

rights which France has under the treaty of Utrecht and renegotiate them in the light of present day circumstances.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

NATIONAL FILM BOARD—INQUIRY AS TO CLOSING OF BRANDON OFFICE

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I raised the question of the direction that is being taken by the National Film Board, particularly in respect of its distribution services in the rural parts of Canada. This is a subject that has been under discussion from time to time during the current session of Parliament. In fact, it was a subject of some controversy earlier in the year when the decision was made to discontinue the free distribution of the excellent films of the National Film Board. As a result of protests from schools which depend heavily upon this source of information on Canada, from public libraries and from the local film councils scattered across the country, the decision was reversed. The Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) indicated at the time that the service would be restored to the level at which it had been from the earliest days of the National Film Board.

My reason for raising the question again is that the distribution centre for western Manitoba located in the city of Brandon is closing at the end of the month, and I would assume that this is just one of several distribution centres which serve the rural parts of the country where, I suppose, it is reasonable to say that the heaviest use is made of this service. It would seem to be a decision on the part of the minister and the government to do by indirection what they are not able to do by direction with respect to the earlier decision to which I have already referred.

• (10:10 p.m.)

It is an important issue because the National Film Board was the first information service developed specifically to fill the informational gaps so far as Canadian content, which is a popular phrase today, was concerned. It was designed to present information on Canada in depth through the film medium. It was educational as well as cultural. Anyone who has been connected with the work carried out by the local film councils will agree that it has performed a very useful function. I suppose one of the main reasons for inaugurating the work of the National Film Board was to offset the impact of Hollywood and the hucksterism which had predominated in Canadian film activities up until that point.

I am pleased to see that the Secretary of State is with us tonight. Specifically I want him to indicate whether this is a discontinuance of the service to western Manitoba, rural Manitoba which, as I have indicated, is the greatest user of the service, or is it intended to try to carry out this type of service from a centralized office in the city of Winnipeg? Further, is it regarded as a part of the government's austerity measures? If it is regarded as an austerity measure, I think it is misplaced because it will be considerably more expensive to serve the rural parts of Manitoba, or any other rural areas of Canada where offices are closed, due to the greater distances and the mileage involved. In the long-run it will be a more costly service and it will not improve the cultural, informational and educational program that has hitherto been available from the National Film Board.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that it is a reversal of the course that the minister is following in other areas of informational promotion. Cultural programs costing many millions of dollars are now being promoted by the Department of the Secretary of State. Information Canada is spending \$7 million during the current fiscal year in order to bring about a more co-ordinated and effective information service with a view to interpreting Canada to Canadians. Yet flying in the face of this new program we have a retraction of an informational service that has established itself every year in the minds of Canadians as a most useful source of information on Canada.

It is discrimination against rural Canada. This seems to be a general policy on the part of the government at the present time with the phasing out of rural post offices, another