

*Government Orders*

that the games played by government with respect to introduction of bills and the processing of bills are rather puerile and not becoming of grown up men and women. It is very little consolation to me that it is played by all parties when they are in power.

It goes without saying that broadcasting touches all of our lives and it is extremely important to this country. In my opinion, broadcasting is to the 1990s what the railways were to Canada in the 1880s. Broadcasting ties us together, it binds us, and it makes us one family. At least, that should be the result.

It is important to our parliamentary democracy, and if the system works well, broadcasting, in my opinion, gets a lot of credit for that and plays a huge role. Broadcasting is as important an institution as this institution right here in which I am speaking. That is the kind of rating I give it. It is little wonder that we refer to it along with newspapers as the fourth estate.

It is also important to our unity, and it is important to Canadian identity. If our unity is tenuous and a little weak, broadcasting has to take some small blame for that. If our identity is fuzzy, again broadcasting is partly to blame for that. In my opinion, broadcasting has not always done a very good job *vis-à-vis* national unity. That issue should be addressed in this particular bill that we are talking about today.

Before I deal with some of the specific provisions of the bill, I would like to discuss where we stand today in broadcasting. The statistics are staggering. Our children spend more time watching television than they do in school. Watching television is the favourite pastime of a vast majority of Canadians.

At the same time, 95 per cent of Canadians are radio listeners. More than half of Canadians say that broadcasting is their principal source of news and information. For these reasons, the legislation before us today is of critical importance as it will affect virtually every Canadian every day of the year. The ongoing problem of low levels of Canadian content in broadcasting continue. In fact, 71 per cent of all programs viewed by English-speaking Canadians on television are American. That is disturbing. Less than 7 per cent of television drama

available to us in English is Canadian, yet we spend nearly half of our viewing time watching it.

In the face of technological change, the threat to Canadian content will only increase through more and more foreign programming entering our country via satellite dishes and other technologies. In my opinion, we must develop quality Canadian programming which can compete with the continuing onslaught of foreign programming in the years to come.

I want to turn my attention to some of the specific shortcomings of the bill as I see them. There is the matter of national unity which I referred to earlier. The current CBC mandate specifically refers to the development of national unity. This new act does not do that. I think that this is a serious omission and I find it disturbing. The new act refers only to the maintenance and the enhancement of national identity and cultural sovereignty. The word "unity" is gone, Mr. Speaker, you will not find it. I do not think that that is good enough.

Back in the days when the current act was drafted, which was 20 years ago, there was a perceived threat to national unity. You will remember those days, Mr. Speaker, as well as I do. There was restlessness in the country. Quebec had awakened. There was the B & B commission. There were many passions stirring in the country. National unity was on people's minds. The new Broadcasting Act of the day recognized and responded to that situation.

National unity is still on the minds of Canadians. It is still very much an issue. It is as worrisome as ever. For example, there are the stresses and strains that emanate from the Meech Lake Accord, and with the Prime Minister refusing to lead, constitutional difficulties grow.

I believe that in the absence of a strong federalist voice, strident provincial voices get louder. They do not get quieter, they get louder. Witness what has happened in the province of Alberta with a loud party called the reform party. Witness the proclamations of the leader of the Parti Québécois in that province. Instead of all of us fighting for one strong Canada what we find very often is a free-for-all emerging, one province against another.

Consequently, in the midst of the inevitable discord we get last month a cartoonist in Quebec equating Manitobans with the Ku Klux Klan. I am sorry to say that the same has happened vice versa. There have been intoler-