

Canadian Policy on Broadcasting

entirely disagree with everything the hon. member said. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to know that the hon. member for Yukon has as colleagues people like the hon. member for Royal (Mr. Fairweather); otherwise his party would be a pretty dismal group. Using some of the language of the hon. member for Yukon never in my wildest experience as a lawyer have I heard so extravagant and unjustified a distortion of a statute from the mouth of another lawyer as I heard this afternoon. Nothing in the bill before the house justifies one thousandth of the extravagances which the hon. member adopted in making a case for private broadcasting. There is no evidence for his contentions, other than the fulminations, frustrations and ignorance to which he gave vent this afternoon.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Mr. Knowles: That is his style.

Mr. Lewis: I wish to deal with matters relating to this bill and I wish to remind hon. members, and particularly the minister, that however good the principles of this bill may be, their implementation depends entirely on the quality of those who are appointed to the positions this bill creates.

Miss LaMarsh: Agreed.

Mr. Lewis: I am speaking of positions on the commission and positions in the corporation. The Secretary of State (Miss LaMarsh) says that she agrees. Well, so far as a minister of the crown can be, she has been in charge of matters relating to broadcasting for about two years, two years during which the state of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has been reduced to a painful low. They have been two years during which she made some of the appointments. What has been the record?

The minister says that she agrees. Before this debate ends I hope she will tell this house, not only on her own behalf but on behalf of her cabinet colleagues also, that the sort of action she has indulged in, in the past, will not occur again.

Miss LaMarsh: Such as what?

Mr. Lewis: The Vancouver *Sun* of September 5, 1967, dealing with the Board of Broadcast Governors, says this in an editorial:

The board has large powers over television and radio licences. It can make men's fortunes, or it can deny them fortunes. Under such circumstances,

[Mr. Lewis.]

it ought to be as non-political as possible. But it has not been so, under either Conservative or Liberal governments.

Its personnel has rarely been distinguished. At present it has 15 members, three of whom are full-time, the remainder part-time. All are appointed by the federal cabinet. Of 10 part-time members named since the present government took office, eight have been Liberals.

The *Globe and Mail* of August 2, 1967, says the same thing; the same thing was documented in a column in the same newspaper by George Bain. In a television interview on November 1 the minister said that herself. She had this to say, according to the transcript I hold in my hand:

Oh, we've got some really first rate people, people like Coyne in Ottawa.

When I heard that, and also when I read the transcript of the interview, I could not help feeling depressed that a minister would know only one member of a board of 15 members. She could name only one member during the interview.

Miss LaMarsh: I think my hon. friend should realize that almost all of 14 agencies have boards which report to me.

Mr. Lewis: We were not dealing with 14 agencies; we were dealing with this one board. This is the board with which the minister ought to be intimately acquainted; she ought to know what has happened in broadcasting in the last two years, and particularly in the last year. If she is suggesting that she does not now know the personnel of the board and their qualifications to sit on it, I can think of no greater condemnation of her stewardship in this area of public activity.

During this interview, according to this transcript, she said:

Oh we've got some really first rate people, people like Coyne in Ottawa. You couldn't have anybody better. This is one of the brightest men in Canada on this job. There are some that are at the other end of the pole, and there's no question of it, and I've been as guilty as other ministers I think in putting them on, because I haven't met them or known very much about them.

Can one think of a more cavalier way of dealing with one of the most important institutions in the country. Obviously, the minister did not say—and I am not exaggerating when I put this to you, Mr. Speaker—that those who were chosen were chosen as the result of conversations with party leaders or party hacks in the various regions of the country, instead of as the result of conversations with those elements in our society