

Oral Questions

● (1110)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[English]***CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION****REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF PRIME MINISTER'S
INTERPRETATION OF BOYLE REPORT ON ALLEGED SEPARATIST
BIAS**

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the right hon. Prime Minister and arises out of comments made during the question period yesterday when the Prime Minister exhibited a sense of clairvoyance. He said that the CRTC report which we talked about yesterday supports his contention, to quote him, that "the overwhelming majority of CBC employees are of separatist leanings". Yesterday the president of the CBC said—and I am quoting him now—that "the CRTC has not found the CBC guilty of a separatist bias". I want to ask the Prime Minister to tell the House who is right about what Mr. Boyle said about separatism in the CBC. Is Mr. Boyle right or is the Prime Minister right?

An hon. Member: You mean Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I am sorry, I mean Mr. Johnson.

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to know what Mr. Boyle thinks, he just has to read his report. All I said yesterday was that the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton should not be interpreting the report as he did in a false way.

Mr. Lalonde: You are using McCarthy-like methods.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): I am interested in the interpretation that the Prime Minister put upon the report. Mr. Johnson indicated quite clearly that as far as he was concerned—and I am now quoting him—the CRTC has not found the CBC guilty of a separatist bias. Yesterday and on other occasions the Prime Minister has indicated that he disagrees. I am simply asking the Prime Minister who is right, Mr. Johnson, on the one hand, or the Prime Minister?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the relevant question is what Mr. Boyle says, and the way to get the answer to that question is to read his report. If the hon. member reads the report he will see that Mr. Boyle's report said that the electronic media had been contributing to the division of Canada.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): That is quite a different thing.

Mr. Trudeau: Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that the division of Canada means to separate Canada into parts, and to separate Canada into parts is called separatism in some quarters.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, that is pretty fancy footwork even for the Prime Minister, who is digging rather deeply. The Prime Minister as the head of the government has expressed an opinion on the CBC. If the Prime Minister believes that and is using what his minister of health has just said are McCarthy-like tactics, could he tell the House why he is allowing to continue in office as president of the CBC a man who, according to the Prime Minister, is so blind that he cannot see the hordes of separatists that are around him?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, I am afraid this is much too subtle for the hon. member to understand. I will try to give the answers that I gave in this House before we set up the Boyle inquiry. It was that there were a lot of active separatists in Radio Canada. This is the statement. The hon. member can quarrel with it if he wants; but Mr. Boyle does not pronounce on that, nor does Mr. Johnson. The relevant question is whether these separatists are subverting or whether they are doing their jobs properly. It is also whether they are guilty of malpractices as journalists and so on. Mr. Boyle says that there is subversion and that there is malpractice. These are facts, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Trudeau: They are facts, Mr. Boyle says this. The hon. member can disagree with Mr. Boyle, if he wants; but I have made the assertion before that the point is not really the political beliefs of those who are working for the CBC or anyone else. It is whether they are doing their jobs honestly, conscientiously and properly.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trudeau: The Boyle report indicates that they are guilty of malpractice and they are guilty of not uniting Canada.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the Prime Minister has neither read the report, nor has he read the statement by Mr. Johnson, the President of the CBC. In his news release, the President of the CBC said the following:

In commenting on the CRTC report today, let me deal first with that question of pro-separatist bias. I am pleased to see the CRTC has not found the CBC to be guilty of such bias.

Obviously, the President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation takes issue with the statement made by the Prime Minister in February and the statement made once again by him here today. The important part is that there have been assertions made by the government. His Minister of State for Urban Affairs, who was later promoted to be the czar of Quebec, said that there were thousands of letters and thousands of inquiries.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Boyle did not receive one of them during his inquiry.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!