

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

• (8:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Olson: On a point of order, the hon. member must know that in this house he is not allowed to reflect on decisions of Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): The member who just interrupted me is perhaps right, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to question the ruling of the Chair; all I wanted to say is that we, of the Conservative party, wanted to know the facts in detail, and the only way to know about them would have been to refer the bill to a committee of the house where we could have studied it. I do not in the least question the decision of the Speaker, but I wanted to say only this: The Conservative party merely wanted to refer the bill to a committee of the house, not only to get acquainted with the wording, the charges of the Secretary of State, but also to bring to light certain clauses of the bill which, in our opinion, require explanations.

And we are now—

[English]

Mr. Olson: May I ask the hon. member whether he would feel restricted in the exercise of his privileges if he were to ask all his questions when the bill is studied in committee, after the principle of the bill has been agreed to on second reading.

Mr. Régimbal: But the Liberals will not agree to refer it back.

[Translation]

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): Of course, if the Liberal party opposite co-operated fully and gave us such information, I would fully agree with the hon. member who has just interrupted me, but I am convinced that even when we study that bill in committee, we will not get all the information we need to inform the public. That is why we asked this afternoon that the bill be referred to a committee of the house so that the citizens of Canada might be informed about the scope of the important legislation now under consideration.

I return, of course, to the charges of rotten management made by the Secretary of State against the C.B.C. and I say this: For two years now, the minister has been responsible of the C.B.C. before parliament; for two years now, we have been asking her questions concerning the rotten management of the C.B.C. We have also asked questions

on the extension of the broadcasting system to centres which still do not have the opportunity of tuning in on the C.B.C., and during those years, the minister merely answered in the house: "I am only the messenger, the clerk of the C.B.C. I will simply transmit the message to the C.B.C. management and will give an answer to the House of Commons."

During those two years if the Secretary of State who answers for the C.B.C. knew that the corporation's management was rotten, it was her duty and her responsibility to inform the members of the house of it, because they are responsible for expenditures on behalf of either the C.B.C. or any other department of the crown.

If, during those two years, from 1965 to 1967, since she has been holding the post of Secretary of State and has been responsible to the house for the C.B.C. the minister was aware of rotten management within the C.B.C., it was her duty to so inform the House of Commons. That is why we are now astonished by that statement, which I would say is very serious, about a crown corporation that should be politically independent—it would be undesirable to have political interference within the C.B.C.—and I say that the minister has acted irresponsibly in throwing such statements, such gratuitous charges directly in the face of the C.B.C. management these last few days. As a French Canadian, I would say this is grossly unfair to another French Canadian, namely, Mr. Alphonse Ouimet, who has been C.B.C. president for several years and who is near retirement, to charge him with rotten management.

Mr. Béchard: Mr. Speaker, may I ask the hon. member a question?

• (8:20 p.m.)

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Béchard: Does the C.B.C. management include only French Canadians, since he is trying to pass judgment on one man only?

Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix): I am very glad that the parliamentary secretary to the minister has asked me that question. That is precisely what we want to know and the minister has been refusing for at least one week to specify her accusations. We only want to know whether those charges relate to the C.B.C. management, to its president or to some other persons in the corporation?

The parliamentary secretary fully agrees with me. Of course, what we want to know is whether those accusations are aimed at such