

Adjournment Debate

than two or three hours to study CBC proposed expenditures of almost \$416 million.

I suggest tonight to the Secretary of State a course of action which I hope will be acceptable to him, his cabinet colleagues and to all hon. members. I suggest a course of action that has good precedent. The Secretary of State will remember that some two or three years ago the CBC reduced or eliminated broadcasting its Gaelic programs in certain parts of the maritimes. That matter, at the instigation of a member of the opposition, was referred to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts where, in an atmosphere of concern, diligence and non-partisanship, it was resolved. That was a good precedent and one that, in my opinion, is applicable to the situation with regard to farm news broadcasting.

The situation is obviously of concern to the Minister of Agriculture who calls it deplorable. The situation is obviously of concern to the Secretary of State who, on February 27, told me that the government's concern has been communicated to the CBC. Such being the case, I urge that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts. I am prepared to instigate this if I can detect some willingness on the government's part to agree that the whole matter of CBC farm broadcasting be aired thoroughly in committee.

I believe that this, first, would be responsive to the concern and complaints expressed by many radio listeners in various parts of Canada. Second, I believe committee hearings would be a responsible course of action. I can put it no better than the editorial in a recent edition of "Farm and Country" which said in part:

The issue really goes deeper than actual farm programming. Basically, it is one of who really determines policies that are in the best interests of the general public. Certainly, Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner, who has the CBC under his wing, must intervene, as must Agriculture Minister Eugene Whelan. Also we urge all our M.P.s in Ottawa to take up the cudgel in defence of good CBC farm and consumer coverage.

I, for one, and I am sure there are many other hon. members, am willing to accept this challenge because I believe it is important and I believe that it is urgent.

The Minister of Agriculture seems to believe that privately owned radio stations should replace the CBC in farm broadcasting. He said on February 27:

So, if the private sector can do this, and maybe better than the CBC, more power to them.

That possibly is true, and the broadcasting committee should hear evidence and witnesses in this regard from both the CBC and private stations. Mr. Speaker, thank you for permitting me these few minutes to draw to the attention of my colleagues in the House this problem which is a national and a serious one, but, more important, one with which we are capable of coming to grips. I look forward with optimism to the Secretary of State's reaction to my proposal.

Miss Coline Campbell (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I am informed by the CBC that no such cutback in CBC material directed to rural listeners has occurred. In some instances the actual time of presentation of the agricultural material within the noon hour period has been adjusted to reflect the listening habits within that region, but in all cases CBC maintains

[Mr. Jarvis.]

the same service to rural listeners in the early morning, throughout the noon hour period, and in many instances with late market reports in the late afternoon.

In addition, within the past 18 months CBC radio news has appointed its first agricultural specialist, Mr. Glenn Powell, and this appointment has resulted in increased agricultural coverage in mainstream programming during those periods of the day when CBC Radio enjoys its highest audiences, for example, "The Worlds at Eight and Six", "Sunday Magazine," and so on.

The CBC through its management has been engaged recently in meetings with such organizations as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, with a view to assessing and improving its service to rural listeners.

There is in every region a report and analyses on agricultural matters following the 6:30 news in the morning. I can speak personally of one radio station in my area. On Monday morning when I am on the road back here I listen to one of the agricultural representatives who does a very good job. There is definite market and other specific information for farmers between 12 noon and one o'clock, and frequently between one and two p.m. more extended coverage of agricultural concerns either through reports or phone-in programs, or both.

An attempt is also made to link agricultural and consumer information in order to give urban listeners a better understanding of the food cycle.

In addition, as has already been mentioned, CBC radio provides late afternoon market reports before "The World at Six". Because of the changes in radio broadcasting patterns generally over the past ten years, agricultural material tends to occur in many parts of the schedule where it did not appear a decade ago, for example "As It Happens" and other national programs.

However, as this extension into other program areas has occurred, CBC has always retained the essential agricultural information which we know that our rural listeners require in the noon hour period. One example of this extension has been the development of two syndication services. One of these contains general daily agricultural items for broadcast on all stations and the other is produced from Ottawa by the national agricultural representative, Mr. George Price, and is tailored specifically to the needs and interests of rural listeners in all points of the country.

I remind the House that the main estimates will soon be before the committee until the end of May. As the hon. member mentioned, perhaps during that time he can discuss further his questions with representatives of the CBC.

HEALTH—REQUEST FOR EXPANSION OF PILOT PROJECT FOR SCHOOL MILK PROGRAM

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, it grieves me that we in parliament seem to have lost all perspective of our responsibility to Canadians. One most grievous area of concern prompts my appearance here tonight to debate my question addressed to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) on March 2 with regard to the plight of hundreds of thousands