

The reduction of Radio Noon and replacing this with a direct Toronto feed is contributing further to a feeling of isolation, and being resident of an unimportant part of our country.

The International Association of Business Communicators, a group of people who are not predominantly involved in any one of the communications industries, wrote:

We believe that CBQ Radio has a vital role to play in the geographically large and sparsely populated area of Northwestern Ontario.

We have received comments from co-op housing residents and the Thunder Bay Potters Guild. All of the correspondence we have received indicates clearly the broad-based support which regional radio stations have. We had a furore in the House over the whole question when we heard that the station in Gander, Newfoundland was being closed. We heard about the campaign which was launched to protect that station and to get it back on the air. That campaign was successful, and I am very pleased about that. But that campaign reached into Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario. People followed that campaign with keen interest. They knew that there was a danger, should members of the Conservative Party who have it in for the CBC continue to get their way, that CBQ in Thunder Bay might become nothing more than a repeater station for network programming. CBQ would then lose the regional aspect and the news-gathering function which it has.

For example, in the recent provincial election in Ontario, CBQ did not do local reporting. It relied on network programming. It sent a person from Thunder Bay to Toronto to cover northwestern Ontario, which is anywhere from 800 miles to 1,500 miles away from Toronto. I realize that electronics are wonderful these days, but I think to have a number of people in a studio in Thunder Bay reaching out to northwestern Ontario for local coverage makes a lot of sense.

The people of Thunder Bay want to ensure that they can keep in touch with each other. By "each other" I mean the communities around northwestern Ontario. So much of what happens to one community happens to another. Therefore, it is important to know what happens.

For instance, five or six years ago the mines were closed in Atikokan. That is being relived today in Ear Falls. That situation will be relived in other communities as the years go by. It is important for those communities to hear what is going on. If there is only a network service with no local programming, the people will not know to the same extent what is happening at the time it is happening. They will feel much more isolated.

There is another danger. There is the danger of the influence of American radio and television which comes into northwestern Ontario. If we do not have the counterbalance of CBQ to ensure that regional programming and information as well as network information are available, we will become closer to the Americans and we will disappear as a nation.

There is a danger also within the context of provinces. A major portion of northwestern Ontario, particularly Atikokan which is on the Manitoba border, receives much of its information from Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg. We in this Party are quite pleased because most of the information that is

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received is about the NDP Government. However, in the context of Ontario, it is important for those people to know what their elected people are doing and what decisions are being made which affect them.

We know that there are those in the Conservative Party who would like to see the CBC totally dismantled. I hope they never have their way. I believe they are misguided. It can be compared to people who do not like a symphony. They say they will not spend any money on the symphony because they do not like it. However, those people forget that there are a lot of people who enjoy a symphony and need it for their own mental survival in society. I believe that we must recognize the CBC, in the broadest sense, as part of that mechanism which allows us to be sane and to remain Canadians. Private networks cannot do that. Private networks will not do that because they are in the ratings game. Every time the BBM is prepared to do a study, where do the electronic commercial stations turn? They turn to newspaper advertising in an attempt to entice people over to their stations in order to get their points up so they can sell advertising.

The CBC has never been in the ratings game. It is there to provide a balanced service to a cross-section of society. If it was not there for that purpose, we would not have French-language programming in some Ontario communities where the French population is small. However, it is seen as a necessity to provide those links.

We must reverse this trend. We must put the supports in place so that we have the kind of cultural milieu which we need. We must encourage it, not discourage it. Also, we must ensure that our communication tools in the public sector are there so that Canadians will know what is happening all across the land, while at the same time they know what is happening in their communities and regions.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this matter and I look forward to questions and comments from my fellow colleagues.

• (1750)

Mr. Hockin: Mr. Speaker, I share with the Hon. Member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan (Mr. Angus) his great admiration for Arthur Black. I like to drive my son to hockey on Saturday when Arthur Black's program is on the radio, and my son learns from it as much as I do. I hope that the Hon. Member is not suggesting that he would like to see the arm's length relationship change in such a way that the Minister of Communications (Mr. Masse) could bring Arthur Black back to Thunder Bay, back to the same program and the same format. I would like to ask the Hon. Member whether he believes in the arm's length relationship? It seems to me that he is essentially asking the Minister to reach out at arm's length and put Arthur Black back into his previous program. That would concern me because that would not be an arm's length relationship he is advocating. So I do want to know the Hon. Member's Party's view on that question.

The previous speaker alluded to the same subject with comments which are far from accurate. I think of the Presi-