

six years. The Government has the opportunity to make enough new appointments to the Commission as possibly to influence some future direction in telecommunications policy.

Over the years there have been a good number of studies done on broadcasting policy in this country. The subject has troubled our country largely because of the fact that we have a tradition of public broadcasting in Canada and because it is a very difficult country in which to resolve the satisfactory environment of broadcasting, given the flood of broadcasting influence which comes from south of the border and which is accessible to almost all of us because so many of us in Canada live within easy transmission reach of the United States border.

The proposals in Bill C-20 which allow the Cabinet to issue directives on any matter but then require that the said directives be scrutinized by a parliamentary committee recognize at least an effort to have something of a balance of forces. I do not think that the Cabinet or the Minister of Communications (Mr. Masse) should be intervening on a constant basis. I hope that they will not interfere with trivial matters, that where directives are given these will be directives on matters of broad policy and not directives as to whether so and so who is a friend of Findlay MacDonald or someone like that should be given a broadcasting license rather than somebody who perhaps was a friend of the former Government. Were we to see the Government using its directive power in that way, it would quickly be seen to be improper. Hopefully, it will not embark on it, or if it embarked on it, it will stop it.

One of the controls on an improper use of the directive power is the fact that these matters are to lie on the table of the House of Commons, at least in a figurative way, for 30 days. During that time, there is to be a reference to an appropriate parliamentary committee of the action of the Government in issuing a directive or notice of directive if it is trying to save a bit of time. I would assume that, given the flexibility of this House and the interests of Members, a committee would then be able to hold hearings and question the Minister or possibly the Commission over why such a directive was in fact being issued. This would perhaps inhibit the Government from using its power of directive improperly while at the same time allows the Government the right to dictate in general terms what broadcasting policy should be.

I recognize there are some difficulties with this proposal. One difficulty is that the legislation, and I think properly, says that prior to issuing a directive, the Minister or the Government should consult with the CRTC. That could lead to a situation in which the CRTC would not need to be told what to do because it would be informed by the Minister that he or she is intending to take a particular action and a particular directive would be recommended. Then, to avoid the embarrassment of having a directive made public, the CRTC would do what it was going to be told to do and it would thereby, it would hope, retain certain room to manoeuvre. If it does what it is told without being told, then perhaps it would not be told what to do the next time. I do hope that you followed that, Mr. Speaker. In other words, the consultation procedure can be

used as a means by which the CRTC would come under the constant direction of the Ministry and very seldom would those directives be a matter of public record. Therefore, very seldom would the Commons committee have input or insight into the nature of the policy directions that have taken place.

• (1540)

Perhaps I can broaden my argument for a moment, Mr. Speaker. The broader question relates to the relationship between the Government and Crown agencies and Crown corporations in general. It seems to me, as has been argued for a long time, that while there must be something of an arm's-length relationship between the two, that relationship cannot be totally arm's length. In the case of the Canada Development Investment Corporation, the body which controls Canadair and de Havilland, no one in particular was responsible for those Crown corporations before they were put under the Canada Development Investment Corporation. No one was responsible because the government appointees on the board of directors thought that the private-sector members of the board of directors were exercising due care to make sure that the shareholders' money was not being squandered by those two Crown corporations. The private-sector directors thought that since there were government directors on the board, the government directors were calling the shots since the Government was the sole shareholder. Therefore, they felt that they did not need to do their jobs. In the end, hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted by those two Crown corporations and a large part of the reason for that was that there had been no thinking through of the relationship between the Government as shareholder and the Crown corporations, which were established to do what in the opinion of the House of Commons of the day was an essential public function and at the same time were meant to operate to some extent in the private sector. To some extent, those two roles conflicted.

The CRTC is an agency which is entrusted with the carrying out of government policy rather than a commercial agency which is meant to either fulfil the public economic purpose or to make money. Nonetheless, the same kind of dilemma applies. Are full and part-time members who are appointed to the board of the CRTC to act in their own lights under what they think should be broadcasting policy, are they to act according to what they are told by the Government that appointed them two, three or five years before, or are they to listen to what the Minister of the day is saying and try to accord themselves with those particular opinions even if those opinions are not the opinions they themselves hold? It is a difficult situation.

In my opinion, no member of any independent agency would allow himself, after having been appointed, simply to listen to the wind and then blow with the wind depending on what the Government of the day seems to be thinking. I do not think he would give up his control to that extent. However, where there is a clearly mandated policy which is laid down by Parliament, then it seems to me to be appropriate for him to say, "Okay, that is the way the Government wants us to do it, that is the way we will do it". If someone in that situation fundamentally