

The same thing will happen in the future if the government carries out its plan to give the U.S. broadcasters almost unrestricted access to the Canadian market.

Why this radical and far-reaching departure from a tradition of building a separate Canadian broadcasting system, a tradition begun in the 1930s by a Conservative government? Why the refusal to provide a sure legislative basis for maintaining and strengthening Canada's own off air broadcasting services, and developing a strong and separate system of Canadian pay and specialty services?

The only answer that can explain this decision by the government is surely that it knows that any new provisions which restrict the entry of American broadcasters into Canada would contravene the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement. I think that is an answer to my colleague from York South—Weston.

That is the key. I did not want to give it away too soon. I wanted people to think about it—if it was not already self-evident.

We have of course already seen evidence in the areas of cultural policy of the way the government is acting since the signing of that free trade agreement. We saw the gutting of the Minister of Communications' original film importations bill, and we have Simon Reisman's public assurance that the revised and eviscerated bill has at least been made consistent with the free trade agreement. That, of course, is why the film legislation will do nothing effective to protect Canadian interests.

We know that the government suppressed an independent consultant's study of the sound recording industry which, in its leaked form, warned of serious consequences for Canadian song writers and performers and the Canadian record industry under the trade agreement. The consequences of a weakened Canadian record industry for Canadian content quotas in radio is obvious, but it is also obvious how wonderful it is for those outside of Canada, for foreign influence.

We have seen the government reject as well the central proposals of its own 1985 task force on film policy related to the use of the Investment Canada Act to strengthen Canadian ownership and control over film distribution.

Government Orders

Indeed, in the book industry, which after all is one of the basic and fundamental sources of material to produce film for VCRs, as well as stage productions for that matter, and where the government had already established a very strong policy in 1985 to strengthen Canadian participation in this vitally important book industry, we saw in the 1988 new American library decision, the abandoning of that essential Baie Comeau policy.

At the present time the government seems to be avoiding making decisions on a number of Investment Canada cases which will again test the 1985 Baie Comeau policy.

Will those decisions now wait until after the election in order to avoid the embarrassment of having a further withdrawal from protecting Canada's cultural sovereignty and identity? There is, of course, further evidence for this interpretation of the government's actions since other new legislative initiatives which might have contravened the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement have also been rejected.

For example, the government refused to include in Bill C-40 any requirement that foreign pay television or specialty services carrying on business through affiliates in Canada should do so through a Canadian entity licensed by the CRTC. I remind members of this House that this unanimous, all-party recommendation of the standing committee was endorsed by the Canadian Cable Television Association as well.

Failure to act on this recommendation will result in two classes of broadcasting networks carrying on business here: one, those which require a licence and must contribute to achieving Canadian programming objectives and those which can extract money from the Canadian market without a licence and with no obligation to contribute to Canadian programming. For them, Canada is strictly a cash cow.

The result will be a growing sense of unfairness and a resulting undermining of the legitimacy of the regulations applied to Canadian services. The result will also be a reduced ability to meet Canadian programming objectives.

It has been our view that anything that has access to our home television set should have been considered by the CRTC and exempted where deemed acceptable, but not necessary to contribute to Canadian broadcasting.