

Request for Third T.V. Station in Toronto

media, private enterprise may be forced to the wall. As a taxpayer and a legislator I am not prepared to accept the burden of state control and state operation of the media.

My last remark may be considered by some to be an exaggeration, Mr. Speaker. It is. It is intended to be just that. My reason for the statement is an attempt to awaken Parliament, and the minister responsible for the CRTC, to a creeping paternalism that instead of improving quality may choke it completely. Imagination and originality are hard to foster when you are being throttled by regulation and more regulation. As control of the broadcasting media becomes more stringent, the possibility of state financial involvement increases. Restriction is not being exercised only by the CRTC. We are being asked by the hon. member for Peel South to direct the CRTC to hold hearings for the purpose of possible establishment of a third VHF outlet there.

There have been pronouncements that the House may soon be asked to abolish tobacco advertising on television and radio. If we support that move, where do the media make up the loss of revenue? I do not object to the intent of possible legislation, Mr. Speaker; all I ask is that the entire means of communicating tobacco advertising be treated equally.

As much as I sympathize with the hon. member's motion, I regret that I will not be able to support it. Policy decisions regarding the direction of television to Canadians residing in the central and northern reaches of the country prevent me from being generous to those who already have sufficient outlets to cater to their entertainment and educational needs. Television outlets are desired and required in many localities in my own constituency. Indeed, there are residents at McBride and Valemount, short distances from microwave, who would most happily accept one outlet. Efforts to interest CBC in extending service from Jasper, Alberta, for the few miles into the two localities in British Columbia continue to be met with study after study.

● (5:50 p.m.)

Dissatisfaction is also being experienced at Fort Nelson where the CBC frontier package fails to provide all-round acceptable programming. Until these inequalities are overcome—which are also part of the commission's responsibility—I would not favour a hearing as proposed in the motion. I could be easily swayed if the hon. member would support extension of television services to regions not as densely populated as those near the 49th parallel.

There is considerable concern, Mr. Speaker, about the role being fulfilled by the CRTC. When an hon. member must resort to bringing Parliament's attention to a situation which automatically should be resolved by terms of reference to the CRTC through the Broadcasting Act, it is not surprising that the public takes strong exception to recent proclamations of policy regarding Canadian content. Those of us who choose to live miles north of the 49th parallel are prevented from receiving broadcast entertainment of comparable value to our southern counterparts. We who are developing our country far from

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densely populated regions of Canada must forgo many material benefits, and the arbitrary regulations imposed on CBC, our only television outlet in most cases, further limits our viewing pleasures.

CRTC policy of imposing exceptionally high Canadian content without consideration for population disparity is not acceptable. Proposals were published a year ago February 1, public hearings were held and from the announcement of finality by the commission we are led to believe that public input assisted deliberation. If this were the case, it appears to me that greater concessions would have been made. With the combined opinions of broadcasters, actors, writers, members of the public and Members of Parliament, why did the commission proceed with its uncompromising Canadian content policy? Speculation is only possible. Broadcasters were divided and accommodating in their presentations, but who could fault them? The licensing powers of the commission are exceptionally wilful. Writers and actors could be considered partisan, and Members of Parliament as political influence. In the case of the latter, Mr. Speaker, I suggest we know public opinion and are more prepared to cater to it.

Regulations adopted by CRTC are loading the dice against the broadcasting industry. No corresponding conditions are applied to magazines, newspapers, movies or billboards. Is this fair? Mind you, with some actions of the CRTC we cannot help but wonder if it ever intends to be fair. As may be seen from the hon. member's motion and my comments, I believe it is time a review of the commission's references was made, keeping in mind that public desires are of greater importance than has been shown to date by the present body.

Mr. Jack Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, upon reading the hon. member's motion my first reaction was one of surprise. As an individual who spent considerable time in Toronto getting my university and legal education, it seems to me that if there is an area of the province with a surfeit of radio and television coverage, it is Toronto.

I was also surprised when I received a communication from my riding indicating that notwithstanding the fact we have two excellent radio stations in Sarnia and programs that can be picked up by antenna from London and Windsor, the feeling of parochial and local pride was such that the writer felt we should have a local station in the Sarnia area. It seems to me this is the kind of situation the CRTC is faced with, looking at what might be termed as parochial pride as against a legitimate need for television coverage requested by individuals.

I support the hon. member for Sudbury (Mr. Jerome) and the hon. member for Peel South (Mr. Chappell), who moved the motion, who indicated in their comments that initiative should be taken by the CRTC and that they should not be limited by the scope of an application. This is an area where direction might be given to the general public, particularly those who wish to establish independent stations. Without this kind of expertise and initiative we will be faced with the situation where a group with the money, power and know-how can have a