

*Government Orders*

from Canadian viewers. That should set off alarm bells everywhere.

We have to ask ourselves in light of the decline in viewership for the CBC and in light of this request for more money why in the world is this happening. Why are we allowing this debate to even happen when we see all this money going south of the border? Should we not be trying to repatriate this money? Should the CBC be more dependent on viewer support than it already is?

With the CBC's tacit application for a new arts channel, the festival channel, will some of this money end up supporting this new application? The festival channel really is in competition again with the private sector. We have a very strong private sector application for an arts channel but it seems the CBC feels it has to justify its existence by applying for that new arts channel as well.

I have to wonder if this \$25 million going to the CBC will end up in some way, shape or form being shuffled over toward the festival channel to help that channel get off the ground. The CBC has no mandate to be involved in this arts channel. Nonetheless it has found a very sneaky way to go in the back door to push for an arts channel to fall under the CBC purview. We have to ask ourselves whether the intent of the department is to shuffle some of that \$25 million into the newly proposed festival channel.

We also have to ask what guidelines has the government established to the exercising of this borrowing authority. This has not been made clear. The government has basically said it will decide when the CBC comes to it whether the CBC's application for funds has merit. We are talking about a government that wants politicians and government to be more accountable.

● (1240)

We need to know before we approve this what kind of measures will be put in place to ensure this money is not wasted, that this money does get a return on investment because that is what they say will happen. We have to make sure it does not go into a festival channel to compete against private sector broadcasters. It is not at all clear that will not happen.

Those are the types of questions this government has to answer before we can go ahead and give any kind of support for allowing the CBC to have borrowing authority.

This really represents the opening of a Pandora's box. We wonder whether there will be an increase now among crown corporations coming forward to ask for borrowing authority. I would argue that is a very scary prospect.

Too often these different crown corporations do not have the private sector to compete with and keep them in line and they do not have a bottom line to address. Often they do not have to worry about what the shareholders will say and therefore very often can spend money very unwisely with impunity. That is a

scary prospect when we have a \$45 billion or \$46 billion deficit this year entering into a new year when we may have a deficit in excess of \$40 billion.

I will conclude by saying it is crystal clear that any attempt to revitalize the CBC using measures normally reserved for companies competing in a private marketplace undermines its integrity as a public broadcaster.

Any special measures designed to raise capital for the CBC such as loans, subscriber fees or licence fees would be an unfair advantage if the CBC underbids its private counterparts for any services which it offers given its heavy state sanctioned financing.

For that reason I urge the members of this House to oppose this bill.

**Mr. Dennis J. Mills (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry):** Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the member opposite from the Reform Party. I feel his analysis of the CBC has been very narrow.

When I look at the CBC I do not see it just as a broadcaster. I see the CBC as an instrument to pull this country together. When we think of the CBC we do not just think about CBC television, but of CBC radio, of CBC Newsworld, probably one of the most efficiently run organizations in the broadcast industry anywhere in North America.

When we see the way it pulls this country together, whether it be in the arts, in current affairs in French and English, I do not know what other galvanizing instrument we have out there that can provide that type of service and support in this country.

There is another aspect of the CBC and we talk about accounting measures. My background is in business and I believe that it is very important to have full accountability of the CBC.

However, I do not think we are putting on the asset side of the sheet the great contribution the CBC has made in terms of training writers, producers, camera operators and technology wizards recognized all over the world. This is training support the private sector has been able to pull from to move into its own private broadcast units without having to fund any of that training and support. That is not just in television, it is also in radio technology, talent and service support.

Look at what the CBC has done in terms of the north. What person in Canada would not agree with the fact that the CBC has made a contribution in the north? What private broadcaster is even going to go there to help pull that part of our country into the mainstream?

● (1245)

I support the approach of the Reform Party to having accountability, but I wish the Reform Party would support our approach. We should look at all assets, all strengths, not just at one or two particular weaknesses. If the Reform Party were to put into its accounting analysis all other contributions the CBC has been