

Oral Questions

continue to run up that debt and simply pass on the bill to our children?

• (1450)

[Translation]

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CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications. It concerns the sudden shutdown of the CBC television station in Sydney.

With the closing of VIA Rail, the Canadian Armed Forces base, cuts to Air Canada and the gutting of the Atlantic fishery, the economy of eastern Nova Scotia is in tatters.

The closing of this television station means the loss of dozens of jobs and deprives the people of my riding and that of all Cape Breton of a special link with the rest of the country.

Why is the minister so intent and determined to dismantle another national institution and take away more jobs from an area that is already suffering tremendous economic hardship?

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, several study groups studied and recommended the reorganization of the CBC and the Corporation took steps to accomplish just that. I will be happy to explain in greater detail the basis of this decision tomorrow, when I testify before the parliamentary committee.

[English]

Mr. David Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): My supplementary is to the same minister. The minister will know that the primary tool to facilitate and enhance national unity has been the CBC. Canadians in the poorer regions of this country want to know from this government how it will achieve this vital objective when, in fact, it shuts down those institutions that in effect bind all Canadians together. Why is the minister so intent and so determined to shut down this national institution, the CBC, which can and has facilitated national unity in this country?

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, the government always looked upon the CBC as a government agency with an important role to play, as evidenced by all the programs made available to the Canadian people. With that in mind, the government always made sure that the average increase in the global revenues of the Corporation was higher than the combined average for government programs as a whole. However, this does not preclude the CBC—as any private network, newspaper and daily paper in Canada and in most Western countries—to adjust to market conditions because our nation may be predicated on unity, but it is also predicated on free market, Mr. Speaker.

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[English]

HOSTAGES

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg South Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pose a question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs.

All Canadians have a great admiration for the character and determination showed by the Canadians who were held hostage in Iraq and Kuwait. I think we are all very pleased that they are now home for Christmas. I want to say that for many of them the trauma they experienced did not end with their release. Many of them are now suffering very serious economic hardship because they had to leave their jobs and assets. Some are having a very trying time making a personal adjustment after their difficult experience.

Is the Secretary of State for External Affairs prepared to offer services and resources by the government to help these very brave Canadians in their adjustment back to Canada, including writing off the travel costs which External Affairs has imposed upon them in terms of their return from Iraq and Kuwait? Could the minister give that undertaking in the House today?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that everyone admires the courage of the Canadians who were trapped in Kuwait. There is no doubt that everyone in this House