

Government Orders

opposition party are also making this fight and I applaud them for that.

We want to see the role of the CBC to promote national unity. We want federal institutions to speak for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the hon. member for his excellent presentation.

I am glad that this review of the Broadcasting Act provides us with another opportunity to talk about national unity. To me and to millions of Canadians and Quebecers, this question is extremely important, and I think it is a matter of utmost concern. I therefore want to take every opportunity to express my faith in a country I am proud of, a country that is mine, that is ours, and a country that is admired and respected throughout the world. Tell me: Where on this planet would we be better off than right here in Canada? Unfortunately, we are destroying this country with a bill that is a disaster, that is poorly drafted and unacceptable to Canadian men and women.

It should come as no surprise when I say that when I read the papers or watch television in Quebec, I can't help wondering who defends the interests of Canada in our province. There is plenty of talk about sovereignty and independence, but hardly a whisper about federalism. I am reminded of what was said so eloquently by the leader of my party. My leader said it this way: "No one has the courage to talk about Canada in Quebec," and I think this is very sad.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, my leader said no one has the courage to talk about Canada in Quebec, and I think he is right. And that is why I object to the abrogation of the national unity clause as proposed by Bill C-40 before the House today.

The bill, in fact, does away with the mission entrusted to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1968, and I quote:

Contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity.

If we relieve the Corporation of this obligation, who will take over that responsibility? Isn't the corporation the nerve centre of our communications, as was said by our Prime Minister? What do we expect to accomplish with this wording change proposed by the government, for it does not add anything—quite the contrary, it diminishes the importance of the CBC mandate? There can be no doubt that at a time when our country has to cope with profound divisions concerning our constitution and linguistic issues, at a time when intolerance and racism are all too often so obvious, the CBC can indeed be the very link which unites Canadians from coast to coast and which can promote our identity and set off the absolutely unique nature of our nation.

Since the infrastructure is already in place, Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why we should fail to ensure that it is properly maintained and in good condition. Why would anyone want to thwart such positive measures and not promote national unity? I cannot understand that.

Can this kind of mission be considered as propaganda, as the Conservatives claim, and I quote my leader, Mr. Jean Chrétien:

The *raison d'être* of a country is to survive.

Quebecers have to be told about Canada. Never since Confederation has the survival of our country been so seriously threatened.

Even after the Meech Lake failure we must continue to cultivate the will to live together, to understand one another, and to respect, support and appreciate all our differences. We must put the emphasis on the similarities which unite us, not on the differences which divide us. By taking away from the CBC the mandate to promote national unity—and not the Union nationale, as our Minister of Communications said a number of times in the House, for he thinks we are still in the mid 1960s—are we going to prevent the broadcasting of scenes which do nothing at all for national unity? If so, I will come back on my position.

As I see it, changing the words will not change anything. Freedom of the press would always be respected, and I sincerely hope so. I have in mind the sad isolated incidents in Brockville and Sault Ste. Marie which, repeatedly shown on the screen, led us to believe that all English Canadians were intolerant, something