

The Chairman: What made us Canadian? Having access to American television made us Canadians?

Mr. Boucher: I can give you an example on that. When I was a youngster, when we were teenagers, we looked to the States as the promised land and we were bound here and knew we couldn't escape. If we could have escaped to the States, we felt this was tremendous. This, I must admit, was a kind of hope, but you don't find that today.

The Chairman: May I make it clear that you are speaking for yourself, and you may speak for others, but you are not speaking for me. I accept your statement of course, that you felt that way.

Senator Prowse: I think he speaks for a great many people.

The Chairman: He may be but he is not speaking for me.

Mr. Boucher: Unfortunately, I did not conduct a poll amongst our Association members but I have spoken to many, many people across the country and this is something I had not thought about until about a year ago and this is generally accepted. Some of the press reports you have had, for instance, on the situation in Regina, where there is no access to American television there...

The Chairman: You said that is what makes us Canadians. Is the fact that many people long to go to the States what makes us Canadians?

Mr. Boucher: No, I am sorry...

The Chairman: I am not quarrelling with you.

Mr. Boucher: I think we have the freedom of choice here and this is a very important part of being Canadian.

The Chairman: You mean freedom of choice is part of being a Canadian?

Mr. Boucher: I think it is the most important part.

The Chairman: I think I understand the point.

Mr. Boucher: This is what I mean. I think I should have qualified it. We can choose in so many areas and this is why I am here, for instance.

The Chairman: We can pursue it later.

Senator McElman: Let me pursue another angle. Let us say in Edmonton that there is a capability of 20 channels and a cable company wishes to bring in 14 U.S. channels and 6 Canadian. Should that be regulated in any sense or should they have complete access?

Mr. Boucher: I spoke of the need for balance. I think this would be an imbalance, of course, and the Association has never stood for unrestricted mass importation of U.S. signals. We are on record before the CRTC as having said we are not for a complete freedom to import everything from everywhere in the sense that we can flood the entire airways or cableways of Canada with U.S. programming. This was not the intent of our industry, I dare say, beyond the major networks, and perhaps the two independent sources of programmes in the States like NET. After all there is a limit to viewing and the more signals you bring in to Canada—first of all, there is economics but secondly, you have to limit the amount of hours the individual Canadian would spend watching American programmes anyway. If a wide choice would be available, I think this would have to be re-assessed. As things are today certainly the choice is limited to what is generally distributed right across the continent.

Senator McElman: I come back to the basic question: should this be regulated at the choice of the cable owner or by a regulatory body, an agency established by government?

Mr. Boucher: Well, if all points are considered I think a regulatory body is certainly in a better position to rule on specific instances and to do it on the considerations of the area to be served. I think this is paramount rather than having broad importation with no restrictions.

I think if you were to ask me whether selections should be based on one particular area, then I would say this would be the better way of doing it; and, of course, a regulatory body would be the only ones structured that way now. They would be the ones to choose what that market could tolerate.

Mr. Fortier: Mr. Boucher, for many years, indeed until 1968, the CATV systems were considered as broadcasting-receiving undertakings only, and as such, were not subject, for example, to the BBG authority. In those days they developed following the granting of permits granted by the DOT.

Mr. Boucher: Right.