

Adjournment Debate

I have no doubt that the Government is completely out of touch with the realities of this nation and has gone completely out of control. There are over two million unemployed Canadians at this time for whom there is not much hope. In the meantime we are addressing ourselves more to foreign trade for which this Crown corporation is a trough to Liberal cronies. That is not necessarily my opinion but a matter of record. It is one of the reasons why this mismanagement cannot be tolerated any further.

This Government continues to pass on its responsibilities in the democratic process as the elected watchdog in this country and gives more power to the bureaucrats than to those of us who have been elected to scrutinize the expenditure of tax dollars.

I appreciate the opportunity to express some of my views which are not only mine but those of my constituents. It is time to oust the Government and get the country going again with a new Government and the Leader of the Progressive Conservative Party as our next Prime Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Shall we call it six o'clock?

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 45 deemed to have been moved.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION—MACBRIDE COMMISSION REPORT. (B) GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, let me begin my complimenting you on the ease with which you have pronounced the name of my riding. It is getting better every time you say it.

Before the recess of Parliament last June, I rose to ask a question of the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacEachen) about the Government's attitude toward the MacBride Commission report which was commissioned by UNESCO some years ago.

In fairness, that is a report that has not had much publicity in the world, certainly not in this country. It has great implications both for Canada and all other countries. It involves the freedom of the press or, in counter distinction to that, control of the press.

● (1800)

The MacBride Commission Report paid for by taxpayers around the world, but mostly by western countries, has a very contradictory position. On the one hand, it espouses freedom of the press, and on the other it calls for more balanced reporting from the countries of the world. Those countries,

what we call Third World countries, are particularly intrigued by the notion embodied in this report because they would then look for government controlled information centres which would sanitize all news reports emanating from a particular country and make sure all correspondents, journalists, reporting from a country would have to vet their reports through a government information agency to the outside world.

I can understand, and I say this very honestly, the feeling of those Third World countries and their attitudes. They are very often offended, embarrassed and sometimes feel betrayed by the kinds of reports that foreign journalists write regarding the conditions of their countries.

But freedom, political freedom, rests on journalistic freedom and the freedom of the press. There is no greater authority than John Milton who spoke about this 340 years ago when he wrote an article entitled "Areopagitica". At the time he was inveighing against the House of Commons in England which in his words wanted to "license" books. But a Member of that Parliament, a Member of the Government, was criticizing the Government for the policy of licensing, as it was called at that time. Milton pointed out that we ought to look through history, and at the authorship of that kind of policy. Second, we ought to look at the kinds of people who introduced that policy. We do not have time now, but it would be worth our while to make those kinds of comparisons today. Who authors that kind of an idea today in terms of licensing the press? Who is it around the world who controls the press? Do we want to contribute to that kind of policy?

My question to the Secretary of State for External Affairs in June asked what Canada's position was regarding that report. It is not enough to disagree with it. I want to know what Canada is doing to set out a bulwark against that kind of policy. I noted with interest that a kind of sub-committee of that group, the New World Information Order, was set up to introduce the kind of technological changes that would be brought about. The director general is meeting this week with representatives from around the world. Canada's representative to that body is Mr. John Meisel, a highly respected man in this country, Chairman of the CRTC. What kind of position did our Government lay out in front of Mr. Meisel before he left for that meeting? Was it simply a point of disagreement or was it a matter of opposition? Are we as a government, are we as a country, are we as a Parliament, not only going to disagree but oppose that kind of a measure?

I noted with interest that Canada has this year given another instalment to the International Program for the Development of Communications, the body to which I have just referred. In July or August this year a grant of \$260,000 was given. The United States has given \$850,000 but the United States has put that money in a trust fund so there can be some kind of accountability to show what that organization will do, that organization which is supposed to implement the curtailment of the muzzling of the press around the world.