

Government Orders

[English]

In other words, 23 years ago today in this Chamber, the Hon. Judy Lamarsh brought in the first broadcasting bill. I think the time has come to renew that bill, bring that bill forward and this time let us get it right.

On this particular set of motions and amendments, we have a number of concerns. My friend and colleague from Western Arctic spoke very eloquently on the whole question of the northern service. In speaking to these amendments yesterday, and I hope at future times, we keep bringing up the subject of national unity and how the CBC is a force for national unity.

Since I became a member of this House, I have been very fortunate in that I have been able to travel in the north. Without the unifying factor of the CBC, without the CBC's broadcasting abilities in northern Canada, what would be the unifying factor in northern Canada? It would be that most northern televisions have access to Detroit cable stations. Somehow, close as Detroit is to Windsor, it does not quite do the same job. We do not need American television as the only link in a broadcast sense, in a television sense to our northern citizens.

I spoke a bit yesterday about the need for the inclusion of Radio Canada International. When I was a graduate student in the United Kingdom, as I said, I and my Canadian friends would wake ourselves up at three o'clock in the morning to hear the Stanley Cup play-offs. We would get up at odd hours to hear *As It Happens*, to hear various and sundry other public affairs programming from Radio Canada International because that was our link to our home country.

Above and beyond that, and important as it is for Canadian nationals living abroad, the other important service that Radio Canada International provides for Canadians as a group is it presents a picture of us to the international community. When they hear top-notch public affairs programs, such as *Sunday Morning*, such as *As It Happens* and various and sundry others; *Ideas* is another one that springs to mind that is frequently replayed on Radio Canada International, it creates for us an image that I suspect most Canadians would be proud to own.

To leave this out of the broadcasting bill, to just pass over this institution, which means so much to Canadian prestige, is I think a terrible oversight.

I want to conclude by saying a little bit about the parliamentary service. The parliamentary service is something that is very dear to all of us. Clearly it is a link for every one of us in this House to our constituents and to people across the country. If the idea of omitting the parliamentary service as well from this bill is the beginning of privatization of the coverage of the House of Commons, then this is indeed a frightening and ominous decision.

People across this country watch this channel. I think every one of us knows this, sometimes to our sorrow and sometimes to our pleasure, that many, many of our constituents watch the parliamentary network to keep abreast of what is happening in debate, to ensure that they are as well informed as they wish to be about the doings of Parliament. I am sure that most of my colleagues in this Chamber would agree that from time to time they hear from their constituents about something we have said or some comment we have made that has not gone unnoticed by the people at home.

The only way to maintain this, away from the possibilities of conflict of interest, et cetera, is to keep this service in and under the aegis of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as a Crown corporation. That is the only way to ensure that the parliamentary service does not either diminish in its coverage or that various and sundry abuses, which could arise from privatization, do not take place.

The other thing that I wanted to discuss is the whole question of the news service.

The news service in both languages is crucial because of the opportunity it gives Canadians to see an in-depth look at the news. We are not restricted to the 30-second clip or the seven-second clip. One gets in-depth coverage and one has some idea of what is going on behind the news story. It should be available in both languages. It should be the right of all Canadians to hear news coverage in both languages.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being one o'clock, I do now leave the Chair until two o'clock this day.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.