

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

which could bring to bear some intelligent judgment as to the qualifications of those who were to sit on the board to which they were appointed.

Mr. Churchill: Would the hon. member answer a question? What assurance have we that the same procedure will not be followed in the future by other ministers, or by the same minister?

Mr. Lewis: My answer to the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre is that precisely the same condition existed when he was a member of a government. Emphasis on political appointments to the B.B.G. was just as prevalent in the previous government as it has been in this government. We shall not rid ourselves of this situation until we rid ourselves of what I call perhaps the most evil, although small, remnant of patronage in our federal set-up, the political appointments to important agencies.

Mr. Churchill: But how will the hon. member correct that?

Mr. Lewis: We cannot correct it by legislation, Mr. Speaker, because there is no alternative to the appointments being made by the governor general in council. The position could be corrected soon if this parliament in a unanimous voice were to say to this government and all future governments that it is time to end this cheap and shoddy patronage for positions of power and importance in the country and that appointments to the bench, the B.B.G., the C.B.C. and other similar bodies should be made on the basis of qualifications and quality only. Whether the appointees happen to be Liberals, New Democrats, Conservatives or of other political persuasions, they should be qualified for the job. This is the answer. I say that this is the most important consideration before this parliament, before this government, and this is why I raised it as the first point in my speech.

The new commission will have greater power than the Board of Broadcast Governors set up by the previous government. Its powers will not be as great as suggested by the hon. member for Yukon; nevertheless they will be considerable. It will be able to impose stiffer penalties than the old board could. The hon. member for Yukon did not draw my tears when he told this house that the poor, private stations will not be able to do anything because of the \$100,000 penalty that will be hanging over them. If that is the

only way to keep them from breaking the law, then that is how big the penalty ought to be.

Mr. Nielsen: That remark shows the difference in our characters.

Mr. Lewis: There is no reason to criticize this provision. Because the commission will have greater power than the old board had, because the penalties will be stiffer than before, appointing to that commission men and women who are qualified to do the job for which they are appointed, who are free of political encumbrances and parochial and regional prejudices, who are capable of acting as cultured Canadians concerned with this country and its culture, is a matter of the utmost importance.

I proceed to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, under the same head. What about appointments to it? What about appointment to the board of governors of the C.B.C.? From the evidence it seems that there has been a lesser curse of political patronage in the appointments to that board than was the case with respect to the other board to which I referred. It is apparent that in the last year or so the C.B.C. has been the victim of having had no appointments at all. For this the minister and the government are responsible.

● (4:30 p.m.)

If this seems strange to the minister I will make the point clear to her. First, everyone in this house, perhaps with the exception of the hon. member for Yukon, regrets that the C.B.C. seems to have fallen upon evil days during the last couple of years. Whose fault is that? I suggest it is the result of the failure of the board—not of the president and vice president only—but of the failure of the board to act decisively in moments of crisis. This would seem a clear indication that the members of the board were incompetent in their job, no matter how nice they are, or how great their academic learning. Again, the minister agrees with this, I think; I do not want to put words into her mouth, but in that same television program, in the course of the same interview, she said this:

Most of the people we have now are academics on the C.B.C. and you know—take a look at them—every one of them is first rate; got good education, good background, good everything. But they just don't seem to manage.

What is membership on the board of the C.B.C. for if it is not to manage the C.B.C.? It is not to recite Catullus to one another, or to