

than a housekeeping bill. I think the litany of legislative inaction other than studies bears me out in my indictment. The fact is that this is an important and fundamental field which involves radio, television and cablevision all across the country. It also involves common carriers—and we all know about Bell Telephone rate applications. There is nothing more fundamental than this matter, yet the government is just marking time.

I could perhaps use the analogy of another department in respect of our economic problems. Other ministers have been charged with the responsibility of doing something about our economic problems, but all we have seen on this side of the House is a government marking time. That is really an objective comment, because those of us on this side of the House could, quite rightly, say a great deal more. Certainly, we have seen no move in a substantive way on the part of this government in the field of telecommunications.

● (1540)

Even if this is a housekeeping bill, which I suggested earlier is a sad admission, the real question is whether it will help meet some of the problems, or really aggravate them. Without repeating everything I have said, the first, fundamental flaw is that the bill does not recognize in any degree any provincial interest in this field. As I say, I shall not repeat all the problems involved in that respect. The minister may wish to comment on this question; however, it is the most profound and serious indictment one could make in respect of this bill.

Bill C-5—and there was some discussion on this matter in the committee when the minister was there—increases the number of full-time members of the executive council to nine, while the part-time members remain at ten. There is no suggestion that the part-time members will be provincial or regional representatives. When one looks at the bill, one asks oneself if there is to be some form of tokenism in respect of provincial or regional input to this new commission, with the change from five to nine full-time members. I realize the minister attempted to deal in part with this matter in committee. When one looks at the bill, it would appear that the full-time members take on even more power because now, instead of there being merely five full-time members on a 15-man board, there will be nine full-time members on a 19-man board with power to set up special and standing committees to do, I suggest, in effect the substantive work of the commission.

The fact that the number of full-time members has been doubled means there will be a dilution of the input of the part-time members. I wonder whether this was the intent; it might have been. In effect, if that will not be the result of this new commission, I do not believe it will help resolve regional problems and/or conflicts or help in respect of provincial representation if the provinces are to be represented through appointments to this board. Something else which gives concern is the procedure which is outlined in this bill under which the new commission is supposed to function. I alluded to this earlier. There will now be two streams of procedure under the new commission. There will be the present CRTC procedure, which is non-adversary in a sense if the matter involved is a broadcasting matter, and there will be the present CTC proce-

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dure, which is adversary in nature because it involves the hearing of witnesses and conducting cross-examination.

In effect, the commissioners of this new commission will wear two different hats: one day they will wear the CRTC hat and another day they will wear the CTC hat. They will have to be sure they get into the right room so that they will know what procedure is to be applied to the subject matter being discussed on a given day. There are no guidelines here in respect of how this problem might be solved. However, with the two new vice-chairmen of the commission there might be one vice-chairman to look after the former CRTC procedure and another vice-chairman to look after, in effect, the former telecommunications, CTC procedure. The two procedures will flow from the two vice-chairmen and, in effect, there will be two parallel streams within the one body which is supposed to be a body to rationalize the complex and complicated field of communications.

I wonder what purpose is to be gained by having two parallel streams under two vice-chairmen. Another question flows from that. If there are two vice-chairmen with two different streams of procedure, will this remove the chairman that much further from his function of keeping a finger on the whole work and function of the commission? Even though I have suggested that the chairman of the CRTC sometimes has moved into an area where there is a vacuum, because of inaction on the part of the federal government, to help make, in effect, almost legislative pronouncements in a sensitive area involving broadcasting and/or communications, at least he is there. But if we have two parallel streams within one commission, under two vice-chairmen, if I were involved in the industry as either a broadcaster, a common carrier or a cable man I wonder whether I would be worried, in that situation, that the chairman would be so far off, in his rarefied, ivory tower, that he really would not be involved.

We have the present situation where the chairman is so sincere and hard working that sometimes he becomes involved in physical participation in the function of the commission. Now it would appear that we are to move to the other extreme of removal because of the two vice-chairmen and two parallel streams of procedure. I suggest this is just as bad as the other. The minister may be able to make some comments on that matter. When we have the two streams, will we have rotation within the commission between the streams, or will four full-time commissioners be assigned to one stream and the other four assigned to the other stream, with all the built-in biases and attitudes that prevail when commissioners or members of a commission hear just one type of problem?

When I first read the press release and the green paper of the minister, I thought one of the reasons for the merger of the regulatory function was not only to create more input—which is not being done by this merger—but was perhaps to bring together, rather than divide, the three elements, broadcasting, cable and common carrier. If some of my fears are justified in practice, one really wonders what will be accomplished by this merger if we are to have two parallel streams, one dealing with the CRTC function and the other dealing with the telecommunications function of the CTC. Those are some areas which create real concern in respect of this bill.