

Broadcasting Act

endeavour to return to the House with a more comprehensive ruling as soon as possible.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Motions Nos. 1, 1A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 12 are in order and will be grouped for debate, and a vote on Motion No. 1 will also apply to the other motions.

[*English*]

Motion Nos. 7 and 8 are acceptable and will be debated separately and voted upon separately.

[*Translation*]

I will now call Motions Nos. 1, 1A, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 12 . . .

[*English*]

I will hear the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone).

Mrs. Finestone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to personally thank the Table Officers, the Office of the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel and the Journals and Distribution branches. They have been very vital to the process, as you mentioned before. My office and I, in particular, are very appreciative of the role they have played. The spirit of Parliament has been well served.

I wrote following the consultations precisely because you were going to be ruling with respect to how the amendments were to be grouped. My major concern was that we had received so many, shall I say, complaints or shall I say disappointments, from very many interested parties which will be affected by a new broadcasting policy.

The Government commissioned an excellent study by Caplan-Sauvageau which took 1985 and 1986 to complete. In 1987 and 1988 the standing committee addressed itself to those issues and held good, sound hearings which were well received. The Minister took a great number of these issues into consideration and brought forward a Bill, which was not easy for her to do. I commend her for that.

The Bill is very complex and there have been very many changes over the 20-year period. Since the Bill was brought in during the summer months when many people, particularly in the big associations and institutions that will be affected, were on holidays. They wrote to say that they were most uncomfortable with it and that they had not been able to address the draft language in the two months available.

My concern, Mr. Speaker, was that you would regroup, particularly under Clause 3, that section which deals most specifically with the broadcast policy. Are you dealing strictly with the definition section in your decision? If so, I will be most pleased to accept the rulings. However, the amendments that relate to Clause 3 deal with the Canadian broadcasting system and the programming mandate for that system, particularly for the CBC and for the educational broadcasters,

introduce a new alternative programming service, and look at special requirements for private sector networks for programming undertakings and for the provision of special requirements for distribution undertakings. It is a very serious part, Mr. Speaker, and I hope they will be split in a way which will allow us more than 10 minutes per clause. I thank you very much for your kindness.

Mr. Speaker: I have perhaps been somewhat more generous than I might be at other times. I have listened to the Hon. Member. I think I understand the point that she is making. The Chair will, of course, always try to do what is appropriate. If some of the Member's concerns can be accommodated the Chair will, of course, try to do so.

I want to say to the Minister, who has been very patient, that my decision must, nonetheless, be based on sound procedural grounds.

I know that the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell) has some concern. I will hear him, but very briefly.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be very brief. I wrote you a letter on this aspect and I concur with what my colleague from the Liberal Party has said.

Clause 3 of the Bill is entitled "Broadcasting policy for Canada". It contains about a dozen major policy thrusts. If we debate all of the 27 amendments on it in 10 minutes we will not come close to doing justice to such a serious and important debate. In my letter I suggested somewhat of a compromise, that we break it down into four debate areas.

The first would be general programming provisions, policy which applies to all broadcasters. The second would be provisions which deal with this new alternative television network and educational broadcasters. The third would be provisions that deal with the CBC, which is defined in here. The mandate of the CBC is in this clause and you can see how large that is. The last would be provisions dealing with distribution undertakings, that is, undertakings which private networks would make and private broadcasters and so on.

I think that that is reasonable. I suppose that you have difficulty, Mr. Speaker, with the technical rules in doing this. I hope that you can find a way of giving a little more room for debate on these amendments.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway. Being an experienced Member here, I think he realizes that I am bound by certain rules. However, I will say to both Hon. Members that the Chair is considering with considerable care the very courteous and helpful letters which I received. Again, I thank both Hon. Members for their generosity in referring to the co-operation of the Table Officers. I will return as soon as I can and give what guidance is appropriate with respect to the matters which have been raised.