

● (1640)

Whether or not Ministers find this particular solution attractive, it is my hope that they will consider very carefully the effect of the cuts in the cultural industries because allied to the proposed political control of the CRTC we are being presented with is a situation that has never existed in Canada before. The Government may have good reasons to justify such a very radical change but we have not yet heard them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): If there are no questions or comments, we will resume debate.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to make a few remarks on Bill C-20, an Act to amend the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission Act, the Broadcasting Act and Radio Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): I am sorry but I must interrupt the hon. gentleman because I have a matter of business to dispose of before five o'clock.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 45 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: The Hon. Member for Broadview-Greenwood (Ms. McDonald)—Cultural affairs—Budgetary cut-backs. (b) Level of government funding; The Hon. Member for Westmorland-Kent (Mr. Robichaud)—Tourism—Elimination of funding under Industrial and Regional Development Program. (b). Consultation with industry; The Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre)—Post-Secondary Education—Youth—Budgetary cuts. (b) St. Valentine's Day conference—request that student representatives be permitted to attend.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION ACT

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Masse that Bill C-20, an Act to amend the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission Act, the

CRTC Act

Broadcasting Act and the Radio Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, we are in general support of this Bill but I do have a few comments on some of its provisions.

Part I gives the Minister the right to issue directives with regard to broad policy issues relating to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. We support this. This part has a caveat which excludes anything to do with specific issuing or renewal of licences. We believe that is a very important exception. We think it is important that the Government should have the right to make these broad policy directives. It is also important that these directives are laid before the House of Commons and referred to a committee so they can be scrutinized in committee. This the Bill does. I think this is an important step and I want to recognize that.

There is one area in particular where our Party is concerned that the Government should be issuing a directive and that is in relation to the application by CNCP telecommunications to compete for long-distance services. This is not simply a specific, but a broad policy matter which I believe requires the attention of the Government. We want the Government to act on this because it affects the very important system of telephone use that we have built up in Canada where we have an extremely high number of Canadians who have access to telephones. For many Canadians the telephone is their lifeline. This is true for those who live in rural areas, for those who are handicapped in one way or another, and it is especially true for senior citizens.

We know that long-distance rates have been used to subsidize the operation of local phone services so they are available at reasonable rates. If we allow deregulation of long-distance rates, this will result in higher local rates and will mean that local phone service will in many cases be placed beyond the reach of many subscribers. This is an important area where the Government should be issuing a policy directive, and I hope we will be hearing from the Government very shortly. At the same time we are concerned about Clause 14.6 of the Bill which gives the Minister the power to exclude telephone and telegraph systems from regulations if, in the opinion of the Minister or the Commission, these services are already sufficiently competitive. We do not see this extension of the Minister's power as warranted or that it will serve the public interest.

We are in general agreement with the clause in Part II that attempts to regulate the use of satellite receivers. We see this as an important technological issue. The Government has been scrambling to catch up and to do some justice to individuals who have set up satellite receivers and at the same time not to open up the system so that the whole question of regulation of broadcasting would go by the board. Again, we would issue a plea to the Government to give every consideration to small and isolated communities which depend upon these satellite receivers for any kind of decent TV reception.