

Government Orders

Spending that much time watching television is far too much.

Canadian children watch almost 1,000 hours of television compared to the 800 hours they spend in school. That is not good. Canadian children spend far too much time before television screens. However, having said that, even if we can be concerned about Canadians watching too much television, one would hope that at least the programs that they are watching would be Canadian in the main. That is not true.

It has already been said and pointed out on a number of occasions, and this quote is attributed to ACTRA, "that Canada is a culturally occupied country". It is so true. If we had visitors from another planet visiting this great country, I am sure that they would be shocked if they were told that 71 per cent of all programs viewed by Canadians on English television, are primarily American. I am quite sure that if our visitors from another planet were told that, they would say: "Are they crazy? Have they gone mad? This is a wonderful country." Yet, we allow this kind of thing to happen to us.

If we told our visitors from another planet that 97 per cent of screen time in Canadian cinemas is devoted to foreign material, primarily American movies, what would our visitors from another planet say? They would probably say: "Are they gone mad or are they absolutely crazy?" But it is a fact. What if we told our visitors from another planet that 75 per cent of our domestic book market and 71 per cent of our periodical market consists of imported foreign products. That is mostly American. What would they say? They would ask: "Have you gone crazy? Are you nuts?" That is what they would say.

Let me point out one more thing. What if they were told that 85 per cent of Canada's sale of records and tapes, manufactured in Canada, are from imported master tapes? If our visitors from another planet were told that, they would flip right out and would be asking if we were mad, crazy or nuts.

That is one of the sad parts of the Canadian story that we have not come to grips with. It is absolutely insane that we allow this kind of dumping of American programming into the Canadian market. It is not good for this country.

If it is looked at in a broader context, it really does not come as any surprise. We do this to ourselves all the time. For example, recently we had our government sell Air Canada, a proud national airline. It sold it off and is shameless for doing it. Now it is going to sell a part of Petro-Canada. If it had its own way, the whole lot would be sold tomorrow morning. The only window that we have, as a government and as a public policy instrument, on the petroleum industry, this Conservative government is going to get rid of, maybe not all at once but it is going to be sold. There is a lot more because it is all interconnected, it is all related. This is a government that decided we are going to share our energy resources with the Americans. Why, we will even go beyond using good business sense, even in a moment of deprivation, even if we were facing shortages. We will share our energy. We will share our natural gas. We will share our oil with the Americans. Not only that, it eviscerated the National Energy Board. It took the guts right out of it. It just pulled the entrails right out of the NEB and said, "When it comes to natural gas exports, it does not have to have any net benefit to Canada, not at all".

• (1740)

Let me get back to this bill. It seems to me that this bill does not serve the broadcasting system, it does not serve productions and it certainly does not serve increasing Canadian content on our television screens. I would have thought that this kind of an amendment would be quite acceptable.

Mr. Jim Edwards (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few facts on the record in connection with this cluster of amendments. Just before doing it, I want to comment. The hon. member for Winnipeg St. James was alluding to people from Mars, which does not surprise me. I was reminded of the fact that the last time we had a man from Mars routine on radio in this country, which I believe was in 1938, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission ruled that those political commercials, which they were at the time, which were voiced by Messrs. Aberhart and Manning, were improper. Questionable though they may have been in their content, fortunately that is not something that would happen today because we have a much more liberal interpretation of free speech.

The amendments that we have before us have been the subject of much debate during the consideration of both this present bill and its predecessor, Bill C-136. It replaces a reference in the current Broadcasting Act to