

Canadian Broadcasting Policy

responsible decides to grant a minute or two more in cases where sentences or arguments are not complete, fine. In any event, there is a committee to take care of such things. But, so long as standing orders are what they are, we intend to demand that everyone complies with them.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to the resolution, like all the other members I realize it would be pointless for me to dwell on it unduly. That is why I shall limit myself to one very brief remark for the simple reason that we do not have the bill before us. Moreover, before taking a personal stand on details—I know some members who have far more experience than any of us and who can speak of the technical aspects of the organization of the C.B.C. with much more authority—I shall make but one simple remark.

Under our present system, I feel that a situation exists which strikes me as illogical and contrary to a democratic principle that should be recognized. At election times, those candidates who can find election funds, God knows where, snow people under an avalanche of slogans and speeches, and monopolize the radio and television networks. If only they had practiced the art of oratory beforehand, it might not be so bad. But many of them go before the mike or the camera with so little preparation that I feel they do themselves more harm than good.

Well, Mr. Chairman, to my mind there are two abuses in this connection: in the first place, television time is misused; the people grow tired and are so fed up with all that political hanky-panky that most of the time, they switch off their television set whenever a speech is about to be delivered. Another thing also happens: some candidates, because of lack of funds or because they are unwilling to have their hands tied by accepting contributions from all and sundry, are deprived of the opportunity of presenting their views to the electorate.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that there is some discrimination here. And in my opinion, we should be concerned, when formulating the law that will from now on govern the C.B.C., with providing a little more justice in the allocation of time to the candidates from various parties.

It seems to me that some steps could easily be taken such as, for instance, putting a limit on the time which will be allotted. And, I think that everyone will be quite happy to see such a measure for a limitation of the time and also possibly some action

[Mr. Mongrain.]

with regard to the cost of those programs. If we really believe in the democratic system, so far as I know, a man is not a better candidate or a better M.P. because he was fortunate enough to get large contributions from big companies or rich parties. I do not think that the fact he can buy 20 times as much broadcasting time as the candidate of a splinter party or an independent candidate will make him a better member.

Mr. Chairman, I think that there is some discrimination there about which, so far, we haven't objected very often. Is it perhaps because splinter parties accept more readily that kind of martyrdom forced upon them, that is to always play the part of the poor cousins? Is it perhaps because more powerful parties cannot take the heroic decision of restricting their electoral expenses? But I will go a bit further and suggest to the members of the old parties that it might be wise of them to do so, because I think they realize themselves that the eagerness with which subscribers contributed to electoral funds a few years ago is beginning to abate. They probably also realize that they will soon run into difficulties themselves if they do not decide to pass legislation limiting all bona fide candidates to the same amount of time, so that radio and television no longer be used to overwhelm the people with electoral speeches or slogans which are not always intelligent.

● (4:30 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Thompson: Mr. Chairman, my comments on this resolution will be brief. We in the Social Credit party are pleased that the subject of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has finally come before the house. We welcome this resolution. It is a long time since we first began talking about the need to revise our broadcasting regulations and the whole field of broadcasting in Canada. Whatever the final form of the legislation may be it is encouraging to find this topic being dealt with, as it should be, here in the house.

It seems to me to be conveyed by the Fowler commission report that program content is of more consequence than administration, that any other aspect is merely housekeeping. Yet the feeling in the committee was that basically the problem today is one of housekeeping and that program content is of secondary importance. There is no