

Government Orders

As he continues to speak, I want him at least to be up to date with the information that has been given to this House in that regard.

Mr. Edwards: I am grateful for that piece of information, Mr. Speaker, but I think my answer would remain the same, my response on the issue of the parliamentary channel.

If the CBC has made this decision with reference to the parliamentary channel—and I understand it has—then it is up to the House of Commons and the Speaker to decide what to do about it. It would be inappropriate for me to suggest to you, Sir, sitting in that chair, what the appropriate course of action would be. It is up to us on both sides as members of the House, with the assistance of the Speaker and through his wise judgment, to arrive at these decisions.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pursue this question on the parliamentary channel just a bit further.

As we speak, Canadians have the opportunity from one coast to the other and in the north as well, as I understand it, to watch the proceedings of Parliament live.

We on this side of the House consider it essential that Canadians continue to have the opportunity to watch democracy in action live, not that it makes for great television, but it permits constituents to view first-hand what is going on in the House of Commons.

His minister has unequivocally stated that the government would not subsidize or pay for this particular parliamentary channel. I would like to ask the hon. member, as parliamentary secretary to the minister, whether he considers it essential that this service continue to be provided. If so, is he prepared to speak to his minister and to the government to urge them to provide the necessary resources? He seems to be passing the buck, Mr. Speaker, to you and to the House, as if the Speaker has some oil well in the back of Parliament or some vault full of money. Ultimately, the taxpayers will have to pay for it.

Can the member indicate whether he is prepared to urge his minister and the rest of the ministers to provide the necessary resources to the CBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, to continue this very essential service?

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the CBC does not want to continue to provide this service. It is clear that the position of the CBC has been for some time that the service ought to be in the hands of the House of Commons where it properly resides. Therefore I stand by my earlier statement that it is an appropriate decision for the House of Commons to make as to whether it wants to come up with the funds to provide the service.

The hon. member asked what my view was. My view is yes, this is a very worth-while service and it ought to continue. However, to ask the Department of Communications to cough up \$4.5 million at this time to provide the service is perhaps inappropriate. It is really a decision of the House of Commons. For the Department of Communications to finance it, I think, would be an inappropriate exercise by the government of control over the affairs of the House of Commons.

Mr. John Harvard (Winnipeg St. James): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to take part in third reading debate in the House of Commons tonight. It gives me an opportunity to place some of my thoughts on the record. I must say that I have expressed some of these thoughts in earlier debates, but I hope they are worth repeating.

Bill C-40 has undergone a long examination. There have been many debates. However, despite the fact that we have just heard from the hon. parliamentary secretary and despite the fact that we heard from the Minister of Communications earlier this day, there has been very little Conservative participation in debates on this bill.

To give some idea of how scarce and how sparse Tory participation has been in the debate, I want to remind you that yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we had six hours of debate. On many occasions we had some worth-while questions. Not one Conservative, including the Minister of Communications, stood in his or her place and responded either to questions or gave some of their thoughts or gave any support to the bill. I find that kind of non-performance—and that is what it is, a non-performance—rather disgusting.

If the Tories are proud of this bill—and when they do speak they claim that it is a good bill, that it is good legislation—I find it rather strange that they do not come forward and speak in defence of it.