

*Broadcasting House Proceedings*

Today we propose to recreate the agora, but for everybody, for the people, for the Canadian people. Through the electronic *Hansard* we shall open the walls of this House to all Canadian citizens who will be able to follow our proceedings. If they wish, they will have direct access to our work. No longer will they have to rely on distorted or incomplete reports interpreted or revised by someone else. I do not say that the role of the media is not important. I do not say that they should not continue to interpret and report our proceedings but Canadians will be able to see directly what we are doing, when we are doing it.

There will also be an element of entertainment that might revive the interest of the public in parliamentary business. And if they continue to read newspapers, at least they will be able to compare their own perception of facts with the interpretations given by the media and those of us who sometimes complain about the misinterpretation of the media will no longer have reason to complain as our intervention will be on the record and will have been seen and heard by a large part of the Canadian people. Furthermore, as those interventions will be filmed and kept in the archives, newsmen will have there, I suppose, a reminder of the ethic that makes the glory and the honour of their trade.

But the opposition does not appreciate this attempt, this decision of the government to open Parliament. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) complained earlier that some ministers make statements outside the House and carefully avoid making them in Parliament. I do not see the logic of his objection because if we broadcast our proceedings, ministerial statements will be recorded immediately and broadcast to all interested people and they will not have to use more efficient means outside the House. We propose a more open Parliament and it is precisely the wish of the hon. member. And we are using the best means available to make Parliament more open.

Opposition members are calling for a legislation to ensure access to information. They make no distinction between information which should be available immediately or a little later and information which would likely jeopardize certain negotiations. They are totally irresponsible when they advocate full access to any kind of information and in all circumstances. They want information to be more readily available. That is also our hope, and we have announced a legislation on access to information. But before the fact, we are offering, through the television broadcasting of the proceedings of the House of Commons, immediate access to the most important information, that is what is happening in the Parliament of Canada. There are opposition members who are opposed to this project of televising the proceedings of the House of Commons.

The President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen) was wondering this afternoon if Parliament would resist such an exposure? I ask in turn another question. Are opposition members afraid of not resisting scrutiny in this public forum, in the true sense of the word, that the television broadcasting of our proceedings would make of Parliament?

[Mrs. Sauvé.]

Mr. Speaker, since I came to this House, I have seen things that the hon. members of the opposition would perhaps not want to be laid before the eyes of the general public. For instance, the frequent absence of some members. The opposition tactics of planning very cunningly a rotation system for its members, a system that is only known to them and that we must try to thwart at some crucial moments in the House. They subject us to sudden fits of attendance and absence which prevent our members from spending as they do the necessary time in their riding. Of course, those are quite obvious tactics, but they shirk their parliamentary duties when they do not play the game, because there are some unwritten rules that the members opposite should obey. They take unreasonable advantage, Mr. Speaker, of the game of hide-and-seek at the time of crucial votes in this House.

Ever since I came to Parliament, I have secretly blamed the opposition for this and I now dare voice it publicly tonight because our role, as representatives of the people, is difficult enough to expect the cooperation of both sides of the House in allowing all hon. members, those of the opposition as well as those on the government side, to perform properly their duties as parliamentarians and representatives of the people. But all this, with the televising of our debates, will be brought out in full daylight: a mere travelling of a camera will enable one to see who respects the House and who does not.

Another thing I shall be delighted to see, Mr. Speaker, will be the televising of the question period. This House witnesses moments without equal when the questions of the opposition are direct and go straight to the core of current events, when questions and counter-questions fly on all sides, when the outstanding parliamentary talents of our Prime Minister come into play. We have quite a show on some days. We have no fear, Mr. Speaker, of letting the nation see that show. On the contrary we long for the day when we can let everyone know, on a daily basis, how the Prime Minister fights for the interests of the people.

● (2050)

We on this side of the House are ready to meet that challenge because on many occasions we tested the Prime Minister's qualities as a parliamentarian. I do not say that the opposition does not have its own good parliamentarians. Some days, when some of them are on their toes, we also have a good show from the other side of the House. But since the opposition too has its artful, able and competent parliamentarians, why not make them known to the whole nation? That is in fact the proposal we put forward to you: it will be an even contest for both sides of the House. Perhaps it is because the malicious intent of certain questions raised by the opposition will in the end become far too clear that they oppose that project. And perhaps it is because some people, whose talent can only be exercised through misdirected controversy, will be absolutely deprived of means if they were to change their style.

I am convinced that a broadcast question period will impart a much more responsible approach to that aspect of our deliberations. As a matter of fact, ours is more interesting than that