

healthy interchange. I was impressed by the performance of all—indeed, by the costumes of most.

This debate is important to all Canadians because broadcasting is more than just a major industry. Radio, television, cable and satellite broadcasts help us to communicate as a people. They contribute to the development of our culture. They help us to interpret our common heritage. They shape our perspectives and ideas. They provide instant access to local, national and international developments.

Radio and television reach into the homes of virtually all Canadians. Like any other media, they offer Canadian creators a national stage to reach a national audience.

Of all the cultural industries, broadcasting has become the principal vehicle by which Canadian creators can reach Canadian audiences. While we are on the subject of creators, I think all of us on all sides of the House were impressed by the well organized lobby which visited us on Tuesday of this week, animated by ACTRA, the Canadian Conference of the Arts and l'Union des artistes and by the response of the minister and the Prime Minister in making a commitment to produce, in the words of my hon. friend from British Columbia and of the Prime Minister.

For all these reasons, the broadcasting system has a vital role to play in the maintenance and enhancement of our cultural sovereignty and in the strengthening of our cultural identity.

The bill before us is designed to ensure that the broadcasting system will continue to play this vital role and that all Canadian broadcasters will contribute in an appropriate way to these fundamental cultural policies. In this respect, the bill addresses directly the major issues and concerns which were brought to the government's attention through one of the most thorough and public policy reviews undertaken by a Canadian government. These issues and concerns stem from two inseparable forces which, together, are changing the face of broadcasting around the world. One of these forces is

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technology. The other is the trend toward international programming, or global audiences.

Satellites, cable, fibre optics and high definition television are changing the nature of broadcasting and expanding the potential for diversity and choice in programming services. At the same time, the globalization of broadcasting offers rich opportunities for co-operation and cultural exchange.

[Translation]

Still, Mr. Speaker, there is a paradox. Although these two forces offer the prospect of greater diversity, ever rising production costs and market pressures create a need for what might be called international entertainment programs which are totally alien to the cultural values of the various nationalities and which increasingly pervade the program schedule of broadcasters throughout the world because foreigners can buy them at cut-rate prices even if production costs are high.

Given the rapid progress of broadcasting techniques in this country, Canadians were among the first in the world to experience the impact of these forces and witness this paradox.

Before drafting the new broadcasting legislation, we decided that our goal would be to tackle the paradox of modern broadcasting in the Canadian context. To put it another way, we would draft a legislative policy and regulatory structure in such a way as to take into account and favour technological progress, while at the same time stressing the diversity and creation of Canadian programs.

For Canada's broadcasting system, that is the challenge of the coming century.

[English]

Our broadcasting system provides a truly remarkable range of radio and television signals. There are literally hundreds of radio and television signals, and cable television carries dozens of channels. The mix includes Canadian stations, both public and private, in English and in French, as well as foreign services. Yet despite this range of services our policy review revealed that Canadians want more real choice and diversity. Above all, Canadians want more and better Canadian programs, especially in prime time television and especially in drama.