

does not have the confidence of the government and parliament.

• (3:40 p.m.)

What must be said to the C.B.C. now is that we all expect that changes will come in the foreseeable future and that the responsibility which is being entrusted to the corporation will be lived up to and respected. Commercial considerations and high ratings should not be the motivating factors in the C.B.C.'s re-thinking in respect of its programming. Under this bill the C.B.C. will come under the general supervision of the C.R.C. but it, unlike the private broadcasters, will be free of the penalties which the C.R.C. has the power to impose on others. Rather, the C.B.C. will remain responsible to parliament. I agree with this aspect of the bill. There are some who, with what they consider to be good cause, would have the C.R.C. take responsibility for the C.B.C. in all matters. They would have the C.R.C. be the final body with control over C.B.C. operations. There are objections to this and, I think, realistic objections. First, I cannot imagine any morale surviving the complete emasculation of the C.B.C. An emasculation would be the result if the C.B.C. were to have its freedom of action and freedom of decision given to another body. Further, it would make meaningless the C.B.C. mandate, because it would be little more than a guide line to a puppet of a senior body, the C.R.C. Whatever may be the faults of the C.B.C., it has at least 30 years of experience in programming for Canadians and dealing with the demands that a mandate for national service implies. The C.R.C. has no such experience.

Second, much as I approve of the idea of a stronger regulating body, I would have serious objections to the C.R.C. having control over every outlet and thus every programming principle that is available to broadcasters and to Canadians generally. The power which would be delivered into the hands of this board, were it to have control over the C.B.C. as well, would be enormous. That type of enormous power I could not look upon gladly.

These arguments are academic, for the fact remains that the price that must be paid for the public broadcasting system, with the service that is the motivation and the rationale for such a system, is the inevitable responsibility of parliament for its performance. If we are to pay public money for the establishment and maintenance of a public system, if we are to give to a public system a mandate

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for national service, if we are to make a public service the paramount keystone of our broadcasting policy, then we cannot but accept the responsibility for what it does. There is no means by which we as parliamentarians can divest ourselves of the consequences of what we do.

For these many reasons I commend this bill to hon. members and I commend the minister for bringing it forward.

Mr. Erik Nielsen (Yukon): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a bill which has as its purpose to lay down the broadcasting policy of the government and it is upon this policy that we have to render our judgment. Certainly that is the manner in which I have looked at the provisions of the bill. As I have looked at the bill in this light I believe it has presented a number of features which should cause grave anxiety to those who believe in the free expression of opinion in this country. What actually has happened here, I believe, is that the government has been unable to control the C.B.C. and unable to make it a rubberstamp and is now trying to create a new device for the purpose of gaining that end.

Miss LaMarsh: Did you make it a rubberstamp?

Mr. Nielsen: I will have something to say about what the Conservatives did when they were in office in respect of the C.B.C.

I listened to the parliamentary secretary laud the president of the C.B.C. He suggested what a great Canadian he is and what a great job he has done. He went on to leave the impression that all members on the other side have great confidence in the president and the management of the C.B.C. Yet we were treated to the spectacle of the minister appearing on television and calling that management rotten. She was obviously embarrassed yesterday morning and this morning when attempting to deal with the questions directed to her. Some of her replies were astonishing.

Miss LaMarsh: They should not have been.

Mr. Nielsen: I call them astonishing. I cannot understand how members on the other side can stand in their places, laud the president of the C.B.C. and tell us about the great confidence they have in the management when the minister responsible for reporting to parliament can refer to the management in the way she has done.