

Oral Questions

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman has referred to statements made which would indicate that there is a feeling I think among many federalists from the province of Quebec that Radio-Canada is not discharging its mandate above all to work for the unity of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Right.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): This is surely one of its fundamental purposes. I would recognize the difficulties posed by the hon. gentleman in the sense that we have a national broadcasting corporation which is given a certain mandate by parliament and if there is a feeling on the part of the government that the mandate is not being discharged, as to whether action should be taken.

Mr. Horner: Take away its licence.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): The hon. gentleman opposite suggests we take away its licence. At this point I would not make a further comment.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I think this is a matter which should be widely discussed, not only by members on this side but by members opposite, to find some effective means of carrying out parliament's mandate with regard to preserving the country and to find out if indeed that mandate has been discharged by the CBC.

Mr. Horner: Send it to the broadcasting committee.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is a public body financed by the taxpayers of Canada, reporting to parliament through the Secretary of State, and that the government appoints the board of governors and appoints the management, surely any dissatisfaction with the manner in which the CBC conducts its affairs is the responsibility of the government.

Some hon. Members: Parliament.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): I am therefore asking the government if it is prepared to document its criticisms of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and, if those are well founded, to take the appropriate action it thinks ought to be taken rather than go on a competing television network and criticize its own broadcasting corporation.

An hon. Member: They have not got the guts to do anything about it.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman in the past has often laid heavy stress on the fact that the CBC is not in any sense under the exclusive jurisdiction of the government of Canada and that other members of parliament and other parties have some deep concern about how it is operated. It seems to me that one of the more effective ways of

engaging in a further examination of this question would be to do so within one of the committees of this House.

An hon. Member: Okay.

An hon. Member: Fair enough.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I suspect that my colleagues the Secretary of State and the President of the Privy Council would be quite prepared to have a further occasion upon which not only members of this side of the House but others can pass judgment on whether or not the corporation has carried out its mandate. Of course, it is the ultimate responsibility of the government to take a decision in this regard. On a matter concerning the broadcasting corporation, I think it has to be the concern in all corners of the House.

SUGGESTED REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE OF ALLEGATION
CORPORATION UNFAIR IN REPORTING DEBATE BETWEEN
SEPARATISTS AND FEDERALISTS

Mr. T. C. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): A final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. If the government does not have the intestinal fortitude to deal with this matter itself, is it prepared to refer the matter to a standing committee of the House of Commons so that it may be fully investigated and that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation may have an opportunity to defend itself and that the Canadian people may know whether the government tends to equate itself with unity and is criticizing the CBC more for the fact that it is not willing to be the slave of the Liberal party rather than that it is not supporting federalism?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Donald S. Macdonald (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that is just exactly what I said. We would be quite prepared to have a committee decision.

An hon. Member: Then do it.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I hope the hon. gentlemen will have the courage as well, if they find that indeed Radio Canada has not been maintaining the unity of Canada, to criticize the corporation.

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): I will.

Mr. Lalonde: You never watch it; you do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Is jumping on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to be a substitute or an excuse for a government that seems unable to reconcile the strains of confederation? That is the point.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I wonder whether the hon. gentleman might not want to participate in the discussions in the committee on this particular question and perhaps seek to make up his—