

Government Orders

• (2040)

As a teenager I was becoming aware of my country and its differences, watching the various programs that came from different parts of the country, whether it was *Land and Sea* from the Atlantic, whether it was broadcasts relating to farms and agriculture from the west, whether it was programs relating to different cultural events in the north—not as many as we should have had but enough—whether it was *Front Page Challenge* or *Hockey Night in Canada*, it gave you a sense of being Canadian.

The CBC enriched my life when I was a graduate student in the United Kingdom. We would stay up—there were about 10 of us at the London School of Economics in the mid-1970s—to listen to Radio Canada International, because it was our connection to our country, to find out what was going on, to hear the day-to-day news of the country, and to listen to the hockey games. Also, because our friends from other countries came to listen, it gave a certain portrait of our country to others who got a better understanding in the international sense of what it was to be a Canadian.

Earlier the parliamentary secretary mentioned in his comments that Al Johnson in 1980, under the national unity mandate, kept integrity in CBC's journalism and covered the issue of Quebec and the referendum fairly.

This does not surprise me. You do not need to take national unity out of the Broadcasting Act, out of CBC's mandate, to ensure that CBC will cover things fairly. I know the member for Hamilton—Wentworth agrees with that, but the mistake is that you are putting the cart before the horse. You are saying that national unity somehow hampers journalistic integrity. In all the years of the CBC's existence it has not done that. Why should it start doing it now?

Mr. Speaker, you know, I know, and every member of this House knows that no one wants the CBC to slant news. We do not want the CBC to interpret the national unity mandate in its news coverage. The argument that it would do so is specious. It is not fair or worthy of the kind of news coverage CBC radio and television have given us as Canadians over the years. It is not worthy of any member of this House, and I do not think any member of this House truly believes it.

What we are talking about in a national unity mandate has always been handled well within the context of news coverage. What really happens within the context of news coverage on national unity is that the CBC reports

events and thoughts of one region of the country to another and back and forth to the centre.

National unity also equals cultural programming in music, drama, and public affairs. It is in effect saying: "Winnipeg, this is what Halifax thinks", "Yellowknife, this is what Shawinigan cares about", "Vancouver, listen to what is irritating St. John's, Newfoundland," and today it is quite a bit.

I resent this evisceration of yet another cornerstone of our nation's infrastructure. I resent the pious mouthings of the government that by breaking down we improve. We have an expression in Nova Scotia that I think the rest of you in this country have heard: "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Well, CBC ain't broke yet, try as some people have.

Ms. Blondin: It will be.

Ms. Clancy: And Canadians do not want the government to fix it.

The member for Hamilton—Wentworth talked about competition and whether we can compete. I am astounded at this member who is a journalist and has been a journalist whom I have admired and respected and still do for many years. He is certainly much more senior to me. We can compete. We do compete. We compete now, and we compete internationally in every possible facet of the CBC's production. *Degrassi High* competes. *Street Legal* competes. CBC news and *The Journal* compete. Sports coverage competes. The world acknowledges that no one, for example, films and presents ballet better than the CBC.

Ms. Blondin: Or hockey.

Ms. Clancy: Hockey, of course. That goes without saying.

As the member for Hamilton—Wentworth said, CBC radio is the finest in the world. I agree, absolutely. I received what little journalistic experience I have had in training on CBC radio, and it remains one of the fondest memories of my previous existence.

What is this ridiculous contention that we are not competitive, that we need that ghastly phrase which I hope will soon be wiped from the Canadian lexicon, a level playing field. We do not need a level playing field. If we are at the bottom of the hill and they are at the top, we can still get over the top faster than they can. We compete. We do better.