

*Routine Proceedings*

Every person we talked to said that the television station was not biased and was very fair.

In the United States politics is a little more polarized than it is here in Canada. People said that the station gave as much time to the left as it did to the right, to this issue as to the other, and that it all works out in the end. There were a few Congressmen who said that they had apprehensions at the beginning. The Republicans said it was a Democratic enterprise, and so on.

We asked them, after several years of experiencing the television channel and station, was it biased now. They said no. We asked them if it portrayed any Congressmen in a bad light, and they said no. We asked them if it was beneficial to the debate of public policy in America, and they said yes, it was.

C-SPAN is the channel that we would propose to model our broadcasts on in the House of Commons. It would have a basic schedule of televising the House during the day and then wraparound programming. The wraparound programming would include news conferences, provincial legislatures, if they were speaking on national issues, party conventions, conventions, conferences and committees. It would be gavel to gavel so there would be no editorializing by the producers. It would also cover special ceremonies.

This has worked extremely well in the U.S. After Congress rises at 6 or 6.30 in the evening, they replay sittings or play taped committee meetings or taped news conferences. They may play them two or three times. They may take out one news conference which was of very great importance and play it. If it originated on a Monday, perhaps it will be replayed a couple of times on the weekend. They opened up the process and Americans are able to participate, view and understand public policy in the United States.

We went to C-SPAN and the biggest question that we wanted answered was, who decides what goes on air? Who decides which committee hearings should be broadcast? We felt that this would give whoever decided a great deal of power and influence. We asked to go into the producers committee where the decisions were made.

At the committee meeting it was decided what went on the air at what times. There were about six or seven

journalists in the room, or people who had professional journalism backgrounds. Some had worked as assistants and some had worked in different capacities with interest groups or with public service organizations.

Each morning they would meet and go over what was going on during the day. Basically they would make a decision on what would interest the public most. For example, what was of topical interest? Who was speaking? How important was the subject matter? They argued it out among themselves and came to a decision as to what time this programming material would go on air. It was done very easily without a lot of haggling or production.

What amazed me was that after all was said and done, members of Congress and people across the U.S. would look at what had been decided by six or seven very young people and say that it was very fair; it was not advantageous to either the Democrats or the Republicans. That was very important.

I wish the parliamentary secretary, the government House leader and members who are apprehensive could have sat in with us as well, because it certainly allayed a lot of the fears of our committee.

There was apprehension about televising the House of Commons. In 1977 when TV was first introduced, there was a long and protracted debate. When it was introduced, the camera angles were a little wider and the guidelines were a little looser than they are today. Gradually members complained and we came up with a form of electronic *Hansard*.

The hours in the House were changed to cut out evening sittings, and the House was televised during the day from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. We then had many hours of dead air space. The CBC was paralysed for 12 years, not being able to fill this time with public policy broadcasts because of apprehension of the members of the House of Commons and others.

Finally last year, as an interim measure, we replayed broadcasts of the sittings the House of Commons. Some members have said that it is all government time, others have said that it is all opposition time, or that one side is favoured over the other.

In my view, and in the view of most Canadians after seeing what goes on in the House, other than Question