

*CBC Programming*

... that is, exchanges of documents between a minister and a Crown corporation whose minister is answerable to the House, or exchange of papers between ministers on the implementation of various government programs.

Clearly, if the CBC were to be required to produce correspondence received or exchanged with the minister or the public, on any of its programs that might lead to comments or protests from Canadians, it would require a much larger budget, because such requests would be so numerous every time there is objections among viewers, that the situation would be far beyond control.

Surely, if the CBC's way of discharging its responsibility to prepare programs is to be questioned, I believe today's debate is not the best forum.

During hearings of the standing committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts, when the CBC's representatives appeared, I believe it was three weeks ago—the chairman himself appeared—members had an opportunity to question the latter on program contents. During these hearings they were able to voice their views.

I do not believe that adding correspondence will allow us to truly determine criteria as to the way in which the CBC fulfills its responsibility to prepare adequate programming. Evidently the corporation, when dealing with the whole Canadian public, must meet certain requirements for general adequacy. It is clearly not within the term of reference of the CBC to spearhead the evolution of mores within the Canadian society, and it is not within its term of reference to slow it down either.

● (1730)

I feel that the CBC's first responsibility is to reflect the Canadian society as it is now, although one may of course wonder when one considers the statistics which the hon. member quoted a while ago and which I quoted myself bearing witness to the fact that Canadians are extremely sensitive to this program, notwithstanding the qualified reaction they have had.

When the CBC however must define its responsibility as to programming, it must do so while taking into account the state of the evolution of mores within the Canadian society.

It is very easy to criticize the CBC, for it is the corporation which lays itself more open to criticism. Why? Because it is almost free from government control. There are two elements which I should like to mention and which emphasize my point.

About two years ago, a program was broadcast at 8 o'clock, therefore at prime time for families during which some scenes dealt with homosexuality. A month or a week later, the programs were suspended and the series was discontinued for the remainder of the season.

I think that no motion was then introduced in the House asking the minister responsible for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to file the correspondence exchanged about the program. Under the circumstances the CBC was probably questioning the same kind of morality as in the program *Baptizing*; it did show such maturity that I think it deserves our confidence.

Other judgments could be passed about the CBC and the way the government is discharging its responsibility

[Mr. Joyal.]

towards that Crown corporation. I would like to mention to the hon. member a thesis submitted to La Sorbonne in February and for which that university has awarded a doctorate to Miss Denise Bombardier who was a Canadian student in Paris. Its specifically dealt with a study on the control of the CBC status, as a Crown corporation in relation with other European television networks. And the main conclusions of her thesis were that the CBC was one of the freest television systems in the world. Of course, if the doors are thrown wide open, schedules and broadcasts may contain programs that are shocking, likely to call for blame and particularly likely to force CBC officials to withdraw those programs from the schedule.

I think it was done in the past, and I also think they are likely to retain the confidence already expressed on several occasions by Parliament vis-à-vis the CBC. I do not mean that the CBC must be absolved of all the mistakes and errors it may have been guilty of in the past, and particularly those that will happen in the future. Because, you see, Madam Speaker, when you rely on an institution run by men, errors are always possible. There have been some, there will be others. Our responsibility is to set the main criteria delimiting the operation of the Crown corporation. It is not necessarily by trying to arouse the passions of Canadians for or against such and such a type of program that we will fulfill our mandate. Our mandate is to ensure that the Crown corporation best serves the interests of Canadian morals as they exist now because there are Canadians who are behind average morals, and others who are ahead. This is an ever changing situation that the Corporation must reflect. Of course, it makes mistakes but I do not think that our role is to brandish the stick or the machine gun every time there is that kind of outbursts. On the contrary, I believe that on the long term, the record of the CBC is still favourable. And if we can attract comments like those which I mentioned and which have been approved by a university outside Canada, I believe that the CBC still deserves our confidence. But if these criteria which I mentioned a while ago had to be applied and if the attitude of the government in this matter had to be reviewed, we should refer this to the Committee on Regulations and Other Statutory Instruments, review this list of criteria and proceed so that the bill introduced by the hon. member for Peace River can be debated and so that this bill may include elements which will prevent a Crown corporation from having a tendency or an orientation toward secrecy which stops Parliament from assuming its own responsibility, which is to control its operations.

Of course, Madam Speaker, when we talk about cultural issues, taste and morality, the interpretation is exceedingly flexible. We can give to the same painting, the same literary hour, a series of definitions and values which can be as valid for various people who are considering them. I am thinking, for instance, about the difficulties that the Canadian courts had in applying the criminal laws concerning morality. What is obscene and what is not? What, by its nature, can shock public morality and what is acceptable? All these limits are extremely flexible. They change with the events and I am certain that the morality of today's society in 1975 is not the same as the one to which I was referring when I mentioned this program of