

potential yet, as I am sure every member of this House will agree, an empire which may come to be understood as the alternate network originally envisaged in this bill.

The point is that we risk the gradual but unending constriction of our societal memory, and in so doing we risk the future of the country itself. It matters not if there remains on the northern half of the North American continent a country called Canada. It matters not that that country maintains a flag with two red bars and a red maple leaf in its centre. It matters not that at the beginning of every hockey, football or other sporting game people who call themselves Canadians get up and sing a national anthem called *O Canada* if those are simply hollow symbols of what once was. If we lose our collective memory as Canadians, which is the price we will pay, if we lose the means of recreating that memory constantly and conveying it among ourselves, then Canada may exist as a name, but it will most definitely not exist as a country.

That is the context in which I want this bill viewed and that is the reason that I think this House, in all fairness, must reject the bill as it is currently constituted. The principle of the bill that we are debating at second reading is a principle for the governance of the growth of private sector, principally American broadcasting in Canada. It is a principle with which I cannot agree.

We should have before us instead a bill, the principle of which should be fostering the rapid growth of broadcasting that will convey Canada to us. That is not the principle of this bill. Neither I nor my caucus can support it.

Mr. Dennis Mills (Broadview—Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of the approximately 3,000 people in my riding who are employed in cultural industries.

I must tell you that the first time I read this bill I did not really notice a big difference from the previous bill. At first blush it seemed to be consistent with the national objectives. Upon review and some support from my colleagues, it was brought to my attention that the government has removed the words, "to contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity". The words that were put in place were, "to contribute to shared

national consciousness and identity". I looked at these words and my first reaction was why would the minister want to remove those words at a time when our national will is being assaulted by tendencies in every region of our country to balkanize? We have taken our most powerful instrument of galvanization, our broadcast systems, and we seem to have removed the spirit of what their main purpose is supposed to be.

• (1330)

I tried to think of an example that people on the street might understand when we talk about national unity and the frustrations that people experience in every region of our country. I go back to an experience that I had last January when I was studying French in Quebec City with my colleague from Brampton. One evening we were at a concert and witnessed the Quebec francophone recording artist, Richard Séguin. I left that concert and could not get over how much talent this man had. I returned to Toronto and told my wife about this artist. I went to Yonge Street and went into seven record stores before I finally found a Richard Séguin tape. It was on the third floor, in the back corner, one cassette.

About two weeks later I went to Montreal. I visited with Richard Séguin and I told him this story. He said: "Dennis, this is the frustration, this is the problem we face as francophone recording artists in this country and this is part of the reason why we sometimes say 'what's in Canada for us?'" Richard Séguin can sell 100,000 albums in Quebec but beyond Quebec he is not heard. He is not heard on the CHUMs or the Qs. He is not heard. He is heard on one instrument of communication that is national on a consistent basis, *MuchMusic*.

The frustration that people feel is that their music and artistic endeavours are not given a national presentation. I have tested this over the last few months. If you go into a university or a grade school and say: "How many people have heard of Rita MacNeil or Gordon Lightfoot or Blue Rodeo?" most will put up their hands in recognition. When you mention francophone recording artists, very few do outside Quebec.

I think this bill is here to promote all recording artists, not just in each region but from coast to coast in every region. That is not happening today. I realize that this bill is going to committee. I think there has to be a way that we can be a little bit more progressive and that we