

*Government Orders*

The last thing Canadians need at this point in time is a further erosion of national institutions like the CBC which plays an integral role in unifying this country by promoting our common values.

I also object to provisions of Bill C-40 which will reduce the term of office for the president of CBC and the chairman of the CRTC to five years compared to the previous seven-year term. It is important that both these agencies keep their ability to operate at arm's length from the government.

Furthermore, a seven-year term brings more stability and consistency with both organizations. I believe that the seven-year term should be restored.

The government has also failed to ensure, in Bill C-40, the continued presence of the parliamentary service, Radio Canada International, an all news service and a northern service. All these services are important to a country which is geographically large and serves to unite Canadians from one region to another.

Furthermore, the submission is contrary to the unanimous recommendation of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture in its 1987 sixth report. I am particularly concerned about the parliamentary channel which is considered a key window for Canadians to view Parliament and its proceedings.

Through this particular service, all Canadians have the ability to examine what their representatives are saying in our national forum, the House of Commons. I believe that it helps Canadians to better understand the issues and events that shape our country and our world.

Bill C-40 also fails to recognize the right to Canada's aboriginal peoples to receive service and representative native languages where numbers warrant and as public funds become available.

Liberals believe that the maintenance and support of the aboriginal languages and, through them, the transmission of native cultures is so important that the new broadcasting act must provide such a strong affirmation.

The northern services which extend to 98 per cent of all Canadians living in northern Canada is omitted from Bill C-40. In the northern region of our country, this channel provides services to 100,000 natives and non-natives in seven different languages. As well, CBC northern services produce recordings of native singers and musicians.

Many of the native languages and cultures are being forgotten and threatened by extinction. This government has the duty to do everything in its power to help aboriginal people to preserve and promote their language and culture. Also, I am particularly perturbed about the dual powers of review by cabinet over CRTC decisions.

This new power will jeopardize CRTC's ability to carry out its role as an expert in an independent, quasi-judicial body. If Bill C-40 becomes law, the cabinet will have the right to issue policy direction to the CRTC while retaining the right to set aside a decision of the commission on the basis that the decision derogates the attainment of the objectives of the broadcasting policy or of a direction issue to the commission.

Giving these dual powers to cabinet is potentially very dangerous to the Canadian broadcasting system. The power to review CRTC decisions puts the independence of the commission in jeopardy. It is extremely crucial for the commission to be independent and appear independent from any political interference.

It is not acceptable to leave the impression that the CRTC is being directly or indirectly controlled by the government. The commission was created because there was a need for a body to regulate in a consistent and non-political approach.

As far back as 1928, the Aird Report noted that this independence would also protect the government of the day from any political pressure inevitably exerted upon it as it ensures that the competing arguments put forward to the decision makers are weighed as objectively as possible.

If Bill C-40 is adopted, it will create a very dangerous precedent in the way the government establishes its relationship with organizations functioning at arm's length with the government.

I believe that the independence of the CRTC is seriously undermined through this legislation. The loss