

Government Orders

That is our vision of where our Broadcasting Act should go. That is why we will propose further amendments to this bill, to try, in spite of that government over there, to make it a more national broadcasting system that really works for Canadians.

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by paying tribute to those who were the authors of this bill, including the member who has just spoken, and his predecessor Lynn McDonald, the former member for Broadview—Greenwood. They, along with John Gormley, Bob Pennock, Jim Caldwell, the distinguished member for Mount Royal and the current member for Jonquière were those who wrote the reports on the broadcasting policy and the broadcasting law. These were reports of the standing committee. Prior to that, of course, the Minister of Communications had commissioned Gerald Caplan and Florion Sauvageau to do their task force report. That really is the up-to-date foundation on which this bill is fixed.

The hon. member for Mount Royal said that she was looking for a bill that was not hurried. I believe she was referring to some of the activities of last year, and some of the circumstances of last year.

The industry and Canadians have waited. Since the Hon. Francis Fox introduced his first amendments to the Broadcasting Act in the early 1980s, Canadians have waited.

There is no wish on the part of the government to unduly rush this bill. There is a genuine commitment on the part of the minister and the government to make sure that this time we do it right.

There was a wag who suggested at a conference not long ago on the future of broadcasting in Canada that what we ought to do is to pass again the bill of 1968 and add a rider at the end, "This time we mean it". This time we sincerely mean it. We have been able, I think, to do many things which improve the bill of 1968 and the current law.

I will not respond in argumentative detail to the points that have been made by my colleagues opposite. There is another time and another place for that. But I would just touch on a couple of points.

I believe that the member for Mount Royal sincerely believes that circumstances have changed and that the unity clause thus ought to be rethought. I look forward to

engaging her in debate on that subject because I differ with her, but I respect her point of view.

I took note of the other criticisms she made about the changes in the bill and the shortcomings, as she saw them, of the bill. I give her my commitment that as we work together on this bill in committee, when it finally does go to committee, that her view will be heard and properly debated.

My friend, the NDP critic, has given us some predictable items I think. We have heard some of them before. But I want to point out to him that there are many things happening in Canadian broadcasting that are positive and, indeed, show the way toward the building of a genuinely strong industry, both in the public and in the private sector.

• (1440)

I had the opportunity on Monday of this week to visit Montreal and see the facilities of Vidéotron and the new video interactive television that has been in place since September 25. I was very impressed not only with how it works but I was challenged by how, as a society, we are going to adapt to this new technology. Also, I was intrigued that the Vidéotron people had decided against creating any interactive games that involve the theme of war. That was, I think, not only an intrinsically good and sound decision, but it also anticipates what might be produced in that mode elsewhere outside Canada. It provided a strong alternative to that kind of game.

I congratulate those members of the Canadian broadcasting community and many others. There are many examples that can be cited, both public and private, of initiatives that have been taken that are distinctly Canadian and which are very, very constructive.

I am glad that the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam acknowledged the \$81 million which was announced this week going to CBC to meet the unanticipated contract costs of recent labour settlements. I think that reflects the fact that this government is aware of the need for CBC to survive and flourish.

Also, I would assure hon. members that the government took careful heed of the interchange that took place yesterday between members of the standing committee and the chairman designate and the new president of the CBC as well as the new CRTC chairman. I thought that it was not only significant in the history of Parliament but also totally appropriate that a committee that is dedicated to communications would be dealing with the country's top communicators. It was a very, very