

*Government Orders*

It strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that the debate with the government on each one of the services we are going to talk about this morning will indicate why the government has been short-sighted in the context of this particular bill. I believe each one of these services is key to Canadian unity, to Canadians' concepts of each other, and to Canadians specifically knowing about themselves through some of the more formalistic ways of presentation on the screen.

This series of amendments is to ensure the continued presence of the parliamentary service, Radio Canada International, the all-news service in English and in French, and a northern service. All of these services are important to a country which is so geographically large and would serve to unite Canadians from one region to another. This admission, I believe, is contrary to the unanimous recommendations of the report of the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

I find that rather ironic given the news in many newspapers this morning. The headline in *The Ottawa Citizen* states:

PM to Unveil Unity Initiatives. Committee to Consult Canadians on Future.

What is a better mechanism than the parliamentary channel? It sometimes makes people very angry and sometimes makes people laugh. Sometimes people say that this is a circus in here because they do not watch other than that 45-minute thrust and parry that is really a question and no answer period. That is what people see.

If we want people to know what Canadians are doing from coast to coast and if we want to feel what Canadians are feeling in the regions, what better vehicle have we than the parliamentary channel which we can use after hours when the House is closed?

We are going on a week's recess to catch up with work in our ridings and offices. Why can we not be using that time productively in the interests of Canadians and under the guidance of the Chair? Why are we considering privatizing it or going into a co-production with the private sector on this parliamentary channel?

This is an expression of a form of democracy that the world is looking at. It is one of a number of forms of democracy and, as newly emerging nations come on the scene, their representatives come here to visit. The

House of Commons through the Speaker sponsored one of our table officers to write about democracy. It hosted the Russian delegation that was here, the German delegation from East Germany, the Hungarian delegation, the Romanian, and the Polish delegations who are coming here to examine the way our democracy works. Would it not be a good idea if the way our democracy works was shown on the screen?

If we are going to have this constitutional committee that is going to go and have a constitutional crisis attack, maybe we should have the country watching what is going on. Let us see what this committee on national unity from the grassroots is saying across this land. Perhaps the unity that we are looking for in the bill and in the country at a moment of really serious concern will come to the fore.

With respect to the other channels that are equally important, I have an amendment that relates to English and French all-news services. The CBC's news service is absolutely wonderful. We have done away with that horrendous, seven-second clip and journalist overvoice for the rest that interprets what you and I are saying in the House, and we have in depth coverage.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that the parliamentary channel, which is seen as such a valuable tool as well as CBC's all-news service, is going into the U.S. cable satellite public affairs network on C-SPAN. It frequently carries these parliamentary proceedings. It has 55 million subscribers.

New York State has launched a parliamentary network project into 18,000 schools and universities, the English channel for the social studies faculty and the French channel for languages. The project is being monitored for possible expansion into the states.

• (1210)

The Americans are going to be looking at us and we are so busy watching American movies and American news and American everything else, that we forget to do something for ourselves. We are so short-sighted in the manner in which we handle this very vital, nervous, sensitive, important tool—the software, the brainware, or the vehicle that can get through to the public, that television set which is just a piece of hardware until one pushes a button and then it becomes alive. It can promote the kinds of things that we want.