

the NDP and the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie in his minority report said that we should not have to pay for this.

I do not want to end in a controversy. I will pass along a little story to my friends. A couple of years ago I was on holiday. I was in California. I rented a car and drove the highway by Big Sur from San Francisco to Log Angeles. I pulled in at Big Sur, which is pretty remote. There was a little tavern where I wanted to have a beer. I went in. There were two old hippies, probably my age, standing there at the bar.

I sat between them and had a beer. I noticed outside that they had a TV satellite dish. One fellow said: "Where are you from?". I said: "I am a Canadian". He said: "Canada, Canada. I saw that House of—". I said: "The House of Commons, Parliament". "Yeah, Parliament," he said, "I watch it on TV. They are really strange dudes, really strange dudes". I did not have the heart to tell him that I was a member of the institution.

The point is, as my friend said, that it should be open to all. Maybe there are junkies, as the hon. member called them. I think there are a lot of people who watch us and approach us on the street.

The point is that there should be an opportunity for everyone to watch it. The point we are trying to make in the NDP is that it should be free. It should be paid through general taxes and not paid by people once again being asked by the cable companies to pay more money when they are already making big profits. They should put this on free of charge.

The House of Commons should have instructed the CRTC to require that. I hope the CRTC, the group that governs television and the price that people pay for their cable, requires that it be free.

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. At the start I must admit, as most of us do, that I was not a member of the committee that looked into this matter. Thus, first, I would like to pay tribute to those members of Parliament who looked into this topic and issued the report that we are debating by way of a concurrence motion today.

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I did make a presentation by way of written correspondence to that committee. I must say that the committee did not accept my perspective. While I speak against the report, it is not with any malice because I do respect the parliamentary process whereby people come together to form committees that look into different topics. They invite the public to comment. They invited us as members to comment, and we all did.

They then went through a process of negotiation and discussion and came up with the report that we are debating today. The fact that I disagree with the committee does not in any way take away from the respect I have for the members of the committee and the thanks I have for them doing this good work.

Our differences are, I guess, in perspective. My perspective would be for us to get back to this House being more meaningful in the life of Parliament.

By that I mean I wish we could have debates here, as used to happen in earlier days, when people would actually change their mind as a result of hearing a debate in the House of Commons. The reality today is that no views or opinions are ever changed as a result of a debate in this House.

Where peoples' minds are changed is at the committee level. Once television hit the House of Commons nobody could be seen to be compromising because that leads to all sorts of problems from your own supporters out in the ridings who do not appreciate the nature of Canada and the nature of Parliament. This is a body where we come together to broker in a sense the honest and legitimate interests that are held out across this broad country with our very different populations, whether they are in Newfoundland, B.C., Alberta or Quebec. The role of Parliament is to broker those differences and to come up with compromises.

Compromises never meet the needs of the extreme group, the people who feel so strongly. The fact of the matter is that if you are going to survive in life you simply have to compromise. The fact of the matter is that none of us know every issue perfectly and we are not as smart as we think.

I can remember giving my maiden speech in this House some 11 years ago and really pounding forth the view of southern Albertans as to how we held our opinions on certain issues. I then listened to other members and realized that they were far smarter than I.