

Government Orders

It is for these reasons that we as parliamentarians should reject Bill C-53. We should send a message to Canadians that we are truly serious about parliamentary reform, deficit reduction, government streamlining and government efficiency.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we talk about heritage, most people believe that we are dealing with ancient things, old things. However, this afternoon, I would like to show that heritage also means modern things, even highly advanced technology. I would like to do it from a cultural perspective, from the perspective of Canadian and Quebec culture.

At the present time, right above the Equator, there are two American satellites beaming down to South and North America. They were sent into orbit by the Hughes Corporation, a subsidiary of General Motors in the United States. These two satellites have been nicknamed "Death Stars". What does this mean?

These satellites can transmit TV signals nearly to every home from the North Pole to the South Pole. They can broadcast up to 200 channels simultaneously.

I must warn you that this is not science fiction; not only can these satellites do what I have just mentioned, they have been doing it for several weeks already. They now have customers mainly in the U.S., but also in Canada.

These American satellites belong to the Direct TV Corporation and can be used by a Canadian corporation called Power Direct TV, itself a subsidiary of Hughes and Power Corporation.

What does this have to do with culture? Think about it for a moment. These satellites broadcasts are, for the time being, totally foreign to what is happening on the cultural scene in Canada. Programs are produced in the US and the content is American, naturally.

In fact, just about anyone in Canada can obtain the necessary equipment to receive these channels, and I will explain how to illustrate how real a danger it is for Quebec and Canadian culture.

• (1545)

In the United States, right now, you can buy a dish the size of large pizza and a descrambler, and get the signal coming from a satellite on your television set. Now Direct TV is a business concern and the signal is not free; however the company has to know that you are receiving their signal to be able to bill you for it.

How does it work? You go to the United States and you buy the box and the small dish for about C\$900. I should add that as soon

as the market picks up, the prices will fall to about half that much. You bring all this back to Canada, to Quebec, or any other province or to the Northwest Territories and you install your small dish outside, or even inside if you have a south-facing window. Next you connect your box to the phone line and you dial the 1-800 number.

You automatically reach the U.S. company and register as a new customer willing to use their services. The company then sends a signal to one of their geostationary satellites above the Equator telling it to talk to your box. These satellites always stay above the same spot on the Equator. This is not science fiction, this is happening now. Your box has a number, and when the satellite sends it the right signal, it comes to life. From then on, it gives you access to about 200 channels.

You can now view all the regular programming of the major American television networks and you can order up movies on a pay-per-view basis, which is like going to a video store, except that you do not have to get out of the house. You push a button indicating that you want to watch such and such a movie and, automatically, the box records the films that you ordered and your viewing time. At the end of the month, the parent company in the U.S. phones your box and reads the meter, so to speak. And the box provides the information. The company in the U.S. then issues a bill and sends it to you.

However, since you are in Canada, you will not receive the bill at your home. It will be sent to an American address that you were provided with, and you will get the bill from there. No GST, no provincial sales tax. I think that the Department of Revenue should realize that services are being provided to Canada without any international agreement.

I will quote officials from the American company working on the Canadian side. Mr. Kruyt, who works for Power Direct TV, appeared before the heritage committee on November 16.

What was the question I asked? I had asked him why the company tolerated that Canadian consumers receive the signal, knowing that it was not complying with Canadian consumer law. He answered: "We have no financial incentive to prevent these people from receiving the signals, but do have a financial incentive to charge them for doing so".

I then asked him what made him think that eventually, in providing the service legally to Canadians, signals could be screened to ensure that they receive Canadian rather than American signals. And the answer I got was that the American company would give them control over what they call the on-off switch if they could start business in this country. This is of course a situation where profitability is the only rule.