

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

sector initiatives and federal-provincial co-operation, and of the policies of the government in other related economic and cultural sectors.

I would like to continue the quotation of the former Minister with respect to the appointment of the Caplan-Sauvageau task force which states:

It will also take full account of the challenges and opportunities in the increasingly competitive broadcasting environment presented by ongoing technological developments.

The long and short of the matter is that the rather wordy mandate of the task force is that it has to deal with the entire sphere of public broadcasting in Canada. Included in the terms of reference is consideration of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

I would like to point out to Hon. Members that the motion before us is duplicative. It is a waste of time for this House to consider. It is unnecessary and pointless. Why? As I said at the outset, frequent commissions and reviews have been set up to which the former Minister paid tribute. I refer to the Applebaum-Hébert Report and many other reports prior to that. Also, the Hon. Member proposes a move which would duplicate the work of the committee which his former Minister established.

I would like to call the attention of the House to the fact that implementation of the Hon. Member's motion would cost real money. It would involve an excessive waste of taxpayers' money.

I would like to direct Hon. Members to what the Hon. Member proposes in his motion. It states:

That the sub-committee be empowered to hire professional and support staff;

I would suggest to Hon. Members that that would cost real money. Second, he proposes:

That the sub-committee be empowered to adjourn from place to place in Canada for the purpose of visiting the Corporation's facilities;

That is merely a euphemism for going on junkets across the country in order to obtain information which would cost real money. In this case I wonder why the former Minister would have appointed the Caplan-Sauvageau task force to do exactly what the Hon. Member proposes. I suggest this is a complete duplication of what his own Party is already doing. To hire a professional support staff, which was included by the mover of this motion, is something which reminds me—and I do not want him to think I am being purely partisan—that our Tory friends seem to have no shame about wasting public funds while they try to deindex seniors and family benefits, pay off bank loans which are not good and provide capital gains for the wealthy. The Government certainly knows how to suggest ideas for the wasting of the taxpayers' money, and here is more evidence of that.

● (1720)

One of the chief concerns I feel we should have about this motion is that the approach of the Tory surgeons is first to cut or amputate and then diagnose the patient. Last fall the CBC budget was cut and the survival of Canadian culture was at one and the same time threatened. The Government was clearly taking a chance that our air waves might be filled with

American programming because the Budget cuts inevitably will affect Canadian content programming and our ability to reach rural and remote Canada. Our national identity depends on our cultural identity. Yet by these cuts, the national dream of the Canadian identity is under attack.

The CBC is an important factor in defending our culture. It is as important today as the railway was, and is, to keep our country united. Yet this Government saw fit to make the enormous cuts of \$85 million and more. The outcry, of course, from Canadians was tremendous. They were indignant at these cuts because they know the cultural industry is one of the best job creation industries in Canada. Critics of the cut-backs which have been imposed on the CBC, and on other arts and cultural councils, have argued that Canada's cultural industries employ as many people as agriculture. In 1981 it had revenues of almost \$8 billion and a payroll of \$2.5 billion. Employment in cultural industries rose 74 per cent between 1971 and 1981 as compared to 39 per cent growth in the economy as a whole. It is six times more efficient, by the way, in job creation, than the manufacturing sector.

In stressing the impact of federal aid, critics point out that for every one dollar received from Ottawa, the cultural industry generates almost \$5 from other sources. Yet while other industries were cut by 3 per cent, culture was cut by 5 per cent. At a time when Canadians are concerned about cultural sovereignty and unemployment is high, Government support for Canadian programming and for artists and performers is being reduced. For the half a century the CBC has been on the air waves, it has made it possible for Canadian writers, film makers and artists to make a living in this country rather than going south of the border. It has created a Canadian identity and has produced programs which commercial stations would not likely produce. Because of the recent cuts, the CBC may be seriously weakened as a national service. It may not be able to continue to broadcast in two languages, run two television and four radio networks, a northern service, an international service and a parliamentary channel.

I do not want to take away the right of my hon. friend to criticize the CBC for whatever reason he wishes. No doubt there are areas where improvements could be made following his suggestions and those of other people from across this country. I am sure that all of us want to monitor and express our personal opinions about the CBC, and how to improve the service, in any way we wish. The Hon. Member suggested on March 29 that we eliminate the CBC. He now suggests that we have a duplicative committee to cross this country at the taxpayers' expense to "reinvent the wheel", to once again examine the CBC. That seems to me to be quite unrealistic.

We have to be concerned about the cuts which were made by this Government to the budgets of the CBC and other cultural organizations. It is interesting now to see that the former Minister of Communications, the Hon. Member for Frontenac has had a conversion on the road to Damascus. He speaks now of cultural sovereignty. He sets himself up to say he is going to be a champion of that cultural sovereignty, that he will defend it to the death. His successor has also indicated