

Canadian Broadcasting Policy

fact is that we who are trying to devise legislation for broadcasting and those others who are trying to devise policies for broadcasting enterprises, whether they be public or private, are somewhat similar to the sorcerer's apprentice in that we are dealing with forces which we do not really understand.

I was interested in a comment made by one hon. member who spoke earlier today about the effects of television. There is a general assumption on the part of too many of us that we understand the effects of television and that we have a fairly good comprehension of its impact on the Canadian society or, for that matter, on world society. In my view we know virtually nothing about it.

Certainly it is obvious today, and this is a generalization that scarcely needs amplification, that the world is in a troubled state. Within our own country we can see the development of tensions not only between French and English speaking citizens but between various groups within our society, tensions of a size and import that we would not have thought possible in the decade to which I have referred. I suggest that despite the massive communications network, both public and private, that we have developed across this country, and the accumulation of individual stations, broadcasting today has actually done very little to solve the basic and really fundamental problems of our time despite what we have said to the contrary and the platitudes that we utter in this connection. In point of fact, if one wished to make the proposition that broadcasting far from helping up till now has actually contributed to tensions and has generated far reaching controversies, it would be possible to defend it. I suspect it is also contributing in a large measure to the abnormal amount of public unrest which we are witnessing on all sides today. Let me hasten to add—

● (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Prittie: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Jamieson: By all means.

Mr. Prittie: What the hon. member has just said about broadcasting perhaps continuing the tensions and problems would apply, would it not, to the press or any other reporting media?

Mr. Jamieson: Of course; I was about to add that there is no question about an accumulation of media being involved. This is the point I was about to make. There is no

doubt in my mind that radio and television broadcasting have added a very specific new dimension to the media. Quite definitely, there is a difference even between radio broadcasting and television broadcasting.

I am reminded here of an incident in which perhaps hon. members may be interested. They may have had the same experience themselves and I think it serves to emphasize my conviction of the need for more far reaching research. During the debate on the Middle East crisis in the month of June of this year it so happened that during the two hour period of that debate I was listening to the radio in my automobile. Then I transferred from my automobile to my home where my wife was watching the same debate on television. The same characters, the same personalities were involved in this over-all coverage. However, the instant I saw on television the characters involved in the debate my impressions and attitude were quite specifically different from those I had at least started to formulate as I listened to radio. That is only a small point. However, the point I am making is that possibly until such time as we have a great deal more research completed than we have at the present time, and I am not speaking of nose counting which is a kind of cynical disregard of many aspects of broadcasting but perhaps a necessary tool, until we have some totally responsible, non-governmental research we are really only coming to conclusions based on quite ordinary reactions rather than on what the public requires. I say this as an experienced broadcaster, and such research may be university centred or it may be some approach to broadcasting for a specific purpose.

I suggest that this is a very serious matter. I suggest that many of our attitudes, for example, with regard to the treatment of the racial problem in the United States, with regard to foreign affairs involving Viet Nam and other countries, are being shaped against the United States. We are being influenced by television which, I repeat, we do not really understand and therefore we are not able to assess in proper proportion.

Lest anybody should say for a moment that I am proposing that broadcasting ought to be a bland kind of milk toast diet, that we ought not to disturb people, let me say I totally agree with the hon. member for Prince who said that we have to disturb and stir up people. I am all for that. In addition, I am for a maximum amount of experimentation in broadcasting. I think it is nonsensical for us to have the kind of bureaucratic organization