

Canadian Broadcasting Act

this power which, theoretically, they wish to give it, might realize that and try some more constructive approach. But we are told all the time that the C.B.C. is curbing the freedom of the private operators, and that the C.B.C. is guilty of unfair competition. These canards have been exposed in the past, and I intend to deal with them only for a moment or so. Those who are interested in radio realize full well that the members of the Aird commission stated that there should be no private stations in this country, and that they should be owned by whatever creature of government was set up for radio purposes. That of course has not happened.

In those days there was possibly a handful of private radio stations. Today there are under C.B.C. control 134 private radio stations, each and every one of which has been recommended by the C.B.C. I submit that is not a bad record for a corporation which is curbing competition. That is not a bad record for a corporation which is limiting freedom. Indeed, far from being totalitarian, as we are told the C.B.C. is, it has been spawning those very groups some of which have become its most deadly enemies.

We are told that the C.B.C. indulges in or is guilty of unfair competition. But here there is a lack of knowledge, surely, of the purposes of radio in this country; because private radio is not competitive with the C.B.C. Private radio is not a rival of the C.B.C. Private radio is supplementary to the C.B.C., and the owners of private radio must not be allowed to forget that. Private radio stations have a most important part to play in communities in this country; the part they play is in rounding out the federal picture of radio broadcasting in Canada.

Now, in connection with this allegation on the part of some, which I say is invalid, as to competition between the C.B.C. and private radio stations, I should like to refer to the British broadcasting committee's report, paragraph 163. This is what the B.B.C. has to say about competition; and let me add that the committee as a whole did not agree with it. Nevertheless those who made a minority report did. Discussing the purposes, cultural aims, range and general sense of responsibility of the broadcasting service as a whole, the B.B.C. had this to say:

Under any system of competitive broadcasting all these things would be at the mercy of Gresham's law. For, at the present stage of the nation's general educational progress, it operates as remorselessly in broadcasting as ever it did in currency. The good, in the long run, will inescapably be driven out by the bad.

That is the position of many in the United Kingdom who agree, as I do, that the government agency should have exclusive power

[Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North).]

over radio. It is not the duty, as I see it, of the C.B.C. to fight and compete for listeners. It is the duty and the responsibility of the C.B.C. to serve the people of Canada to the best of its ability. In other words, radio broadcasting as it was envisaged by those who set it up is a service and not an industry. And, following upon that, the channels over which radio is disseminated in Canada belong to the people of Canada. Those who are supporters of private radio would imply that private stations have some prescriptive right to these channels. Such is not and must not be allowed to be the case. They have no inherent right to these channels whatsoever.

The other day the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Low) suggested that the overriding policy of the C.B.C. is to give the people what they ought to have, not what they want. He did not state that dogmatically; there were reservations in his statement. Nevertheless that was the inference I took from his remarks. But who can say that he or she knows what the people ought to have? I would say the very last agency to say that would be the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Its duty is to try to give everybody something of what they want. There are those who prefer cowboy music to chamber music; there are those who prefer educational programs to, let us say, Wayne and Shuster. Each and every community in Canada is given at least something of what it desires on the nationally owned radio.

I should like to quote from a book by Charles Siepman, who is professor of education at New York university. He has some rather interesting things to say about this procedure of giving people what they want. Discussing a speech made by Mr. Frank Stanton to the institute of radio engineers, Siepman says:

It is, indeed, the glory of a democratic society that it not merely tolerates but encourages difference, that its concern is with the full flowering of diverse individuality, not of conformity and mass-mindedness. "Giving the majority of the people what they want," which Mr. Stanton later dignifies as "cultural democracy," is that form of tyranny which, as it either excludes or scouts the interests of minorities, is (as we claimed in our discussion of free speech) the breeding ground of intolerance and the ultimate death knell of democracy.

And later he says:

Broadcasters and telecasters, however, are retailers of a great variety of goods.

This is in the United States.

Mr. Stanton's theory of retailing makes as much sense as if a large department store were to clear its shelves of all commodities except the best-selling lines. This, presumably, would be economic democracy.

Now the question arises: What service should the C.B.C. give? The leader of the