is down there now considering a highly attractive offer. He told me that his own feeling was that if a private station

[Mr. Fisher.]

opened in the Toronto area without any regulations to control or direct it with respect to using a certain amount of Canadian programming, you would see the advertisers who now support to a degree the C.B.C. dramatic presentations switch over and use the private station and the cheaper United States imported films. As a consequence of this loss of income the C.B.C. would not be able to maintain its standard of dramatic production. I think all of us should take pride in the recognition that has been given the quality of certain Canadian Broadcasting Corporation productions in that sales are being made in the United States market, and in the past couple of years the C.B.C. has had increasing success in selling its dramatic productions in the British market not only to the B.B.C., which is the government organization, but also to the private television network that has been created in England and Scotland.

One of the other problems in connection with the C.B.C. and its operation in the large market areas is, of course, more and more the movement of United States subsidiaries into Canada. The kind of advertisers who support television programs are marketing their products in Canada as well as in the United States. Personally I am delighted with that. I like to watch the fights and the baseball games, and I support Gillette with the occasional purchase of razor blades.

I think we must acknowledge that this will be a continuing trend. It does mean, however, that the United States television stations close to our borders are always going to be invading our markets. There is nothing we can do in the form of regulation to stop it, but it means they will always have an effect and influence upon Canadian television stations whether they be C.B.C. or private.

I want to be fair here in considering the latitude we should allow a private station and this factor must be weighed. We must weigh United States competition within the same market area against the fact that we would like private stations to be regulated in order to ensure that they utilize a certain minimum of Canadian programming.

One matter that concerns everyone in connection with television—and it has affected me as a teacher and as one in political life—is the choice of popular programs. I am thinking of the near despair that comes when you talk to people about their reaction to television programs and even to the operations of the C.B.C. I know it was a source of despair to me that amongst my pupils the most popular program of all was the Saturday night wrestling. It is very discouraging.