

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Speaker, the first bill to be considered tomorrow will be the government organization bill and it will be dealt with by the President of the Treasury Board.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

### PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 40 deemed to have been moved.

#### BROADCASTING—EDITING OF NATIONAL NEWS ON BUDGET BASIS

**Mr. Rod Thomson (Battleford-Kindersley):** Mr. Speaker, some little time ago in the committee I asked the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier,) who is in charge of the CBC, to explain to me the workings or arrangements in respect of the editing of the news carried by CBC. Since the minister at that time was unable to do so, I decided to put a question to him in the House and debate the subject at this time.

The situation is that when a news story develops in Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal the news editor of the CBC has to make a decision as to what is news. He does this and then it is put on the national news. I am not criticizing that policy, because obviously somebody has to decide what is news and this is the logical job of the news editor. However, there is an additional problem in respect of other areas of the country.

If a news story develops in Halifax or Vancouver, in addition to the news editor deciding whether the item is of national interest he must also take into account that it will cost the CBC several hundred dollars to send that story live from Vancouver. The figure of \$1,000 was quoted to me some time ago. I am not sure how accurate that is but I am sure the cost amounts to several hundred dollars anyway. If a story is brought from Halifax live to Toronto this, again, costs the CBC several hundred dollars.

In addition to the normal decision as to whether a story is newsworthy, this budgetary consideration must be taken into account. In the event the news editor decides a story is worth while, he will have a tape sent by mail to Toronto where it is put over the CBC national news. If it is a morning story, it may well not appear until that evening. If it is an afternoon or evening story, it will not appear until the next day. If the story is not important enough it may not appear at all, because by the time it is put on TV it will be yesterday's news. The news editor must decide between yesterday's news and a good story today, particularly in respect of the television field because space is limited. He will always decide in favour of today's news.

Let me refer to the real basis of my complaint. If a story is news in Vancouver, it should be televised live to Toronto for appearance on TV that day. It should not be

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postponed until the next day. There are budgetary considerations when news stories come from Vancouver or Halifax which do not have to be contended with when the stories come from Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal. My argument is that the outlying areas in Canada tend to be bypassed in respect of worthy news stories, and I do not think this is right.

My understanding is that the CTV network operates on the same basis. If I extend criticism to the CBC I should perhaps extend it to the CTV network as well. The difference is that the CBC is a national concern, supported by the tax dollar, and we might assume that one of its principles is to promote equality of treatment across Canada. Perhaps the CTV network does not have this same obligation because it is directed more in terms of money.

In either case I do not think this is a good way of choosing newsworthy stories, that is, on the basis of whether we can afford them. If news from Saskatoon is of national interest, as a member or resident of that area I feel it should get the same type of coverage given to a story emanating from Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal. Frequently that is not the case now. As I said earlier, I wanted to ask the minister questions in this regard when he appeared before the committee but he was unaware of the technical matters or specific arrangements. Hopefully, the Parliamentary Secretary is in a position to enlighten us on the matter at this time.

#### *[Translation]*

**Mr. Albert Béchard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice):** Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner), I was asked to answer this question.

Since decentralization was carried out at the C.B.C. last spring, more and more importance is being attached to the contribution of the CBC's regional offices to the broadcasting service.

The CBC has correspondents in all provincial capitals who contribute regularly to the information and public affairs broadcasts over the radio as well as on television, and whose task it is to report on Canadian facts to all Canadian people, as is required by the Canadian Broadcasting Act.

Thus it is wrong to claim, as does the hon. member for Battleford-Kindersley (Mr. Thomson), that certain areas in this country that are far away from production centres of national television news bulletins, would suffer on account of the distance and that, for financial reasons.

Information directors hold daily preparatory meetings prior to issuing television bulletins, during which they decide on the importance as well as on the time to be given to the news of the day. As the time allotted to televised news is established beforehand, certain items transmitted by regional centres must necessarily be dropped temporarily or completely, on account of the importance and time to be given to more significant news. But that is never done for financial reasons.