

Business of Supply

made to this house. He completely omitted any reasonable explanation with respect to two economic problems that the people of the country and hon. members of the house are deeply concerned about, the question of oil policy and its ramifications vis-à-vis the United States, and our participation in the international wheat agreement. We obtained from the Prime Minister nothing at all; yet I would hazard that he and some of his colleagues are at this moment outside this chamber busily engaged in expanding, varying and changing what was said and saying what was not said but ought to have been said in this house.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Baldwin: From our mass media we obtain too often only an abridged, distorted and frequently illusory version of the proceedings of this chamber. In saying that I am not faulting the members of the media, who must carry out their work. We have been dragged into our present position through our failure to come to grips with a serious and difficult problem. I think it is about time we looked at it, decided to debate it and, as civilized people, decided what to do about it. Although some of us may want to, we cannot abolish radio and television. They are here and we must learn to live with them. The chamber may have to learn to live with them. For that reason, I am glad to have had the opportunity to initiate the discussion on this matter and to obtain the views of other hon. members.

Other countries have met and overcome similar problems, Mr. Speaker. One problem of course has to do with physical conditions. There is the question of placing cameras and lights, but I have every reason to believe that those technical difficulties can be overcome. It has also been suggested that there will be too much grandstanding, and that the people here will feel they are always on display. Well, we are always on display, even now. During the question period the press galleries and public galleries are filled. I suppose no man in public life ever took great exception to a little grandstanding. If I may be pardoned for using unparliamentary language, it is part of the nature of the animal.

An hon. Member: You mean, we are all hams.

Mr. Baldwin: Another problem is connected with all the empty seats in this chamber. Many hon. members are not present in the chamber. I think it is about time the people of this country learned that hon. members work diligently in committees of this house.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Yesterday we had 11 committees. If those committees are to function hon. members must attend them. My motion is wide enough to consider the possibility of televising the procedures of our committees, or of broadcasting over the radio what happens. Our people ought to know that a great deal of detailed work, such as the studying of estimates and legislation, now takes place in committee rooms outside this house. The fact that from time to time the house is not filled, as I hoped it would be filled today with hon. members eager to hear me speak—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Baldwin: —is not of great consequence.

I wish to conclude by placing on the record the remarks of Mr. Speaker McLeay of Australia, contained in the "Report of a Conference of Commonwealth Speakers". This problem has arisen in other jurisdictions and has been considered to some extent in Australia. Mr. Speaker McLeay says:

● (3:40 p.m.)

Parliamentary debates are broadcast daily in Australia and the broadcasting arrangements are not under government control. The matter is controlled by a joint committee of the two Houses, which makes the final decisions as to what debates will be broadcast and how the broadcasting time will be divided between the two houses. In all cases the committee ensures that the Opposition receives equal coverage with the government. There is continuous broadcasting of debates on Thursday from 10.30 in the morning until 11.30 at night, and at 11.30 broadcasting is cut off.

In other words, debates are broadcast all day Thursday and during the week as decided upon. I continue quoting:

According to the experts parliamentary debates command the widest listening public in the whole of Australia. From time to time we hear objections being registered, but the majority of the people want the broadcasts and there is no chance that they will ever be discontinued. The broadcasting of debates has become a very important factor in keeping Australians informed of what is going on in parliament. The broadcasts are made over the national network and the debates are broadcast live from the floor of parliament. The listener hears the proceedings as they are taking place—they hear the news as it is being made.

In response to a question to Mr. Speaker as to how the members of the press gallery were affected, Sir John McLeay made the following statement:

The press are there to report good headline material. They do not report a complete account of what takes place in parliament but only those parts which have the required news value, or which can be used to promote the editorial opinions of the newspaper concerned. In my experience the greater part of the proceedings of parliament do