

Government Orders

How can television do the job? It can do the job if we give it the proper supports. It cannot do it if we continually cut supports to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

I spoke earlier about the news reports that are circulating tonight. I was told about an hour ago that the cuts would be in the neighbourhood of \$100 million and now I am told they are around \$200 million. I only hope that those news accounts are wrong, because the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation will be absolutely devastated if \$200 million is cut. It seems that the government just does not understand that the CBC is really an investment in Canadian unity. Yet, the government takes away the national unity mandate.

I respect the hon. parliamentary secretary because I take him as very sincere, but when he expresses this concern about the national unity mandate of the CBC somehow turning it into a propaganda machine, I find that just absurd. I find it difficult that the hon. parliamentary secretary, whom I respect, can even say that kind of thing.

If you ask the CBC to be this national unity instrument, you are not telling news editors and news directors to somehow warp the news, you are not asking these people who write the news to manufacture good, happy stories about the CBC. You are not doing that at all.

It seems to me that assigning a national unity mandate to the CBC is, first, recognizing that a public broadcasting system like the CBC can be a force for national unity and, that being the case, we must make resources available to it. In turn, this gives the CBC more clout. With such a national unity mandate the president or chairman of CBC could tell the government politicians that they cannot have it both ways. They cannot ask us to be a force for national unity and, at the same time, cut the legs from under us. You cannot do it. It is not consistent. If we are right in saying that broadcasting can be this instrument for national unity, how could the government, in an arm's length relationship, starve the corporation to the tune of say \$200 million? I do not think it is possible.

• (1950)

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): They want to kill it, John.

Mr. Harvard: Yes. One of my colleagues says that this government wants to kill the CBC and I, unfortunately, have to come to that conclusion. It certainly would be consistent with this government's behaviour because the CBC would not be the only institution that this government has harmed.

Taking away the national unity mandate is a serious mistake and it certainly sends out wrong signals to certain groups and individuals in this country who would be more than happy to see the country broken up.

When we talk about national unity and the government's role in that, we are not only talking about removing the national unity mandate from the CBC, we are also talking about the splitting of the CBC Board of Directors into two committees, one for the French language and one for the English language. The hon. parliamentary secretary spoke earlier about it.

Surely we must have one public broadcasting system that serves what is called the two solitudes in this country. Surely we must have a public broadcasting system that straddles the two solitudes but, somewhere at the top comes together under a board of directors, under a chairman or under a president who make the decisions for both French and English. Yet, you can be almost sure as God made little green apples that if the government goes ahead with these two committees, as it will, it will drive a wedge through the CBC. The two language groups will be driven farther and farther apart. I just cannot understand why the government cannot understand that. I believe it is the beginning of the end of the CBC as we know it and it is the beginning of two separate networks.

We have Radio-Canada right now and we have the English service, but they are really one because they come together at the top. I think the two committee system is the precedent that will result eventually in the two arms going separate ways, that these two arms of the CBC will eventually become separate broadcast arms and never the twain shall meet.

As I talk about this national unity matter as it relates to broadcasting, I also have to be concerned about the balkanization or the regionalization of the CRTC.

I listened to the hon. Minister for Communications this afternoon and, again, I take him sincerely. He talks about setting up panels. He who hears decides. He talks about increasing the regional sensitivity. I can understand that from one perspective; that if you have, for example, a panel that serves only Ontario or British Columbia, there is no doubt that in their own narrow parochial way, not in a denigrating way, they will know