

Adjournment Debate

First of all I would like to state that the government and the minister take very seriously the quite extensive survey and report authored by Dr. Hall. I might take this opportunity to remind the House that on May 31, when the minister announced the appointment of Dr. Hall, he took note of railway employees' dissatisfaction with their pension plan and specified the terms of reference under which the commissioner would operate to deal with those concerns.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): That was in 1974.

Mr. Milne: Yes, May 31, 1974.

To assist these parties in dealing with the complex question of how to protect pensions against the erosion and effect of inflation, the commissioner provided the parties with alternative methods of providing cost of living indexation. The parties themselves, as suggested by Dr. Hall, would be free to make a selection from among the many options according to their own bargaining priorities. I do not think we should take it that it is not a subject for collective bargaining. Dr. Hall said in his report that it should be and the parties have a right to do it.

The commissioner concluded that the existing railway pension plans compare favourably with plans in the public and private sectors. He indicated that while the level of benefits received by recent retirees is adequate, a problem arises for those who have been retired for some time, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre so eloquently pointed out.

In so far as the specific recommendations which aim at granting retired CP employees pension improvements comparable to those granted in recent years by Canadian National, the CP pension committee now has this matter under active consideration. The various cost estimates referred to previously, and the concept of a heritage fund whose principal purpose would be to ameliorate the condition of existing pensioners, were among the options proposed by the commissioner for consideration by the parties. The heritage fund would be paid for through a 1 per cent contribution shared equally by employers and employees. To deal with the question of adequacy on a national level, as it affects all pensions, the government has established an interdepartmental policy review committee to examine all aspects of pensions.

COMMUNICATIONS—POSSIBILITY RIGHT OF CITIZENS TO
RECEIVE PROGRAMS ORIGINATING IN UNITED STATES TO BE
CURTAILED

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, on June 29, by way of a motion under Standing Order 43, I indicated to the House a problem concerning the Arrow Lake TV Society of Nakusp and the fact that they had received notification from the CRTC that effective—I believe it was September 30—they would lose their licence to rebroadcast Channel 4 Spokane from a transmitter site located some 9,000 feet up a mountain in the small community of Nakusp, which has some 2,000 people.

As ministers and their officials know, a motion under Standing Order 43 frequently provides notice that a question will

follow. My question was put to the minister on July 4. At that time I clearly outlined the problem confronting the Arrow Lakes TV Society and the fact that they were transmitting or rebroadcasting Channel 4 Spokane on air and not by cable directly into Nakusp, and that they had been told they would no longer be licensed to do this.

The answer the Minister of Communications (Mrs. Sauvé) gave to the expression of concern—the same expression of concern that can be repeated across Canada in similar circumstances—was as follows:

Mr. Speaker, the freedom of citizens is very well protected right now by the regulating process of the CRTC.

Hah! What an asinine, unfeeling response. By way of a supplementary question I then explained the circumstances surrounding the decision. I said it was a decision by the legal brains of the CRTC, that unfeeling body that is not aware of what is going on in the boondocks. After I had clearly provided the minister with an explanation, the minister responded as follows:

Mr. Speaker, I do not know the details of that decision by the CRTC—

That would indicate that no one had advised her of the motion under Standing Order 43 that I moved the previous week. She went on:

—but I feel that it concerns the need to protect against undue competition those who hold licences to operate a station.

● (2210)

What utter drivel and garbage!

This community established a co-operative society 20 years before the CBC ever thought of providing service to that small community of 2,000, with a transmitter 9,000 feet up in the mountains. For years the people of Kootenay West watched three different channels originating in major centres, all in the United States. The CBC came in recently, and as a result of three interventions on the part of the member for Kootenay West before the CRTC, the CTV network was also able to provide a service to this community.

This co-operative provides the community with three separate channels. They carry the CBC, CTV, and channel 4, Spokane. They were supposed to receive money from the CBC under the accelerated coverage program. The CBC was supposed to provide a signal for that community, but because the co-operative had done such an excellent job the accelerated coverage program people said, "We don't need to provide service to Nakusp. We do not need to spend federal money to provide CBC service." That community did not put in a cable stretching 9,000 feet up the mountain, did not provide "off-air" programming. Instead, it took the less expensive route of providing "on-air" programs. Consequently, the people of the community are now told that because channel 4 Spokane does not meet Canadian content requirements it cannot be licensed.

If their programs had been carried by cable they could watch Spokane forever and a day and would not need to worry about Canadian content. In that case there would not be any hassle with the CRTC's legal division.