

*Non-Canadian Publications*

That is how I describe the bill, the purpose of which was rather laudable, which many of us accepted at an earlier stage, but which had gone from one bad arrangement to another. I, for one, am distressed at this outcome; I feel that makes a mockery of the committee system. We go to some trouble to cross-examine witnesses or hear to evidence from various people who are called before the committee, and now all that evidence has gone out the window.

I think that on the second part of the bill it would have been well, and perhaps the debate would have been substantially shortened, had parliament had an opportunity to hear of any special arrangements made by the Federal Communications Department and the CRTC about the serious dilemma faced by Canada because of stations beyond our borders. We were told by various ministers—the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) for one—that discussions were being held by officials. We watched these officials parade into the Lester B. Pearson Building to try to negotiate some understanding about how Canada would treat these offshore stations, and so on. I would have thought it would have been better had we been privy to the plans, arrangements, discussions and agreements. But all that came to nought. The government decided that they would set up a special status for *Reader's Digest*; they would execute *Time Canada*; they would not wait for any international arrangement about the offshore stations; and they would proceed with Bill C-58.

I think the government has a good deal to answer for. I am interested in the phenomenon that we witnessed during the past few days of members of the government and of the opposition who have serious reservations about the policy and who have the courage of their convictions. After all, this is a place where representatives of the public have to put before ministers, the government and all of us, their convictions about what is right and what is wrong, or how particular pieces of legislation will affect particular parts of Canada. I do not have any personal quarrel with the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner)—why would I—but I do have substantial quarrel with legislation which is so centrist in its application. It is almost a text-book case of the pressures that are on this federal experiment, of which we are all part, when members from one province in particular who are going to be seriously affected have spoken out about their frustrations. But apparently if the results during report stage are to be taken as read, they are not to be listened to; yet perfectly legitimate frustrations have obviously been expressed both in the government caucus and to the ministers' ears about the killing of *Reader's Digest* and how that would affect another part of Canada.

Therefore, ministers must not be surprised if we raise questions when an arrangement is made for the convenience of members in one part of the country which results in the saving of one of the instruments of culture, if I can so elevate *Reader's Digest*, that it is to be safe and sacrosanct under a new arrangement about which we cannot know anything because we do not know the officials who have made the arrangement. Yet other parts of our culture, namely, broadcasting, have been curtailed or cut off.

I do not hold any particular personal brief for an offshore television undertaking. I think we have to under-

stand the pressures on the whole broadcasting system of Canada to understand what this present legislation tries to do. On the other hand, it is much too easy to expect hon. members to sit idly by and see fundamental changes made to the broadcasting aspect in the part of the country they represent, and have other hon. members who apparently are closer to government benches and therefore can have their pressures answered by a changed status of *Reader's Digest*.

I do not care if ministers and members opposite speak in this debate forever. They will never convince me, and I am sure they will never convince my colleagues, that a special arrangement was made that had nothing to do with what the government planned when it first introduced Bill C-58 with a flourish of trumpets. It is this aspect of the bill that has caused government backbenchers to express their frustration and has caused many members of parliament on this side to take what many might think a substantial amount of time venting their frustrations about special cases.

I was here when the new Broadcasting Act received general approval in parliament. I supported, and this party supported, the direction that that policy was enunciating for our country. What I particularly liked about CRTC was its openness. Obviously, every decision that is made will not find general acceptance in the country. How could it, dealing with something that is almost as pervasive as the weather? Everyone has an opinion on broadcasting; everybody, apparently, has an opinion on our educational system; and everybody seems to know where to complain.

● (1620)

However, having said, perhaps a bit trite and oversimplified, that the CRTC is made up of responsible public people, appointed in the way the statute decreed, who after notice evolved a system of regulations which were public regulations and which, if they were challenged, could stand up under what I like to call the rule of law, I say there is no element of the rule of law when special deals are made in upstairs offices. This is a mistake that a government which espouses the cause of liberal democracy should be ashamed of, and a mistake which this opposition party would be irresponsible not to resist. It is a mistake which it would be wrong of us to allow to pass without serious criticism and comment, not only this afternoon but in the days ahead.

**Mr. Jean-R. Roy (Timmins):** Mr. Speaker, a great deal has been said in this debate. It has been a long debate which has accomplished very little, and to my mind what it has accomplished is negative. What is more, if the slightest accommodation had been made, simply omitting the provision for the 80 per cent "dissimilar content" interpretation, there would have been no need for this long debate and no need to take up the time of the House unnecessarily: the bill would have received acceptance in a positive way.

The debate has been exaggerated on both sides. The opponents of the bill gave it overkill on the censorship issue. The bill does not present any extensive degree of censorship. The argument regarding lack of legal authority of the Minister of National Revenue, or the abuse of it, has been overdone.