

his defence of our sovereignty. But we cannot defend the sovereignty unless we have a budget and if we cut the budget we are going to cut the sovereignty. It is as simple as that. We should not destroy the infrastructure of those organizations which have been the hallmark and the bulwark of our strength and solidity as a nation. If we are going to make sure we have cultural sovereignty, then we should not cut the CBC and we should not cut culture. Anything else is lip service and empty hypocrisy.

Let us hope, indeed, that it was a conversion on the road to Damascus. Let us hope that the Minister of Communications, in Cabinet and everywhere he can, will stand up and be counted. Let us hope he will face up to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) in order to ensure this country is defended in terms of its cultural sovereignty and in terms of developing jobs for Canadians in the area where more jobs can be created than in any other sector of this country.

The statement released by the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. de Cotret) on November 8, 1984, on the Government's expenditure and program review, contained a number of significant funding cuts for cultural agencies. Particularly hard hit is the CBC. The nature and degree of these cuts, and the subsequent statements by the Minister, indicate a substantially different approach to cultural policy than under the previous Government. The Applebaum-Hébert report on cultural policy recommended in 1982 the maintenance of an arm's length relationship between cultural industries and Government but continued Government consultation and funding.

During the 1984 election campaign, the Conservative Party indicated a commitment to the arm's length principle, as well as to maintaining funding for agencies and councils in line with inflation. That is what the Conservative Party said. However, in 1984 cuts were announced to the CBC, the Canada Council, the CRTC, the Department of Communications and the National Film Board. The former Minister of Communications, the Hon. Member for Frontenac, announced in a press release on November 15 of last year that three consultants were being assigned "to participate on my behalf" in the Budget restraint exercise at the CBC. At this time the Minister also indicated his plans to conduct "a fundamental review of the corporation's mandate, role and activities". In an interview which was published in *The Globe and Mail* he stated that his Government intends to question "the traditional arm's length relationship with cultural agencies as well as the primary role of the CBC".

● (1730)

He stressed the Department's responsibility to set cultural policy and he doubted whether the CBC should continue to account for two-thirds of all the money the federal Government spends to support cultural activities. It does seem, Mr. Speaker, as if they are a bit confused over there in the Tory benches. They are going to have cultural sovereignty and an arm's length relationship with the CBC, yet the Minister proceeded to put his commissars into the CBC and he was

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questioning whether there should be an arm's length policy. It seems as if the ship is going in every direction. It is this kind of confusion which of course leaves all of us a bit nervous because if there is that much confusion in these and so many other policies, then people cannot plan ahead. They cannot really rely upon this Government to defend our sovereignty. This even puts into grave question the ability of this Government to negotiate with the United States over matters which relate to books and publishing and communications and so on. If the Government cannot elucidate and elaborate on a policy and stick with it regarding the CBC, how can we assume that it will know where it is going when it comes to negotiating in areas where we cannot afford to make a mistake?

This member of the Conservative Party is also proposing a subcommittee with the aim of dangerously interfering as politicians with the long-standing Liberal Government policy of an arm's length relationship with the CBC. Indeed, the Consumer's Association of Canada said that limiting Cabinet power to issue directions to matters of broad public policy is what they wish. Rightly so. The Cabinet should not be able to interfere in the specific programming of the CBC. The Member moving this motion is from Quebec and he must certainly be aware of the special role that the CBC plays in providing French-language broadcasting not only in Quebec but in other areas of Canada where there is a demand, indeed a great need for it. Does the Hon. Member not realize that the CBC is vital to our national interests and must have the budget and freedom to program appropriately? Does he wish his committee to interfere with these national interests? How can he assure us that this interference by politicians which he is suggesting will not dangerously politicize the CBC so that it will no longer be able to provide its vital service to this country?

[Translation]

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I would like first to turn away completely from the irresponsible attack launched by the Hon. Member for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve (Mr. Desrosiers) against the CBC. There are occasions and reasons for criticizing the Corporation. We must not be blind supporters of the CBC, and I will have negative comments to make, but we should use a balanced approach. We have to mention both the good and the bad points, because the CBC deserves to be commended even for some of its triumphs.

What are the facts? The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is serving large section of the globe. There are two TV networks in both official languages, and four radio networks also in both official languages, and in AM and FM. There is the Northern service broadcasting programs in several native languages in addition to our two official languages, and there is a universally recognized international service.

The CBC costs less per program, per program hour than any other national network in the world. It is difficult to have comparisons made with private Canadian networks, because