

*Government Orders*

torn between their financial commitments and social responsibilities.

This situation forced the Government to rethink its policy, and in 1968, Parliament passed a new Broadcasting Act.

• (1320)

This time, a regulating body with increased powers called the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, or CRTC was suggested. But the legislation allowed private broadcast licensees more freedom of action in their efforts to achieve the Canadianisation of the airwaves.

For that matter, the CRTC has recognized over the years the fundamental differences between the Francophone and Anglophone markets. This was demonstrated very clearly in its decision concerning the specialized television network which called for different regulations in the case of companies broadcasting in French and those broadcasting in English.

Since 1968, Canada has changed and technology has improved. Already, in 1985, I had come to the conclusion that the legislative radiobroadcasting policy and framework were somewhat inadequate to reflect the new realities of our time. So the task force on broadcasting Policy was set up to examine such issues as cable distribution, the independent production industry, public broadcasting financing, the private cable distribution regulating framework, the impact of new broadcasting technologies, as well as the social, economic and constitutional changes which had occurred since the radio-broadcasting legislation was adopted in 1968.

The task force confirmed the cultural supremacy of the Canadian Broadcasting System and recommended the recognition in both spirit and letter of the distinctive characteristics of French and English broadcasting. It insisted on the need for drama programs which would reflect the identity of the Canadian society in its cultural and regional diversity. The task force examined the new technologies which, although they can foster progress, can also be a disrupting factor for the legal framework defined over 20 years before.

Following a thorough review of the issue, the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture submitted

to the Government a series of recommendations for the drafting of a new legislation.

Later on, the Government introduced in Parliament a new bill consistent with the current needs and views of the Canadian society. The Senate failed to adopt this legislation, and election having been called.

Since last March, I have met with representatives of the cultural and broadcasting industries everywhere in Canada.

You will allow me, Mr. Speaker, to note first of all the major improvements over the 1968 Act: explicit recognition of the contribution of women, children, cultural minorities, native peoples and the disabled, as well as the need to reflect the multicultural character of our society more faithfully; recognition of the special characteristics of the French-language market; revision of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's management structure and of its accountability to Parliament; explicit recognition of freedom of expression and of journalistic, creative and programming independence; legal neutrality concerning distribution technologies; in addition, the CRTC, under the new provisions of the Railway Act, will take account of the requirements of the Broadcasting Act in regulating telecommunications; permitting cable companies to create programming, while granting the CRTC the power to arbitrate any conflict of interest situations which may arise and if necessary require cable companies to broadcast other specific programming services.

As for Canadian content, the CRTC will have the power to implement a new system to give broadcasters incentives if required. Note that for some time, broadcasters have been making additional efforts in this direction.

The Governor in Council will be able to give the CRTC general instructions, which must first be reviewed by Parliament.

The new wording will enable companies producing signals and their authorized agents, including cable distributors, to take legal action against those who pirate signals for commercial purposes and who steal their coded signals.

Furthermore, we will use this legislation to make the following changes.