

*Government Orders*

There are other parts of this bill which concern me. There is in the bill this proposition for what is called "alternative programming" for the CBC. That has got to be the joke of the year. In my opinion, this so-called "alternative service" for the CBC is a sham. I do not see any evidence that there would be money for it. What is it supposed to do? When I read that section I got the impression that somebody somewhere, some bureaucrat, thought, gee whiz, wouldn't it sound good, throw "alternative service" for the CBC into the bill. That will sound great. That will turn people on. Well, it does not seem to make much sense to me.

I want to say a few words about what is called cabinet power of direction and review. I think the bill will jeopardize the CRTC's ability to carry out its role. The bill will grant both the power to review and to provide policy direction over the CRTC. The bill would give cabinet enough power to override the commission.

In my opinion, the bill would make cabinet both the legislator and the judge. That is pretty serious business. The government does not have to take my word for it. If it wants to consider someone who occupies a very senior position perhaps it should listen to its own appointee, Mr. Keith Spicer, who was appointed chairman of the CRTC not too long ago. I will tell you what he said about combining the power of review with the power of direction. I think it is worthwhile repeating.

Just as an aside, when I was in television I used to have a director who would give me time signals. You do not do that but I wish you would, Mr. Speaker. I have six minutes? All right. I think you would make a great television director. You should consider it as a possible future after you have finished this place. That is not to suggest you are not doing a good job.

Mr. Spicer offered these words at a committee meeting about power of review and power of direction. He said:

I do not like the tandem of the power of direction in the government's hand and the power of review. I think it is very unhealthy. It is the law, and bad law even administered by good people is still bad law.

I have had no worries about the present people whom I have been dealing with in the government, but this is a law that is going to stick around for a while and I think they ought to take a little look at it again. If I could suggest a compromise, is that in a given case that they have

one or the other, but not both; they have the power of general direction policy or review, but not both in the end. Because, otherwise they are going to make the CRTC into a way-station. We are going to be the monkey and they will be the organ grinder and people will say: "Why bother, let us go to the organ grinder."

That is what Mr. Spicer says. Those are pretty powerful words. We are going to have to look at that extremely carefully when we come to committee.

• (1310)

There is the limitation of the role of cable. I think that we must limit the role of cable television systems in providing programming that is complementary to that offered by licensed Canadian stations and networks. Cable should have a special limited role and should contribute to the system. There is a real possibility of unfair competition and conflicts of interest in the present legislation.

There is also the matter of regulation. The new legislation, in my opinion again, must provide some means to regulate cable television. The essential role of cable systems is to distribute Canadian radio and TV signals in both official languages. An important question in cable TV regulation is priority. In many parts of Canada tens of channels are now available. With more and more channels available, only a handful can now be made available on ageing equipment.

By the way, some of that equipment is 20 years old or older. Much of the television equipment presently in use is of that age. The older the equipment gets, the more it falls apart. There are a lot of people in this country who can get only from channel 2 to 13.

There is also the matter of programming in representative native languages. The new bill does not specifically refer to aboriginal languages but only to aboriginal culture. The danger to native languages is very real and it is very apparent, particularly in southern Canada. In my city, the city of Winnipeg, for example, where there is a significant native population, services are not available in native languages.

I think the act should specifically refer to the need to protect representative native languages lest they be lost forever. We must stop the erosion of native culture foremost through the protection of native languages. Language, after all, as we all know, is an important