

Government Orders

Ms. Clancy: Some of us started earlier.

Mr. Edwards: Some start earlier.

The point is that the programs that my hon. friend referred to have not been on the air since 1968. It was in 1968 that the phrase "national unity" was put in as part of the CBC's mandate. We have not had a flourishing of the kinds of programs that show one of us to another during the run of the Broadcasting Act of 1968.

Obviously it has not been taken seriously by those who would want to unite the country. I put my question to my hon. friend: Is the problem not a lack of access to network time rather than anything else?

That was the finding the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture arrived at when it travelled the country in 1986 and 1987 holding hearings into broadcasting policy and legislation in this country. Would it not be sensible to have another look at the structure of the corporation and how it delivers its programs to see if there is not a better way of serving regional needs, perhaps through satellite to cable networks, showing the regions of the country one to another?

I would like to know whether the hon. member has, for example, examined the West German system where you can indeed, Mr. Speaker, see a regional service in one region and in another region. The common system is an alliance of all the regions. I wonder if the hon. member has examined that and whether she has another model to propose that would better overcome the regionality difficulty that we have.

The issue is not unity, because unity will flow from an understanding of each other. I think we are on the same wave length there. Unity will definitely flow if we understand and appreciate each other. When the Hon. Flora MacDonald, with her Gaelic roots, brought in Bill C-136 she put forward the idea that we should stimulate national consciousness and identity rather than compelling a commitment to national unity.

It was her authorship and not the current minister's authorship that brought about that change. Would she not agree that it is putting the cart before the horse to demand that national unity occur as a precondition when, in fact, you cannot even conceive of unity unless you have an appreciation one of the other.

Ms. Clancy: Mr. Speaker, actually there are so many questions in the hon. parliamentary secretary's intervention that I am wondering if we can get unanimous consent to give me another 20 minutes. Just kidding.

I certainly will get to his comments and his question, but I also am a little disappointed because I did not hear a denial of the cuts to the regions. I want to remind you, Mr. Speaker, and through you, all my colleagues in the House that I did say I was prepared to take his denial. We did not get it, and I guess here I am again being a typical Nova Scotian remembering that just because we are paranoid, it does not mean they are not out to get us.

I have actually seen the west German system. My German is not good enough to really make a comment. I have done some reading on the particular system. I think it is interesting, but I would not be prepared at this point to suggest whether that system could replace the system that has evolved.

I am not quite sure what the hon. parliamentary secretary was on about when he talked about *Front Page Challenge* and *Hockey Night in Canada vis-à-vis* 1968. The fact that the national unity mandate came into existence in 1968 does not mean that it was not being followed in spirit before. The problem with removing it is that when we take something away, particularly in these troubled times in this country, we are making a statement. Whether the government admits it, whether the parliamentary secretary admits it, we are making a statement that speaks volumes.

The former member for Kingston and the Islands is not here now. It is not the same time that it was when she brought in her bill. I am not discussing that bill. I am discussing this one. I think every one of us knows that the removal of the term "national unity" from the CBC's mandate has and will continue to have a pejorative for Canadians. It will continue to make Canadians say, "If the government does not believe that CBC has to have a mandate for national unity, what does that say for the government's view of this country?"

Are we a community of communities or are we a nation? I believe we are a nation. I believe we are a nation that is going through a very difficult time. I do not want us to be a community of communities. I want us to be a bilingual, multicultural, diverse, intense, exciting, flourishing Canada. I want us to be a country that looks after and fosters every Canadian's response to the communication and the culture of this country.