

*Government Orders*

We believe the government should have provided the CRTC with full regulatory authority over any foreign service earning revenue from Canada with no obligation to contribute to Canadian programming.

When we looked at this issue in the standing committee we noted that CNN has penetrated Canadian households to the extent of almost 435,000 subscribers. Others have reached as many as 400,000, as opposed to some of our own Canadian networks that have not been able to meet that target as yet. I think that the importation of these services will compromise the potential for developing Canadian services in the future. These unlicensed services do not make any commitment to the Canadian good or to the Canadian programming goals. I think that there is something to be said about that.

In Bill C-40, clause 3(1)(s)(iv) provides cable the power to become programmers. While we believe that cable should be provided an opportunity to be a contributor to the Canadian broadcasting system, we note that there are dangers of unfair competition, vertical integration and conflicts of interest. We therefore argue that Bill C-40 should incorporate provisions that would limit the role of cable television systems to providing programming that is not already offered by conventional broadcasters.

We are not saying no to cable operators becoming involved in programming. We just believe the programming they offer should be different and complementary to existing programs. We also believe that their role should be more clearly defined with respect to community cable.

There is no serious provision in this bill for community broadcasting, which is now a significant part of the system. It gives access to community based groups and local stories that are not always on the public agenda. It reflects the dynamism and the vitality of the multicultural dimension of our local communities. It is a very important and distinct voice, different from that of the local independent or unaffiliated station to the national network.

It is a system that the CRTC addresses in a way that differs from its approach to either the public or the private broadcasting system. I would hope that we would broaden the definition of the system.

With respect to cable carriage of Canadian services, the bill does provide a framework requiring that cable give priority to the carriage of Canadian programming services and, in particular, the carriage of local Canadian stations.

This is a good start, but what does it mean? Could the weather channel, Vision TV or the home shopping channel be considered local Canadian stations? Does the priority mean channels 1 to 13 or 1 to 35? Would the community channel be considered local?

Liberals argue that the bill should in defining the essential role of cable systems require that in distributing Canadian radio and television services in French and English, both public and private, first priority be given to the public sector French and English networks and then the other public sector services, followed by provincial educators and certainly then the private Canadian broadcasting sector.

The programming is not defined as being predominantly Canadian. I find this unbelievable. The bill provides that each broadcasting undertaking shall make maximum use and in no case less than predominant use of Canadian creative and other resources in the creation and presentation of programming. Presently clause 3(1)(e) only requires that the resources that contribute to programming must be predominantly Canadian but does not require that the programming provided by the Canadian broadcasting system be predominantly Canadian.

You buy trucks made in Canada for Canadians by Canadians, but you do not necessarily have to show Canadian content programs. I think that needs to be re-examined. It is really quite an amazing clause, and I sincerely hope the minister will look at how we can put the predominantly Canadian aspect back into this clause.

Again there are no limits placed on foreign services carried by cable. That is one of the major failures in this bill, to provide the CRTC with this strong legislative framework that would allow it, to the extent that foreign broadcasting signals are carried, to define them to be complementary to existing programming from Canadian sources. In other words, it should be different. It should allow those Canadian programs that are bought from Americans to have the exclusivity which they thought was purchased by the networks when they discovered that was not really so.