

Supply—Legislation

words might some day be beamed across the wires and used by radio stations, just as is the case in the province of Saskatchewan where it is done by permission. In the instance I am postulating one can conceive of all sorts of uses that might be made of electronic devices or of some indirect method of broadcasting the debates of this house because of the precedent that has already been established by the Prime Minister.

Are the deliberations of the committees of this house broadcast into the office of the Prime Minister? I do not know. If they are that would be likewise a matter that would have to be considered by Mr. Speaker, and certainly by hon. members of those committees and by the house.

In raising this matter this morning in the responsible and dignified way he did the hon. member for Laurier has, I believe, rendered a service to parliament, and has given us an opportunity of reminding ourselves once again of the traditions and privileges of this house. He has underlined in a way the appreciation we all have for civil liberties; of those things that are protected and guaranteed in a bill of rights and are inherent in law not codified. A bill of rights and all the concepts that accompany it is important, but it is important, too, that those who sponsor these things and advocate them should not themselves be among those who are counted as the first violators of what a bill of rights is supposed to protect.

I speak in this debate not as an older member but as one who has been in the house for a long time and who speaks of these things, I think, with some feeling and I should also like to think with some appreciation. I want to express my gratitude as a member of this house, as a House of Commons man who is jealous of its traditions and who wants to see them preserved, to the hon. member for Laurier for raising this matter in the way he did today, and I commend his words and those of the hon. member for Kootenay West and my more modest contribution to His Honour the Speaker.

Mr. Argue: Mr. Chairman, I can see no real argument against the principle that when action of this kind is being contemplated the house itself should be asked to make the decision. However, in fairness to the Prime Minister I want to say that although he might have had this device installed in his office and not in the offices of any of his colleagues or the offices of the opposition personnel, he did not hesitate to tell me very soon after it had been installed that he did have such a loudspeaker, and he invited me to go to his office to hear it in operation, which I did. I might say there was quite a large delegation

in his office when we arrived, so I did not stay for any length of time, but it seemed to be in good working order, and there were controls on the device which made it possible to raise and lower the level, or shut it off.

If permission had been granted by the house, and if the device were in the Prime Minister's office because of that permission having been granted, I for one would feel that even that might have been a mistake. I realize how very busy the Prime Minister is, and no doubt in the future the calls on his time will be greater than they have been in the past. It will be more difficult for him to spend long hours in the House of Commons in the future, but I would think that for the best carrying out of the functions of his office there is no substitute for attendance in the House of Commons itself.

So far as the deliberations of this house are concerned, the opinions of the government members as well as the opinions of the opposition members and the sense of the atmosphere itself are necessary to the proper conducting of the affairs of government; and the members of the government, and the Prime Minister in particular, should be here.

I do not think anyone believes that when the Prime Minister is in his office he has this device on all the time. I would not think so. I think it would be very distracting, and that it would be almost impossible for him to carry on his other work. Certainly when he has delegations coming into his office the loudspeaker in his office would have to be closed off, so that in practical effect what is happening is that the Prime Minister directly hears very little of what goes on in this chamber.

I am wondering whether someone else has been detailed continually to listen to what is going on in this house so that if something breaks, something that would appear to require the Prime Minister's attention in the house, he is informed that this matter is being debated in the house.

Mr. Dinsdale: The whip can do that.

Mr. Argue: I think that is the job of the whip. I think it is the job the whip should be doing, and I think that is the proper way it should be done.

Then, as the hon. member for Essex East has said, this type of system lends itself to additional or expanding use, and it would be a very simple step to record from that loudspeaker the words used in this house so that if some very important contribution was being made to a debate and the Prime Minister was unable, because of very important other duties, to listen to the loudspeaker at