

Oral Questions

what the Hon. Member is suggesting is correct. On the one hand, I am surprised the Hon. Member is promoting the programming of PBS, an American channel, which is well recognized and received by many areas of the country. On the other hand, I would have hoped that the Hon. Member would be promoting Canadian content, Canadian programming, and the facilities of Canadian television stations.

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NATIONAL FILM BOARD**EFFECT OF NEW POLICY ANNOUNCEMENT**

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Prime Minister, in the absence of the Minister of Communications. The Prime Minister knows that I have been here quite a long time, and I very seldom complain. But I want to say to the Prime Minister that when the Minister of Communications makes an important statement on film policy and changes in film policy, outside the House when Parliament is meeting, and he is not here to answer questions, there is something wrong.

The Minister of Communications has announced changes in policies which will mean the virtual destruction of the National Film Board as we have known it. The Film Board over 45 years has built an international reputation in explaining to Canadians and to the rest of the world what Canada is all about and what Canada has to offer. The Minister is proposing in his new policy to gut the Film Board. He wants the Film Board to contract out film-making work, to contract out all federal department sponsored production, and to contract out technical services. These were the recommendations of the Appelbaum-Hébert Committee. Representatives of the industry, artists and educators appeared before the standing committee. They advised against this policy. The standing committee advised against it. Why has the Minister rejected the views of the standing committee, listened to the private sector, and is proceeding with a plan to gut the National Film Board?

Mr. Jack Burghardt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): First, may I say it is quite correct that the Minister of Communications today has unveiled a national film and video policy which will not only enhance the entire Canadian film industry but will also enhance the operations of the National Film Board. The Hon. Member knows full well, as a very dedicated member of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture, that the recommendations made in this national film policy are the basis really of all the recommendations which the standing committee made in reply to the Appelbaum-Hébert report.

I do not know why the Hon. Member is saying that we are destroying the National Film Board. Quite the contrary, Mr. Speaker. The National Film Board will see no lay-offs; funds will be reallocated within the Film Board itself to enhance further not only the work it is doing but also to provide

training and research for new film producers, writers, and actors.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

CHANGE IN PRODUCTION POLICY

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, if the Film Board is not to get more money, and that is what the Parliamentary Secretary says, if the money is to be reallocated toward training and research, obviously there will be less money for actual production.

The Minister said that a stronger Canadian presence on our cinema and television screens is what he wants, yet he ignores the strength of the Film Board's track record and he will depend upon the private sector. We know that the private sector, if it is going to produce to make money, and that is why it is in business, will have to angle its productions toward the American market. That means there will be fewer Canadian oriented and more American oriented productions. How can you do that and maintain the strength of the National Film Board?

Mr. Jack Burghardt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, one of the major aspects of the National Film Board, the current Board, is Studio D, which is mainly responsible for the productions of programs involving women's issues. Studio D has a tremendous track record. As a matter of fact, it has won a number of Academy Awards. Studio D in the past has hired independent producers and writers to promote and facilitate the various issues and ideas it wanted to produce across Canada. There is nothing new in this area. We just want to expend this operation further to give the private sector, the independent producer, the film maker, the writer and the actor more access to funds and to the availability of the film expertise of the National Film Board.

PROPOSAL TO CREATE CROWN CORPORATION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the Minister has said he would like the National Film Board transformed into a Crown corporation. This is in line with the Bill C-24 proposal to make the Canada Council a Crown corporation. This will undoubtedly increase the bureaucratization of the Film Board and, increase its sensitivity to political influence. How will this help the National Film Board to produce better films or better fulfil its cultural objectives?

Mr. Jack Burghardt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): It will make it more accountable, Mr. Speaker.