

*Broadcasting Act*

Some 95 per cent of Canadians are radio listeners, spending some 18 hours per week at that particular activity. Two-thirds of Canadians say that watching television is their favourite pastime. I do not know if that goes for the proceedings of the House of Commons or not, but perhaps it is with regard to other programs on television. More than 50 per cent of Canadians say that broadcasting is their principal source of news and information. Thus when we sit back and reflect upon the contents of Bill C-136 and when we take into account those facts it is important to recognize that changes ought to have been made in line with those suggested by my colleague from Mount Royal.

The content of our system has been and remains a major problem, for while it is true that society's heavy reliance on recorded media is an important fact, what is even more important is that most of what we watch and hear is in fact not Canadian. It reflects the thoughts and attitudes, the world view and feelings of other nations, primarily our neighbour to the south, the United States of America. Those remarks with regard to the United States ought not to be interpreted by those who are somewhat perverted in their thinking to suggest that we do not like our colleagues to the south. I happen to believe that the United States is a great nation, and Americans are a great people, but there are glaring differences between Canada and the United States.

● (1150)

Canadians must have access to more Canadian programming. At the present time, less than 7 per cent of television drama available to us in English is Canadian, yet we spend nearly half our viewing time watching it. There are more hours of American newscasts available to us than Canadian newscasts. Hon. Members will realize the fact that American newscasts provide more information to us as Canadians about events in their country and their perspective of the global community than in fact we as Canadians do about ourselves. Most thinking Canadians, some of whom may be on the opposite side, but most of whom are on this side, would readily come to the conclusion that, because of our diversity in geography, the smallness of our population and the manner in which it is distributed throughout this country, there is an ever-increasing need for us to have more information and news about our great country, whether one happens to live in western Canada, Québec, Ontario, or the Atlantic Provinces.

In a recent newspaper advertisement the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting introduced Michelle, a typical ten-year old Canadian, who spends roughly 80 per cent of her television viewing time watching American programming. She spends as many hours each year watching American programming as she does attending school. As the ad states: "A foreign power has control of Michelle's mind". If one stops and thinks about it, Mr. Speaker, Michelle spends 800 hours in school and 1,000 hours watching television. Not only is that a difference of 200 hours, but it shows the massive increase in terms of viewing American programming, indeed foreign programming.

As I indicated earlier in my remarks, the position of our Party on Bill C-136 has been outlined very clearly by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone). As she stated, we recognize that the 1968 Act has served Canadians well in bringing about Canadian ownership of broadcasting systems. As a result, the Canadian broadcasting system is the envy of people in many corners of the world. However, there are some things which are missing in this piece of legislation, of which the Minister is well aware. Bill C-136 changes the CBC's mandate by removing the requirement that its programming contain a balance of information, entertainment, and enlightenment. Only information and entertainment remain. Therefore, the question is why? This will undermine the basis of such fundamentally important programs as *Man Alive*, *The Nature of Things*, and a host of other programs. Removal of enlightenment will weaken the distinctive quality of CBC programming. Members opposite may have a different view, however, that is the view I take on this particular issue.

Does the Government believe that the CBC television should be only a commercial, mass-audience network, and that all enlightenment should fall under an alternative television network? That is an important point to which I believe the Government should give careful consideration in terms of examining what can be best said and done for Canadians in this great country.

Let me turn now to the subject of regional CBC cuts and change in the CBC mandate. The Standing Committee on Communications and Culture in its report entitled *Broadcasting Policy for Canada*, pointed out that the CBC, as a result of its parliamentary appropriation being cut, has been forced to cut by 28 per cent the resources for regional broadcasting in order to maintain network programming in recent years. If one happens to live in Toronto, Montreal, or cities of that nature, this particular fact, which I am underlining for the benefit of all Members, may not strike home to them. However, for those of us who live in the peripheral regions of the country, regional programming and the opportunities that it provides is important to us and to the people we represent.

Bill C-136 reduces the CBC's mandate to meet the distinctive needs of the various geographic regions of the country. The 1968 Act required the CBC to serve the special needs of geographic regions, and now the CBC is to reflect Canada and its regions to the national and regional audiences. Why does the Government want to reduce the CBC's role as a local and regional programmer? That is pretty fundamental. Prior Governments of different political persuasions have done many things to try to unite this great country, from a railroad to the auspices of regional economic development programs, and some time ago the introduction of the CBC. If we remove or reduce the opportunities for regional and local programming, I can only underline the difficulty that that will cause for many people in the regions of the country.

The 1968 Act required that individual broadcasters provide programming that is predominantly Canadian in character. Now Bill C-136 proposes that it be changed. As a result, the