

Broadcasting

It should be pointed out that many less populated areas while having a sufficient population base to ensure a potentially successful cable television undertaking, were they able to receive sufficient television signals off-air, could not possibly survive, given the requirement for a microwave delivery system, without a significant degree of support from larger centres.

If you want that to be boiled down into simple English, Mr. Speaker, let me go back to the Toronto Maple Leafs' defence of the 1930s, where little King Clancy had to have big Red Horner alongside him so they could operate effectively as a team. The little fellow could not do it by himself; he had to rely on the bigger fellow to help him.

I think these three citations are the requisites of the policy set forth by the CRTC. When all of them are examined together, I think what they amount to is this, that where lots of people live in houses connected to sewer and water lines, or there are people in remote areas which somehow are adjacent to big cities, then those people can have cable television; otherwise they will have to wait for a new policy. I hope the minister will take this point very seriously and perhaps act as a communications source with the new commission, and that the 19 people or whatever who are on the commission will appreciate the point I am making.

● (1650)

If we are to appear absolutely fair to all Canadians in the developing of communications by cable television, we will have to seize a particularly grisly nettle. It is a grisly nettle if you happen to be a member on the government side, because you have to recognize that not only is it very logical to require services where there are municipal water and sewer services, but you must not judge communications interests on the basis of whether someone runs a sewer line into a particular area. It must be recognized that these services must be provided in certain areas whether the authority wants to provide them or not. They must generally be provided where Mother Bell has already provided her services. The marginal areas have now all been exhausted. We have to tell these people, when their licences are renewed, that they must go out beyond the limits of the metropolitan areas; that they must go out ten miles here and another ten miles there until everyone is covered.

The CRTC has found it can tell people to extend services and undertake greater jurisdiction than they originally wanted. We have to tell these people to provide services wherever the people need communications. They have to provide these services where other communication services have gone before. There must be wider limits in respect of cable television than have existed before, at least according to my understanding of the situation. These companies must match the services provided by our telephone companies, including the Bell system in Quebec and Ontario, the provincial systems in western Canada, the Maritime Tel and Tel, the New Brunswick telephone system and the Newfoundland system. I think the matter is as simple as that.

I also suspect that some kind of directive from the federal government will be required. The government cannot look askance at this new commission if it expects to open up the unserved areas of Canada. This can be done through the operations of the existing telephone compa-

[Mr. McCleave.]

nies, because the hardware is already in place to provide service to the remote parts of the country. I think you will find that wherever there is a telephone system there is also the technical and technological ability to provide a cablevision system. This is a choice that has to be made by the government and by this commission, and until the choice is made there will be large areas of Canada not served by cablevision. I make that point as my only point to the Minister of Communications in respect of this new commission.

Perhaps the only other thing I might add by way of a philosophic comment is that it seems very strange, in an age when communication is so very important to us all, that we only get measures such as this one to deal in a fundamental way with communications in the vast areas of this country. It seems strange that in this important area of bringing the people together, with all our new techniques, innovations and technological changes, we should only take such a small step once every ten years. This must be a commentary on our ability to communicate with each other.

Mr. Ray Hnatyshyn (Saskatoon-Biggar): Mr. Speaker, I realize I have only a few minutes this afternoon at my disposal, and I know the minister is anxious to make his position clear. However, I am sure he will want to answer some of the questions I should like to pose, as well as the questions asked during the substantial contributions made by others during this third reading debate. I hope in due course the minister will answer the one or two questions I would like to put to him this afternoon.

One of the things I have observed during the 9½ months I have been in this House is the tendency on the part of the government to create administrative tribunals, bodies or agencies to deal with very important segments of governmental responsibility. To use the Department of Transport as an example, since the parliamentary secretary is here and I want to take advantage of that fact, parliament seems to have lost control of certain areas of transportation as a result of the government's delegating responsibility to agencies, Crown corporations and departments.

When an individual member of parliament attempts to obtain information about the operations of an agency involved in transportation matters, the civil servant tends to adopt a very cursory or arbitrary attitude. The civil servant or bureaucrat, if I may use that term, is inclined to take the attitude that in fact it is none of the individual member's business but, for example, is the basic concern of the agency, such as the CBC. I use that as an example as I see that the minister responsible is here, and I would like to take advantage of that fact by again letting him know that this kind of response does not sit well with individual members of parliament.

The point I am making is that while it has been pointed out that this bill in fact is a housekeeping bill to create a new commission with expanded authority over communications in our country, the fact of the matter is that there is nothing in the bill to indicate that this House or the executive in cabinet will have any input in the deliberations of that commission. This fact intrigues me and perhaps the minister in due course will explain why there has not been provision for the government to give direction to the CRTC in matters of policy.