

Montreal, den 20. Mai 1938.

Radio Commentary

(Saint John Times-Globe.)

It is a good thing this matter of broadcast commentary on the news has been aired in the House of Commons. The views expressed by attackers and defenders are not to be taken at their face value—"Communist twaddle" and "muzzling" the C.B.C. for example—they are tinged with party tactics. Nevertheless it is high time to soothe the sore spot that has certainly irritated many listeners and perhaps one of the best ways of doing so would be to label the commentary.

It is not to be supposed that the management of the C.B.C. intended that the two so-called news commentators speaking regularly in Canada over the national network should be birds of a feather in their ill-concealed political opinions. It so happened, however, neither presents a balanced or all-round picture of current events, because evidently both feel too strongly for and against certain policies for them to do justice to others. Nor is it to impugn their sincerity to call them partisans; nonetheless it would be well, if and when they speak, to let listeners know clearly the opinions they hold. When two regular news commentators, paid by a national commission, both disseminate views hostile to the government of the United Kingdom and incidentally to some of the cherished institutions of the Old Country, opinions that are certainly not representative of Dominion views, it is time to call for a show-down. Apart from any influence they may have on the plastic and less well-informed portion of their home audience, the situation is liable to be misinterpreted by British and foreign nations as an exhibition of official Canadian hostility to the British Government. No impression could be more erroneous than that.

Every news commentator is bound to excite criticism. No matter how impartial his mind or how judicial his methods, he must, in explaining events, give or suggest an opinion or opinions; and these are liable to be weighted by his personal opinions. His audience ranges from the extreme Right to the extreme Left. Even if he allows there is something to be said for both sides, he is likely to displease both sides. Extremists, however, may be ignored in this. The bulk of the audience asks no more than that there shall be no persistent or intentional bias. If the average open-minded listener feels he is regularly hearing a loaded opinion and still more if he suspects that this is being insinuated subtly by suggestions more penetrating than assertion, he will rise in arms. The democratic citizen wants political fare plainly labelled as to where it is manufactured, as he gets it in his newspaper or at political meetings. If it comes from a Socialist factory and it is so marked, he is content because he knows just what he is getting. But he does want a mark on the can, and that is what he feels he has not been getting in this case.

Z. de A.

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