

Government Orders

I am not going to debate the point about the Prime Minister. That is very debatable and a lot of people across Canada share my view. The hon. parliamentary secretary mentioned there was a recommendation in one of the reports which said that we take out the national unity mandate. It is fine to pick and choose here and there. There were many more recommendations in those reports that were never instituted. In fact, some of those recommendations were brought forth as amendments by the Liberal Party and the hon. members voted against them.

The other thing I would like to point out is in regard to CBC cuts. I guess we should look at the record of the government. The cuts were made in the last budget and what could be happening is the announcements are working their way out right now. The cuts were made in the past and now the CBC has to contend with those cuts. They find they are having a difficult time. The government is forcing them to cut back on programs by not giving them the proper funding.

Ms. Ethel Blondin (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for giving such an eloquent speech and for his very thoughtful comments.

I would like to ask him in comparison to the comments made by the spokesperson for the Friends of Canadian Broadcasting, Mr. Ian Morrison, in an article he wrote indicates that 80 per cent of the time a Canadian child watches television is spent watching American programs. For almost as much time as that child goes to school he or she is exposed to a foreign culture, to someone else's values, to another country's views about what is right and what is wrong, to life in Los Angeles, New York, or Miami. Is that what we really want for our children? Absorbing the pictures, scenes, and viewpoints of another people is no way to build a sense of belonging in Canada.

All American television is not bad, but what about our own country, our dreams, our values? What about life in Halifax, Sudbury, or Edmonton?

He also suggests a necessary signal would be the appointment of new leadership to the corporation combining non-partisanship, public broadcasting experience, management flare, an ability to capture the public's

imagination. But much more important, the new leadership must be given the resources to fill the CBC's statutory mandate.

Having said that, I think in the appointment of the president, Mr. Veilleux, we have many of those qualities, but the only thing that is completely out of kilter with this whole suggestion is this. Mr. Veilleux is not being given the resources to see out the CBC statutory mandate. He is being put into a corner where he has threatened to cut the parliamentary channel. He has pressed the right buttons because this is a president who is very astute politically, who knows where the raw nerve of politicians and governments are.

I ask the hon. member what he feels about my suggestion that we indeed have the kind of leadership we need and the expertise and the valued experience of the president, Mr. Veilleux, but we do not have the commitment of government for him to see out that mandate of CBC.

Mr. Arseneault: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Western Arctic for her comments and her questions.

I quite agree with most of what she had to say. When we look at some of the problems we are having in Canada today in national unity, part of it is a lack of understanding of other cultures that exist in Canada. Part of that lack of understanding comes from not knowing enough information.

Part of the information that come to our children come via television. I think it is very important that we get more Canadian programming. It is fine to say that 80 per cent of our viewing time for small children is Americanized. I do not want to put down the Americans, do not get me wrong. They have some good programs, but what about our own culture? What about the cultures of other people that exist in Canada? What about the far north, the far west? I come from eastern Canada. If my children cannot experience it in person, they should at least have the opportunity of being able to experience it through the media.

• (2120)

We are world leaders in telecommunications. We always were. I am afraid to say that with this Bill C-40 we are taking a step backwards.