

Broadcasting

Another case I have in mind is that of a radio station at Harmon Field where the equipment is owned by the United States authorities and where the station is managed by the C.B.C. with the help of United States personnel. When this station was first built it was to provide television coverage for the United States nationals at Harmon Field and those who happened to be on the outskirts of that air force base. Since the time when the station was built electricity has been provided to a much larger area than that to which it is provided at that time. It is possible now for people to receive television broadcasts if the power of the station were sufficiently strong to provide them. I believe it is possible for the Canadian government to come to some agreement with the United States government whereby the power of this station can be increased.

These are some examples of the type of problems to which I would think the committee, some time during its deliberations, would give some attention, so that they will be talking not only about the programs that are received in the larger centres across Canada but will also be inquiring into the efficiency of C.B.C. operations in some of the fringe areas. I know that many persons believe that the committee will have much to say about the type of program that is received. They will be talking about commercials and all that sort of thing. These, of course, are legitimate items to be discussed in the committee. However, I would hope that they would broaden their activities and make some inquiries as to those areas in which television and radio reception is not being provided and not being distributed fairly so that if this is a national service, all parts of this country, where possible, will be able to receive the benefits of that national service.

Mr. Speaker: I must inform the house that if the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

Hon. George C. Nowlan (Minister of National Revenue): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity of speaking on this occasion. I do not propose to deal with all the matters which have been raised in the two-day debate we have had. It has been a good debate, I would think. Most of the arguments which have been brought forward have been of a constructive nature, and I appreciate the attitude shown by practically all the members who have taken part in this debate. At the moment I am going to deal only with one or two matters which were raised by the hon. member who spoke first in the

debate, namely the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate (Mr. Pickersgill), who spoke immediately after I had made the motion.

The hon. member was critical of the contents of the motion. He suggested that it was vague and in fact he thought it possible that something had been left out. Actually, Mr. Speaker, nothing was left out. The resolution was that of the law officers of the House of Commons. I checked with them again afterward as whether this was their drafting and the fact is that it was not only their drafting but nothing had been left out. It was drafted in that way for one good reason.

I wanted the committee to have full scope in dealing with any phase of broadcasting with which the committee wished to deal. Last year we were criticized because the committee was set up at too late a date to conduct, as the committee finally decided, any sittings whatsoever. Two years ago the committee was set up fairly early in the session but even then it was under pressure. I wanted the committee this time to be set up as early in the session as possible and I wanted it to have full scope to deal with any point or any matter with which it wished to deal.

It is not for the minister or for the government to instruct the committee as to what matters should come before it. The C.B.C. is not a creature of the government. It is a creation of parliament. It is under the control of parliament. I wanted the parliamentary committee to have absolute control with regard to any aspect of any investigation which it wished to make. Therefore the wording of the motion is such that this control will be permitted.

The hon. member also referred to a statement which he attributed to me—I have not checked the record but I assume he is probably right—to the effect that an opportunity should be given—I may say this was two years ago—at a subsequent session to review the act under which the board of broadcast governors and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation were operating. I hope the committee will decide to make such a review. I should like very much to see them do that. I would hope that in the very early part of their deliberations they would go over the act with the officials and would get the opinion of the officials as to how it is working.

The hon. member—and I will say this before I close this debate this afternoon—said that he also wanted to see an investigation as to the basis on which television licences are granted by the board of broadcast governors. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that there is no matter which in the opinion of the members of the board is more important than