

*Broadcasting Act*

motions endeavour to strengthen the broadcasting Bill in its recognition of the multicultural nature of our society.

Perhaps I may take a few moments, Mr. Speaker, to remind all of us that the Canadian Parliament adopted almost 17 years ago a statement of multicultural policy for the Government of Canada. It was a statement put forward at the time by the former Liberal Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, and was responded warmly to by Leaders of all three opposition Parties in the House of Commons. It was, then, with the approbation of all Parties that the Government of Canada launched this country on a broader policy than had prevailed before. The Official Languages Act had recognized the officially bilingual character but it was obviously inadequate to say the country was bicultural, so the statement of 1971 expanded on that.

As I have said before in another context, I think we would all have to concede, if we faced up to the matter, that the Government has honoured those principles more commonly in the breach of them than in the practice. I think the breach of them was never more obvious than in the area of broadcasting. It is one thing to assert that the Government of Canada should recognize no single official culture as prevalent but should endeavour to enhance all.

However, if at the same time broadcasting is given an enlarged lease on life with Canadian content being particularly important in broadcasting, whether it is in English or French, and the Department of Communications taking on larger functions—it was established as a Department with peculiar responsibilities to press these policies—I think we would have to recognize fairly quickly that the Government did very little to ensure that the 1971 policy of multiculturalism was a reality in broadcasting. Our concern now with these amendments, and in consideration of various parts of Clause 3, is to ensure that the Broadcasting Act of 1988-1989, whatever its date may prove to be, is actually more responsive to a policy which is now legislated in a Bill which has been given Royal Assent and is in fact an Act of the current Parliament.

I am not convinced that that is yet the case. There have been some improvements but it does not appear this afternoon, in the first response from the Minister to these several resolutions from her own caucus colleague, that acceptance of one of them will give us enough recognition in broadcasting, enough response in broadcasting, to the multicultural nature of the country. In looking over Clause 3 again in preparation for my speech and I noted, of course, that it suggests under subsection (c) that programming shall be responsive to the multicultural nature of Canadian society. However, the sections dealing with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, to which these amendments do not apply, I recognize, have not been changed. There is only that general responsibility laid on the entire system to be responsive that binds the CBC in any way if this Bill becomes law.

There are inadequacies and those are the ones responded to by the Hon. Member for York East, as well as by the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell), whose

motion was not found in order because it attempted to put some pressure behind all of this. But the Member for York East is permissive, in the way these Bills all too often are, in allowing Government not to follow through, to lack the will to refuse to provide the resources so that statements of principle remain only that. Those questions, then, are being left academic for the moment, actually because the Minister does not appear prepared to accept Motion No. 31 which would add a new paragraph, following on very shortly after the sections relating to the CBC, that would add that the programming should reflect the multicultural and multilingual nature of Canada.

This particular motion, even in the weaker form proposed by the Hon. Member for York East, would do a good deal to add to the obligation which is not specifically in the Bill on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and would be a useful addition. It is disappointing to have the Minister only accept Motion No. 42 in which some obligation is laid on distribution undertakings that brings us, of course, down to the community cable service. What is the community cable service going to be asked to do now? In particular, it will provide access for underserved linguistic and cultural minority communities. We know perfectly well from our experience in many communities what will happen. Certainly, I know from my experience in Thunder Bay with Maclean-Hunter Cable Television. I expect similar things have happened in Vancouver and Edmonton. I do not know whether they happen in Kingston, but I am sure they happen in Toronto. The fact is that the services are poorly financed. It is a matter of community broadcasting sometimes achieving a reasonably high level, but very often carried on on a shoestring with volunteers doing their best but not producing broadcasting that will attract many viewers.

With all the concern that others have expressed far more than I have about ghettoizing in this area, that seems to me to be a perfect example in a broadcasting Bill of ghettoizing this, leaving it to the desperate volunteers, those who will do it in any community, those who want to produce something but have so little in the way of resources, receiving only as much support as the cable service will provide. That is going to be the provision for the underserved multicultural, multilingual communities of the country, and that from a Government that says fine words about the multicultural Act is really quite shameful. I call on the Minister who recognizes the needs of the country to be responsive to Motion No. 31 as well as to Motion No. 42.

**Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development):** Mr. Speaker, I will intervene very briefly in this debate to deal with Motion Nos. 31 and 72 in particular. I listened with care to my colleague from Edmonton East and to my colleague from Thunder Bay, and I admire the contribution they have made in the field of multiculturalism. I would, however, wish to point out that what we have here in Motion No. 31 is a motion