

Government Orders

In the meantime, we still have a chance to compete in this new world of sky channels on a level playing field. As Canada cannot ignore participating in an interdependent trading world, and we go it alone at our peril, so Canadian broadcasters cannot avoid the inevitability of having our product viewed around the world and, indeed, that is a highly desirable goal. Here again, Bill C-40, formally foresees this prospect in one of the most significant provisions. The bill gives the CRTC power to set up an incentive system to encourage broadcasters to produce more high-quality Canadian programming.

Every private broadcaster I know has his or her heart in the right place when it comes to wanting to preserve and promote a distinctive Canadian broadcasting system, but a Canadian programming strategy has to be rooted in sound economics as well as profound conviction. Any Canadian broadcaster I know would surely prefer our Canadian programming to be watched by 300 million viewers in preference to three million. Well, it can be done.

I have not got the time, in the few minutes remaining to me, to go into detail but I can see the very real prospect of a flexibly-minded CRTC allowing Canadian broadcasters to invest, say 20 per cent or 33 per cent, in European television; there would, of course, have to be some ceiling; and they may be able to invest in our system too. It could be a very positive way for the regulatory authority to use its loosely-worded incentive system to tremendous advantage, to allow a good deal of Canadian broadcasting to be profitably seen in Europe and elsewhere around the world. Because, in the short run, the only way to safeguard our distinctive Canadian programming identity is to make it good enough so that Canadians will want to watch it and others, around the world, will want to buy it, Canadian broadcasters want to produce more, first-class and relevant Canadian programming. With proper funding, they can do it better and better and better; we know that. Given the proper financial environment, we Canadians can turn out a product which can compete with anything the world can fling at us. This is our challenge and Bill C-40 is, in many ways, an important step toward reaching it.

The industry wants this bill. It knows and we know and heaven knows the hon. members opposite know that it is not perfect but it is a start. Officially, as of the vote tomorrow, Bill C-40 will be in place as a piece of

legislation from which the industry can base its activities. The Broadcasting Act sets objectives, guidelines, and the rules of the system. It is up to the players themselves, the broadcasters, distribution services, producers, consumers, and it is up to the CRTC and, above all, it is up to Parliament itself to make sure that this Broadcasting Act works in the name of a truly viable, Canadian broadcasting system. It may be that we only have two years to do it.

• (2020)

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to rise to pre-empt my question with a number of concerns I have about this broadcasting legislation, Bill C-40.

On February 22, 1990, the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation stated, after a \$600,000 cut was announced, that the \$600,000 cut will have an immediate and devastating impact on Canada's leading aboriginal television network. It went on to say that some of the best aboriginal producers and journalists in Canada will be victims of this budget.

There is no where else for them to go. I think, with the rumoured \$200 million cut for CBC—even if it is \$100 million—the impact will be equally devastating. There is a lot of competition with regard to the opportunities that exist in the CBC.

For people who have numerous years of experience, the aboriginal producers and journalists are relatively new to this game. They are few in numbers. As we all know, many of the aboriginal people who are employed in the public services and in central agencies or corporations are small in number. They are very small and are grossly under-represented.

Having said that, I want to know how it is that if the hon. member across the way believes in the level playing field, he can support a bill that essentially gives no legislative reference for CBC northern services and that gives no legislative reference or base for use of aboriginal languages.