

*Canadian Policy on Broadcasting*

for its programming throughout the country. This is no longer the case. It may be that conditions have changed and that the important function which the C.B.C. then carried out is no longer one which should necessarily be performed by a publicly financed corporation.

Severe criticism has been levelled against both private and public broadcasters on the grounds that news has been improperly presented, or even slanted on occasions, and criticism has been directed also against undue emphasis of minority views during the presentation of controversial programs relating to social problems. In examining the legislation now before us I believe we should give careful consideration to whether a corporation supported by public funds should engage in the distribution of news or the presentation of programs on the more controversial social questions which now face our country, when similar coverage is already being provided by private stations.

These seem to be the programs which have got the C.B.C. into most difficulty in recent years. If we were to ask ourselves: "Should parliament provide a corporation with funds to publish a newspaper?", I am sure we should all say, no. If we were asked to provide funds to a corporation in order that it might produce a newspaper which discussed critical social issues confronting us at the present time, I believe parliament would refuse.

I find it a little difficult to understand why parliament should be called upon to furnish the C.B.C. with millions of dollars to provide a news service and a public affairs discussion service on the air when we would not even think of allotting funds for the purpose of offering the same service through a printed newspaper.

The functions of the C.B.C. should be carefully re-examined, and the bill now before us should give guidance to the corporation as to just what its functions should be in the fields which have given rise to so many problems during recent years.

All the reports which have been made by committees of inquiry have emphasized the fact—as indeed does the bill before us—that broadcasting undertakings in Canada constitute a single system which forms a public trust and must be administered in the public interest. It is clear from all these reports that many improvements can be made in the Canadian system and that in many respects both the private and the public stations have

failed to carry out their responsibilities to the public.

The Fowler committee recommended that parliament should delegate authority over all Canadian broadcasting to a single board or agency. This agency would have full power and authority to regulate, supervise, control and develop the Canadian broadcasting system. Its powers would be clearly defined in the Broadcasting Act and it would be responsible for carrying out the functions set out in the act. Its basic job, so the committee recommended, would be to develop a co-ordinated policy for the provision of broadcasting services to all the Canadian people by all broadcasting stations both privately and publicly owned.

Everyone has said "amen" to this, and we have all agreed that broadcasting facilities in Canada must constitute a single system. If this is so, then surely the principle of entrusting authority to a single regulatory board or agency must be correct. Mr. Speaker, the bill now being considered might have the effect of dividing authority between the Canadian radio commission and the C.B.C. This could give rise to conflict, confusion and inefficiency. Worst of all, it might involve the government in arbitrating disputes between the two public agencies. Therefore it seems to me that in the committee amendments should be considered by the minister which would give effect to the sound principle which is set out in the Fowler report of having a single, effective, regulatory agency.

• (3:30 p.m.)

The question of how the regulatory agency is to function is also of vital importance, and the method should be set out clearly in the legislation. Basically there are two ways of doing it. The first is the easy way, which has been adopted in this bill, to establish a commission and to give it unfettered authority to do the job.

Under the terms of the bill the commission is to consist of five full-time members and ten part-time members, all appointed by the governor in council. But on carefully examining the bill it appears that the real authority is in the five full-time members. They constitute the executive committee. The result is that the actual effect of the bill is to put the future of the important broadcasting industry completely in the hands of an appointed board of five full-time officials. These are appointed for a seven year term. Once they are appointed, in effect they are responsible to no one. Consistently with this