

*Point of Order—Mrs. Finestone*

duty to provide a comprehensive reply. The previous set of Standing Orders which were in effect on February 24, 1986, set forth the same duty but gave the Government only 120 days in which to respond to a committee report. The current version of this Standing Order came into effect in June of 1987 allowing the Government 150 days. I presume that it was felt that we needed that additional one month's time.

One would have thought, however, that that would have been ample time for the Minister to have prepared a detailed reply. If the Minister still was not ready to provide a full reply, then she should have come before the House to seek unanimous consent, which I think the committee would have been happy to grant, to extend that time to her under the rules so that she could have ample time. She has failed to do this.

• (1510)

The Government's response to our committee's report deals in vague terms with only some of the recommendations contained in part 2 of our fifth report. That is the part that dealt with the power of direction and civil remedies. The response dealt with none of the recommendations in part 1 of our fifth report on specialty services, the issue which is now before the CRTC, and none of the 86 recommendations contained in our sixth report on broadcasting legislation. Surely it is evident that the failure to respond to any of the 86 recommendations cannot comply with the Standing Order of the House, no matter how it is defined as comprehensive.

I am not suggesting that the Minister was obliged to advise us what specific actions she intended to take on each of the 107 recommendations. Surely, at the very least, the Minister owed a duty to the House, to the Members, to the committee, and to individual Canadians who came, to indicate whether she agreed or disagreed with our recommendations. Her response does not even meet this minimum standard. She neither accepted nor rejected most of our recommendations, nor does her response provide any indication of which of the committee's 107 specific recommendations she feels that she cannot respond to, or why she cannot respond.

The Minister's failure to respond to our recommendations for a new Broadcasting Act seems strangely inconsistent with the Minister's assurance to the committee on May 4, 1987, and I quote what the Minister stated: "I believe we can all agree on the main thrust of new legislation". The Minister was correct. We did agree on the main thrust of this legislation. In fact, our committee recommendations were unanimous. Apparently the Minister has either changed her mind, or chosen to abrogate her responsibility of policy making to the CRTC at this critical juncture in the evolution of Canadian broadcasting. She has failed to provide leadership in the legislative area, a mandate she stated was of utmost urgency. Perhaps it was better that she did not, if she has no vision.

The inaction of the Minister at this critical time leaves a serious void in addressing the new technological changes, for example, satellite to cable specialty services, the very issues

which we addressed and the issues which will have a profound effect on the future of the Canadian broadcasting system. Many hearings have been scheduled and some direction is required.

It is important to note that last winter when our committee first embarked upon consideration of the broadcasting field, we had a choice of three issues or methods of procedure; start with broadcast policy, then look at the architecture of the system, and finally come up with some broadcasting legislation. That course seemed logical. The Minister of Communications urged us to begin with a fast-track study on broadcasting legislation in order that she would be able to produce a new Act. We, as a committee, would have preferred to follow the broadcasting policy route first.

The reference from the Minister of Communications to the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture stated, as reported in *Hansard* on January 29, 1987, page 2855:

That the committee report its findings and recommendations on all matters relevant to the development of broadcasting legislation no later than April 15, 1987.

During a session of the committee on February 5, 1987, the chairman, the Hon. Member for Edmonton South (Mr. Edwards) stated, as reported in *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, February 5, 1987, page 18:4:

We have a rigorous schedule. As the Minister indicated to us when she appeared in November, it is required for the Government to carry out its mission of bringing in a new Broadcasting Act. The reference from the House refers to recommendations leading to new Broadcasting Act.

In response to the remarks of Mr. Edwards, the Minister of Communications stated, as reported in *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence*, February 5, 1987, page 18:5:

I was pleased to hear the Chairman stress the deadline date we have placed on the receipt of your report on the Caplan-Sauvageau Task Force. I should advise you now that I intend to hold you to that deadline. I am very keen to receive your views by then because I am determined to keep my deadline on seeking Cabinet approval for a broad policy framework on broadcasting after Easter, as well as authority to begin drafting a new Act over the summer.

Our committee rushed to meet the deadline imposed by the Minister, but the Minister did not rush to keep up with the committee's response. Now that the committee has complied with the request of the Minister to begin with broadcasting legislation, the Minister has the audacity to send us back to the drawing board with a new set of questions and objectives that are totally irrelevant. Some of the questions now posed by the Minister, for example, those questions relating to the CBC, are largely irrelevant to the formulation of broadcasting policy legislation, since the issues are operating and not legislative in nature.

With respect to the questions of the Minister on Telefilm and the National Film Board, these issues are outside the Broadcasting Act itself, and are therefore not germane to the issues addressed in our fifth and sixth reports.

With respect to the other questions of the Minister, written in bureaucratese, it is difficult to know if the Minister is contemplating deregulation of the CRTC, privatization, or