

*The Budget*

have transformed the broadcasting environment. We must not forget that in a world where the CBC is no longer the only national service, does it make sense to use scarce public funds to subsidize the provision of commercial television programming?

In this new world of broadcasting consisting of many more options to television viewers, public broadcasting cannot effectively maintain its all things to all people objective. It is therefore essential for survival in this multi-channel universe that the public broadcaster be willing to reinvent itself. It is quite evident that the corporation is unwilling to do just that.

When the president of the CBC states that revenues are not its mission, we must therefore as parliamentarians address this area for it. Since revenues are not the mission of the CBC, what is?

How can a private company such as CTV make revenues its mission while still adhering to Canadian content legislation? Last year, CTV spent \$488 million on Canadian content. The CBC spends \$561 million on Canadian content programming. This is not a huge difference considering we spent over \$1 billion for the operation of CBC and nothing on CTV. CTV spends close to the same amount as CBC on Canadian production. The difference is, one is government owned and one is privately owned. One is a drain on the public purse and one adds to the public coffers through taxation and profit.

• (1315)

Had the government privatized CBC television, it could have saved the taxpayers approximately \$800 million. This number does not include the revenue which would have been generated from the sale of approximately \$1.5 billion in assets which the CBC currently holds.

The government must balance its books, which means all areas of public financing must be evaluated for efficiency and cost effectiveness. It is for these reasons that the Reform Party will not support the budget.

**Mr. Julian Reed (Halton—Peel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record. I am sure the hon. member did not mean it when he said that it was the Reform Party's objective to do away with the debt in three years. I am sure he meant deficit.

Before the hon. member becomes overly defensive about fuel taxes and the impact on Alberta, he should also remember the tax expenditures that go to the oil patch and have gone there over many years. I do not have a figure for last year but I know that in 1990 the tax expenditures to the oil patch totalled about \$850 million. It is only fair to put some of these things into perspective.

There has always been an element that would like to privatize the CBC. Most people who think that way think of Canada as a long narrow strip of land that ends at about 150–200 miles north of the American border.

Historically the CBC has been one of the ties that have bound Canada together. No private investor would put a repeater station at Wawa, Ontario, for instance, or be broadcasting to the most remote parts of the country. That is what the CBC does.

The people of Canada pay for that service through their taxes so that every Canadian can feel included and a part of this country. If we were to privatize the CBC, what would inevitably happen would be those unprofitable areas of broadcasting would of necessity have to disappear if station was to show black ink at the end of the day.

I would suggest to the hon. member the CBC does perform a very valuable function. The money can be spent more wisely.

**Mr. Hanrahan:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has pressed a number of issues in my speech. With regard to the oil patch expenditures, while I agree that these have been made, they are nothing compared to the national energy program that took billions and billions of dollars out of Alberta.

I would not suggest, however, that we continue funding uneconomic programs, whether they be in oil or whatever commodity we are dealing with. With regard to the taxes on public as opposed to private, when the tax program was in place it was refunded directly by the private companies back to the consumer. In Alberta we have the majority of privately owned gas and electricity organizations. We are giving a tax free holiday to the publicly owned companies in Ontario and Quebec at the expense of Alberta and I believe Nova Scotia. This is grossly unfair to the consumer and to the average citizen in both of those provinces.

• (1320)

With regard to the comment on the CBC, let me deal with the historical aspect. I agree the CBC has played a significant role in the development of Canadian culture. We must remember that was back in the days when we had perhaps two, at most three television networks in the country.

The heritage committee right now is investigating the role of the CBC in a 500 channel universe. If we have a CBC which is costing \$1.1 billion at a time when the government is rightly trying to restrict its expenditures, can we afford, when we are cutting back on health, when we are cutting back on education, can we afford the luxury—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry, the hon. member's time has expired.