

The NDP. Well, we know it is just a tag-along party anyway and we would like to look at them as the great pretenders. That is what we do with them. We do not know what its positions are on national unity. It depends upon whether they are speaking in Quebec or outside Quebec. It depends upon whether they are speaking English or whether they are speaking French. It is very confusing.

I would speak a little bit about the national unity issue and whether or not it should be in the Broadcasting Act. I sat back here and asked: "What's wrong with a little bit of propaganda about national unity? What's wrong with an agency promoting national unity?"

• (2110)

We all know that the right hon. Prime Minister does not really want to come out and defend Canada in certain provinces. We know that he does not want to promote national unity in some cases. Is he now putting out that philosophy to his members and asking them to make sure that the institutions do not promote national unity either? Is this why they are taking the national unity clause out of the mandate of the CBC? I wonder about that.

The other question I want to address in closing is the government's strategy with regard to CBC. Whenever things get tough, it has a policy of saying that the CBC and the government are at arm's length and that it cannot do anything about it.

We have heard rumours tonight that there could be cuts of over \$200 million to CBC. We have heard rumours that this would lead to cutbacks in the regional stations throughout Canada. In fact, the number 10 was used, four of them in Atlantic Canada.

I note with a little bit of sadness the strategy that the members from the government side seem to want to expound during difficult times and that is that it is not the government that is cutting programming at CBC. No, it is not the government. The CBC is making those decisions. Well, let us make it very clear. The government provides the funding for the CBC. The government is saying: "Your funds are being cut." The CBC then has to make a commitment with what it has have left to work with. That is what the situation is.

Government Orders

I will end on that note. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for being so attentive. I hope in all wisdom that all hon. members in the House will vote against this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Restigouche—Chaleur on his appointment as assistant critic for his party.

[*English*]

I very briefly want to correct the record, Mr. Speaker. I know the hon. member did not intend it this way, but the record needs to be corrected. The Prime Minister does want to promote Canadianism and national unity and his very actions speak to that. It was Caplan and Sauvageau who made the recommendation that the change take place. They were supported by a former CBC president, Al Johnson, and by the standing committee, including the hon. member for Mount Royal.

On this question of these putative cuts, I think the record needs to be corrected as well, in that sense. The impression sought to be portrayed here tonight—and it is an unfortunate situation—is that the government has somehow intended, or will cut, the CBC's budget by figures of up to \$200 million. That is absolute nonsense.

Whatever announcement the CBC makes tomorrow or tonight—whenever the CBC management chooses to make it—does not involve any government cuts in government funding. The only cut in government funding to CBC that is contemplated to take place is the \$1.7 million in funding for the Persian Gulf activity of our armed forces. That was announced last week. I might say that CBC was less affected by that proportionately than many other government agencies and departments.

Those are my comments. I just wanted to conclude by again congratulating the hon. member on his appointment as associate critic for his party for communications.

Mr. Arseneault: I have a few short comments, Mr. Speaker. I must thank the parliamentary secretary for his kind words, but there are two things that I want to reiterate. I suppose we could debate all night and I would not mind actually.