

To return to this whole question of the regionalization through the "she/he who hears decides," the CRTC is not alone in its concerns about this matter. As a matter of fact, I would quote Bernard Ostry of TV Ontario who told the committee that "the regionalization of the commission and the initiation of the 'she/he who hears decides' rule will lead to fragmentation of national policy and general confusion as to the guiding principles of regulation in all parts of the country".

CFCF from Montreal argued that with this particular rule "we are running the risk of contradicting one of the fundamental objectives of the system, to maintain a single system".

Let us look further at what is happening with the CRTC. This bill seriously jeopardizes its ability to carry out its role as an expert and an independent quasi-judicial body because it will grant new power to the cabinet while retaining an existing one. It would permit the cabinet to issue policy directions to the CRTC, but it would also retain the ability to set aside a decision of the commission on the basis that the decision derogates from the attainment of the objectives of the broadcasting policy or the objectives of a direction issued to the commission.

The Liberal Party argues that the dual powers of cabinet review over CRTC decisions and the power of general policy direction to the CRTC are excessive. These tandem powers allow for government interference particularly through the cabinet and that is most unhealthy. Whatever side of the House a minister comes from, they should be wary of this particular move.

Therefore, Liberals believe that the power of cabinet review should be removed to uninvite—if I may put it that way—political interference that would jeopardize the independence of the commission.

The commission and its predecessors were created precisely because it was recognized that there was a need for a body characterized by continuity of expertise and independence from everyday political pressures. As far back as 1928, the Aird Report noted that this independence also protected the government of the day from the political pressures inevitably exerted upon it as it ensures that the competing arguments put forward to the decision-makers are weighed as dispassionately as possible and in the interests of the communication system as a

### *Government Orders*

whole, and are not dictated or influenced by parochial political pressures.

If there is a member of this House who understands that, it is the parliamentary secretary of the day who at the time of the all news channel hearings felt very compelled to push for an understanding of the proposal of one of his riding people, Allard in this instance, and so resigned as the chairman of the standing committee in order to promote his own constituent's interest. I understand that he felt both a sense of commitment and obligation to promote that particular presentation before the CRTC, but he had the good sense to resign from the standing committee. I do not know that this would allow ministers to resign from the cabinet as they are pressured in the interests of their own particular self interests.

Let us turn to the heart of the broadcast bill, which this government is cutting to the quick bit by bit. I do not know if four bypasses would even save or be able to reinstate the CBC to the power, influence and importance that it does hold within the hearts and minds of Canada as it links and communicates across this land.

Bill C-40 undermines the central role of the CBC as Canada's national broadcaster. On the television side, the CBC's traditional mandate to reflect all regions of Canada and to meet special interest or minority group programming responsibilities is assigned to the non-existent alternative programmer. However, while the bill permits the creation of this new national broadcaster, it does not mandate or require its creation, which appears very unlikely.

In fact, while the government said in June 1988 that the alternate programmer should be operational within two years, as of December 1990, which is here, not one single step has been taken toward its creation. Instead, the CBC, now stripped as well of its mandate to serve Canadian unity, continues to have its budget slashed out of all proportion to overall government budget reductions, thus cutting its voice and the potential for the extension of its voice across this land.

Cuts to the CBC with this Conservative government began in 1985-86 with \$85 million; 1986-87, \$5.6 million; 1987-88, \$21.1 million; 1988-89, \$5.6 million; 1989-90, \$5.8 million; and for the year 1990-91, \$25.9 million.