

*Canadian Policy on Broadcasting*

None the less this privilege of free speech carries with it a heavy responsibility and must be exercised with due regard to the public interest. It will therefore be a function of the commission to observe and assess the degree of responsibility shown by each broadcaster in exercising his privilege of free expression, and to take this factor into account when the renewal of his licence is under review. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has, of course, a very special responsibility to maintain objectivity as a corollary to freedom from censorship and pre-editing of programs. This is a matter of great concern to the public and was raised by several hon. members in the debate on the resolution introducing this legislation as well as at other times in the past few years. Therefore I would like to deal with that problem when I come to the control and management of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation under the new legislation.

One of the most important objectives of the commission will be to ensure that Canadian audiences have a reasonable freedom of choice, and to see that the programming provided by the whole system, but not necessarily by a particular broadcaster, is varied and comprehensive and balanced in controversial matters. The prohibition of political broadcasts immediately before elections is to be continued, with some modifications, and the commission will be empowered to make regulations ensuring that broadcasting time for political broadcasts shall be assigned on an equitable basis. But it has to be recognized that straight political broadcasts are not the beginning and end of the matter. In considering applications for licences the commission will have to take fully into account the relationship between broadcasting and other mass media of communication in a particular area so as to avoid monopoly situations. In cases where a monopoly of communications media cannot be avoided for one reason or another, the commission will have to incorporate into the conditions of the broadcaster's licence a requirement for a balanced presentation of news and opinions.

The conditions of licence will also be used by the commission to establish the obligations of each broadcaster with regard to the quality and variety of programming and the all-important matter of Canadian content. Under the 1958 legislation Canadian content on television has been established by regulation at 55 per cent, and no such requirement has

been imposed on radio stations. But in practice the whole concept has become confused with what might be termed public-interest programming, with the result that under the current regulations such events as the world series and Winston Churchill's funeral have been treated as Canadian content while a concert given in New York city by a Canadian artist might not be.

• (3:30 p.m.)

The Canadian radio commission will now have a great deal more flexibility in determining the nature and proportion of Canadian content required from each broadcaster. The reason for this provision is quite simple. The production of Canadian programs is apt to be much more expensive than that of imported programs which are bought here at a substantial discount. It is therefore reasonable to require a greater effort in the direction of Canadian programming from the more profitable stations. The commission will thus deal with each broadcaster independently in setting the conditions of licence, having regard to all the circumstances of profitability and availability of Canadian talent resources. We all know that these vary greatly from one station to another and from one population centre to another.

The over-all percentage formula for Canadian content has failed in practice to implement what parliament clearly intended in the 1958 act when it empowered the B.B.C. to make regulations "for promoting and ensuring the greater use of Canadian talent". Since the only measure from that date to this of Canadian content has been the amount of broadcasting time, many broadcasting stations have seized the opportunity to meet the quota imposed on them by regulation by broadcasting Canadian programs that cost the least possible amount of money at times when the audience is negligible or non-existent, that is, from twelve midnight to one o'clock when they may have some individual playing an organ in an empty studio and this has been able to qualify as a Canadian program. But obviously if we mean what we say as individual parliamentarians and as parliament, this approach clearly is insufficient and under the new legislation the commission will be required to impose licensing conditions which would ensure that the programming of both the C.B.C. and the private broadcasters shall be of high quality, using predominantly Canadian resources.

[Miss LaMarsh.]