

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

I pointed out that the Fowler committee had prepared a very interesting analysis of the programming carried both by the publicly-owned stations and the privately-owned stations. This appears at page 29 of their report. Briefly the report indicates that on the English language network the C.B.C. stations spent 52.2 per cent of their television time in the provision of programs of light entertainment; 37.5 per cent of their time in the provision of what is described as information; 8.1 per cent—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I wonder whether hon. members would mind my bringing to their attention that the all too numerous conversations in the chamber at the present time make it extremely difficult to follow the hon. member's speech.

Mr. Wahn: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, 8.1 per cent of C.B.C. television time is spent in providing sports coverage; and only 2.2 per cent of its television time is spent in providing coverage which deals with the arts, letters and sciences. So that over 50 per cent of C.B.C. television time is spent on providing light entertainment.

The C.T.V. network has much the same breakdown, only slightly worse in that it is slightly more unbalanced. For example, 66.3 per cent of its television time is spent on light entertainment; 28.8 per cent on the provision of information; 4.7 per cent on the provision of sports coverage; and 0.2 per cent on the provision of coverage of the arts, letters and sciences.

The independent stations which are not allied to any particular network provide an even more unbalanced program. The figures indicate that 74.8 per cent of the time of independent television stations is spent on providing so-called light entertainment; 16.8 per cent is spent on providing information; 8.4 per cent is spent on providing coverage for sports; and no discernible amount of time is spent on the coverage of the arts, letters and sciences.

I think these figures indicate the importance of doing something about programming and underline the importance of co-ordinating programming of the C.B.C. with the programming of the private stations. They also emphasize the importance of stimulating the development of several networks across Canada so that on each network there will be a more balanced program as between light entertainment and better quality programs. If that were done, Mr. Speaker, it would mean that Canadians would have a choice at

[Mr. Wahn.]

any given time whether to watch one type of program or another.

At the present time, Mr. Speaker, you can switch on to the C.T.V. network and view a program of light entertainment. If you turn the knob and tune in the C.B.C. station you will probably get light entertainment there as well. If you were within the range of an independent station the chances are you would get light entertainment on that frequency too. There is no co-ordination among the various stations providing programs, with the result that we do not get a proper program choice.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The figures I have quoted from the report also indicate that a high proportion of the \$141 million which the taxpayers contributed in 1967 to the C.B.C. has been devoted to providing light entertainment, sports coverage and certain information services which duplicate services already being performed by the private stations. I would suggest that a large proportion of this money should be saved, and devoted to improving the quality of the programs provided by the C.B.C., to offering better balanced programming across the country and to bringing better service to the more remote regions, especially in the north, which are not properly served at the present time.

I suggested earlier in my remarks that it would be desirable for the C.B.C. to be relieved of the housekeeping operations it now carries on in consequence of the fact that it owns a large number of stations and has a big investment in physical facilities. Because of its involvement in these housekeeping activities the corporation may not have sufficient time to devote to its main responsibility—programming. At page 219, the Fowler report says:

One outcome of our inquiry is that the C.B.C. now has an outline of what was first described as an ideal television program schedule and was later entitled 'Programming in the Public Interest'. We find it odd that such an obviously practical planning instrument should have come into existence only at the suggestion of an outside advisory committee of laymen. Had there been, among the most senior staff and within the Board of Directors of the C.B.C., the primary concern with programming that we believe to be essential, this ideal program schedule would have been created long ago.

It is apparent that there is throughout the country and has been for some time a great deal of criticism with regard to the programming both of the C.B.C. and of the private stations. I recall that some years ago the C.B.C. had a tremendous amount of support