

### Broadcasting

As members of parliament, we receive on our desks copies of all applications that are made across Canada. Some time later we receive copies of the decisions, or notice that a decision has been delayed. The number of applications in the whole country is such that one wonders when the commission, no matter how much it might be increased in size, finds time to do anything except handle them. As earlier speakers have said, even the ones being presented are not always immediately handled. There can be many delays amounting to years.

If you were to ask the average Canadian the work of the CRTC, he would probably reply that it has something to do with licensing. He would probably say it is the body which denied a licence to expand or a licence for another channel for the cablevision company involved. I recall the Broadcasting Act debate in 1968 which led to the change in the act. Arguments were presented in this House against any move to have the federal broadcasting authority in the cablevision field which had grown up without restriction. I sometimes wonder whether the one, lonely individual who seemed to be fighting most of the battle did not have more of a point than was conceded at that time.

● (1630)

I should like to quote one or two lines submitted to us by the Canadian Television Association; part of the discussion paper sent to the minister. This appears on page 5, in item 19:

Unnecessary restraints on cable companies have created a gap between public expectation and the delivery of cablevision services.

I know for a fact that this is true. People in isolated areas, for example, Elkford and Sparwood, cannot understand why the new technology cannot be used to deliver a clear signal to them by cable. The expectation is there. The little community of Yahk suddenly found that the cost of wiring a cable connection had increased beyond all expectation and was obliged to withdraw the proposal that cable coverage be extended. Yahk is the kind of isolated community where older houses have been purchased by retired persons. Winters are long, and television is expected to provide entertainment during the years of retirement. Disappointment is great. The gap mentioned in the brief is a very real one. It is difficult to explain to such people why there should be such long delays or why their applications are denied.

I suspect that in the back of the minister's mind—I have little doubt this applies also to the CRTC—there is a feeling that somehow this method of transmission will take something away from the off-air broadcasters and in some fashion limit the development of Canadian nationalism through the CBC; that it will prevent the development of what is described as truly Canadian television.

I contend, and I have said this before, that the load of maintaining Canadian nationalism has been placed on those communities which are removed from the United States border and from the major metropolitan centres. For some reason, these people find themselves regarded by the powers that be as responsible for the maintenance of Canadian nationalism; the load is placed on their shoulders in order to salve the consciences of all of us who live in centres where any number of channels, from 5 to 13, can easily be received. Somehow, we all feel better for know-

[Mr. Johnston.]

ing that certain smaller communities are receiving only one flaky CBC channel, thus ensuring that all is well with Canadian nationalism.

**Mr. Paproski:** A flaky CBC program; that is a hockey game that's a week old!

**Mr. Johnston:** Applications for better service are set aside though there often does not appear to be any good reason for doing so, apart, of course, from this vague fear that Canadian nationalism would in some way not be served if action were taken. Thus, a decision is not made, action is delayed for another year, possibly in the hope that in the interim a study will be undertaken which will show that in some way we are better, as a nation, for refusing these applications. However, I doubt whether that will ever be demonstrated to anyone's satisfaction. If Canadian nationalism burns brightly at all, it is in some of the smaller communities, and if it is to be dampened down it is probably dampened down because the people who live in them do not see any connection between their patriotism, their pride in their country, and the fact they are denied the quality of coverage they desire.

There is one other aspect of this subject I should like to mention in closing, and that is the whole question of violence on television programs. I have the feeling that if the CRTC has not been spending a great deal of time on this area in the past, it will be spending even less time on it after taking on increased responsibilities. If the government of this province has found it necessary to appoint a commission, naming as chairman a former member of this House, to look into the entire question of violence and terrorism on TV, it is a sad commentary on the way in which the CRTC has regulated broadcasting in this land.

**An hon. Member:** An electioneering gimmick.

**Mr. Johnston:** There are members across the way who are calling this an electioneering gimmick. I suggest they should read the material which is available in the library of parliament. A few weeks ago a list of new material acquired was published by the library. Included in that list was a book I had requested, one which deals with this very question. I think it is called "Where do you Draw the Line?"

It is difficult to ascertain just what can be done to control pornography, for example. The book deals specifically with violence on television. I suggest to hon. members opposite that they should borrow the book and read the comments it makes. If they doubt that it is a matter of great concern, let them go back to their constituents and listen to the people who are talking about the need to reintroduce capital punishment. I am not one of those advocating the reinstatement of capital punishment, but we have to admit there is some connection between the wave of violence sweeping this continent and the fact that night after night we have permitted our television services to carry a compendium of crime.

I am sure that some time in the future, historians will look back on us and wonder how we could have been so simple as to allow the nightly portrayal of violence and criminality to all who care to watch, including the young people of this country. When a province like Ontario reacts, I would say it is high time we began to pay