

CRTC Act

Canadian content in our own channels that would be indigenous to the Canadian people?

I would also like to know how the Hon. Member feels about *The Friendly Giant* being cancelled?

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, of course I agree with all other Members who have expressed their regret that *The Friendly Giant* program was cancelled.

With respect to the children's pay TV channel, we have had representations, as I am sure the Hon. Member for Mount Royal (Mrs. Finestone) and the Conservative Members have, from a large number of organizations involved in working to improve the lot of children. They are very concerned about the distinct possibility that if permission is given to some private company for children's pay TV, we will get, as we see on other pay TV channels, almost entirely American programming such as Disney or someone else. The only proposal which the CRTC had, which would have guaranteed a substantial Canadian content in its programming, was the proposal made by the National Film Board which proposed to work together with other organizations to set up a non-profit organization. We are happy that, although the CRTC rejected that preliminary application, it has now put back any final decision and is prepared to hold hearings across the country. I hope it will take another serious look at the proposal made by the National Film Board.

Mrs. Finestone: A supplementary?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Yes, I will allow the Hon. Member a very short supplementary because there is only about half a minute left.

Mrs. Finestone: My supplementary deals with the Hon. Member's knowledge of the original proposals put forward by TV Ontario which were extraordinarily creative. Is there a chance that that particular project might come back?

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not qualified to answer that question. However, having seen some of the things that TV Ontario does, I would be very happy if organizations like the Film Board and TV Ontario, or any other non-profit organization, would co-operate in setting up a real Canadian pay TV children's channel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated.

Mr. John Gormley (The Battlefords-Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today in favour of Bill C-20, an Act to amend the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission Act, the Broadcasting Act and the Radio Act. There are two significant factors to which I would like to address my comments, the first being the amendment to allow Government direction in matters of policy concerning the CRTC, and the second being the Broadcasting Act as it pertains to abusive programming.

First of all, dealing with Section 14.1, in the minds of many Canadians, and I speak both as a former broadcaster and as

one who has an interest in communications, this provision is long overdue. As we watch the work of the CRTC, we must distinguish in a more clear and forthright fashion the difference between the establishment of policy and the parameters of regulation. Historically, the CRTC, through its regulatory powers under the present Act and through convention, has established what amounts to policy. This particular clause empowers the Governor in Council to issue directions to the commission concerning areas of general policy, for example, the matter of telephone deregulation which has been debated by others today. As one who believes that the policy-maker, the Government of Canada, should be the one to establish the general policy regarding telephone competition—and I think I echo the views of many people—I would like to see the matter of telephone competition under the direction of the Governor in Council. This would include the matter of committee study and the process of consultation.

As a Member of Parliament from Saskatchewan I have risen in this Parliament before to voice my concerns about the proposed deregulation as it would affect Saskatchewan. This is why I prefer the process of consultation with the Minister in the political process to determine what exact policy we as the Government should take in this particular area. It has been well documented in a Saskatchewan study, both by the provincial Government, consumers' organizations and many other people, that the impact of opening up long-distance telephone communications in Saskatchewan would be very debilitating. This is particularly true in rural Saskatchewan where the high cost of installing even basic phone service is offset by SaskTel, the government-owned telephone company, which does so by charging the rates it does for long distance. It is in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan, as it is of people everywhere, for all people to be able to afford a telephone service. I have spoken in this House before on this matter and I welcome the opportunity to be part of that consultative process, so that when the Government gives direction to the CRTC it is done with the national interest in mind. It should acknowledge our differences in the many diverse areas of our province.

Concerning the power of direction, I think it should be stated strongly for the record to those who are concerned about the Government getting directly involved in regulation, or perhaps being seen to be too politically involved, that the amendments clearly spell out under Section 14.1(2) that:

No direction shall be issued . . . in respect of the issuance of a broadcasting licence . . . the amendment or renewal of a licence . . .

The regulatory aspect of broadcast licencing, which should be a matter of the closest regulatory scrutiny, remains under the purview of the CRTC. Further, there is the specific caveat, as we have mentioned, respecting the reference of this matter to committee and opening it to consultation, so it is not and does not appear to be the case of the Government issuing a policy recommendation and thereby being seen to be arbitrary, unilateral or heavy-handed. The approach here is open, conciliatory and consultative.

In looking at the ability of the Government to advise the CRTC on policy, I do have concerns even about the day to day