

*Broadcasting Act*

interpreted that to mean at least above 50 per cent. The Act of 1958 said it should be predominantly Canadian for all, public and private, in content and character.

We see this watering down. In 1988 the content and character requirement is gone for the whole system, with the CBC the only one which has to be predominantly and distinctively Canadian. That is a real disappointment. I believe that our committee showed very adequately that the resources were available to the private sector to enable them to be really Canadian in their content and character. We know that the artistic resources are there. We have excellent performers, writers, producers, directors and so forth.

The CBC has also had a diminution in its role. Taking out only one word from the aims of the CBC results in a change of direction which is extremely important. The word "enlightenment" has been taken out. It used to be information, entertainment and enlightenment.

Information is, of course, news and public affairs programming. We all know what entertainment is. The CBC previously had a requirement to provide programming for enlightenment. This was a very important role. The CBC was the only source of this kind of programming for many people in Canada. By dropping this one term as a requirement for the CBC the Minister is telling us that the CBC does not have to fulfil this goal. Information, entertainment, and enlightenment remain a goal for the whole system, but the programming which will provide this enlightenment could be relegated to only the alternative broadcasting sources. We do not know very much about what will be provided. We do not know when they will be on stream or what they will do.

● (1120)

We question why that enlightenment function should be in the alternative sector rather than in the main thrust of the CBC, our public broadcasting system. It is a dereliction of duty and shows the sneaky way in which the role of the CBC is being diminished. It will be forced into a greater role of simply news, public affairs and entertainment programs. It will not have to perform nor be funded to perform the role it has played in the past.

Another significant failure of the Bill is in the area of human rights. The Standing Committee on Communications and Culture was very clear in what it recommended. The important issue for women across the country is that they have been absent or badly represented in many news and public affairs programming, and shown in idiotic roles in much other programming. There have been task forces, committees, resolutions, there have been policies and programs to change this. Visible minorities have been asking for more fair treatment in the media, on the airwaves as well as in the boardrooms that govern them.

Our committee said that the programming carried by the system should provide a balanced representation of Canadian society, reflecting its multicultural and bilingual realities, its

aboriginal peoples and the composition of its population with regard to sex, age, national ethnic origin, colour, religion and mental or physical handicap. There must be fair representation in order for broadcasting to be fair and realistic in reflecting Canadian society.

Women make up roughly half the population of the country. They ought to be well represented and not just appear as an occasional minority group on television. The legislation states nothing along the lines we recommended. Instead, Clause 3(1)(c)(iii) states that the broadcasting policy should:

strive, through its operations and programming, to reflect the circumstances and aspirations of Canadian men and women, including the linguistic duality and multicultural nature of Canadian society and the special place of aboriginal peoples within that society,

That is very weak and far from what was recommended. Its intention is unclear.

Women have been dealt with unjustly and unfairly for many years. The long struggle to correct that has been totally ignored by the Government. Visible minorities who have taken courage by women's organizations are demanding better treatment. Their needs have been similarly ignored.

Sex is not even mentioned as one of the objects in Clause 3(1)(g)(i), which states that the Canadian broadcasting system should:

be varied and comprehensive, providing a balance of information, enlightenment and entertainment for people of different ages, interests and tastes,

Sex is not even mentioned.

The discrimination against half our population has been the subject of major lobbying efforts, yet research and task force reports are not even mentioned in the Government's agenda. That is wrong. Canadian women expect better. Women represent half of Canadian society and the airwaves belong to the public.

I am also disappointed with the Government's approach to the right to service. We were very clear that it was wrong that Canadians did not get full broadcasting services, particularly in the public sector, because they have paid for those services with their tax dollars. While people will get some kind of CBC service in many parts of the country, be it radio, television or something of each, they will not get all of the services. FM radio is not available in many places, even though it could be provided at not too significant a cost. We heard that many areas get English but not French, and people feel left out because they are not getting the services for which they have paid and which other people in the country are receiving.

Our recommendation 26 was very clear about what we believe should be the case. The Bill should reaffirm that all Canadians are entitled to Canadian broadcasting services in French and English, with this right being implemented if necessary by means of concerted action by the public sector.

If it takes some special measures through public funds to see that people get these services, then that ought to be done.