

Radio and Television

Does he mean to say that people in the C.B.C.'s employ, like Father Ambroise Lafortune, Father Emile Legault, Father Desmarais and Mr. Rene Levesque, are communists?

Mr. Pigeon: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Dollard is distorting my remarks. Actually I said that Mr. Jean-Louis Gagnon was the symbol of "leftism".

Mr. Dupuis: Adrien Arcand is a fascist but nobody speaks about it.

Mr. Rouleau: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the "whited sepulchres" mentioned by the hon. member are not where he chooses to look for them, because the ones he attacked in this house are probably users of natural gas, but there is no need of a royal commission to investigate their doings.

Mr. Deschatelets: Mr. Speaker, I believe that, in moving his amendment the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Pearson) quite aptly raised a question of national interest which has become a subject of national controversy because of the government's failure to implement the following, taken from the speech from the throne:

There will be placed before you a proposal to establish a new agency to regulate broadcasting in Canada—

Well, the resignation of Mr. Dunton as president of the C.B.C. has given rise in public opinion to some rumours to the effect that this resignation will be followed by others in the C.B.C. The present confusion was heightened by the numerous speeches made by well-known members of this government, and I refer particularly to the Ministers of Justice and of Finance (Messrs. Fulton and Fleming) who, on several occasions, when they were in the opposition and dealt with this subject, always professed to be in favour of granting greater privileges to private radio and television broadcasting for the purpose of allowing them to set up a network to compete with the C.B.C. on a national scale. It is now well known that the present cabinet is not of one mind as to what should be done about radio and television broadcasting in Canada, i.e. as regards policy, future control, structure and financing.

If this debate were to serve no other purpose than forcing the government to make known at last its policy on this problem, one so important to all Canadians, I am sure that in return Canadians would be grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for having raised the matter.

[Mr. Rouleau.]

Mr. Speaker, no medium of communication is more important than radio and television broadcasting, in preserving for this country and the various groups that make up this nation their national and cultural heritage. In this regard, the hon. member for Laurier (Mr. Chevrier) in the fine speech he made yesterday, splendidly outlined the great work accomplished by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. I feel that we should be proud of the progress achieved in the last few years. Proximity to the United States presented some dangers in this regard. We managed to avoid those dangers and, in spite of American competition, we preserved the typically Canadian character of our culture and of our art.

On several occasions, we have been proud to hear foreigners pay high tribute to the quality of our programs, as well as to the quality of our performers. To a certain extent, this is the work of the previous government, and of this we are very proud. However, we are anxiously wondering today what the policy of this government will be with regard to future development of our radio and television broadcasting system. Our own approach to this matter has always been the same, it is well defined, very clear and was reiterated yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition. We feel that the national interest must prevail and take precedence over any private interest whatever. We recognize the important part that the private radio and television stations are called upon to play in this regard in Canada, but they must do so under the authority and the supervision of a regulatory body.

The Fowler report has been in the hands of the government for more than a year. We have been told nothing of the government's attitude in this regard. The time has now come for it to clear up matters in this connection.

Now Mr. Speaker I have a few suggestions to offer with regard to Canadian radio and television so that they may be better fitted to render maximum service to all classes of our people. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians, night workers, shut-ins, the sick or disabled, either at home or in hospitals, are deprived of the enjoyment of television. I wonder if it would not be possible to put on more afternoon films, so that these thousands of our fellow-citizens might have an opportunity to enjoy this entertainment which is unavailable to them in the evening.