

Routine Proceedings

However, my question is: How are you going to decide which committees to televise? At any one time, we have 10 or 15 committees sitting. Do we decide on the environment committee hearings on the new regulations on environment, or do we want to hear the legislative committee on the new broadcasting bill, one that we have been sitting on for a long time? I believe that Canadians are interested. If one looks at the TV channels, people want information.

People will get more information from the committees than from the speeches made in the House of Commons. Material that they could follow can be sent to them. They could follow the bill clause by clause. With modern communication, modern television, it is amazing what can be done. The NDP believes it should be open to everyone. How are we going to choose which committee? How do you see that working?

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, the question that the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam has raised is a very good one. Certainly, it is one that exercised the committee considerably, because we recognized that with up to 20 committees sitting on a day it is difficult to know which committee or committees should go on the air, one on one.

Our view was that there should be committee rooms established on the Hill so that the committees sitting in those rooms would be automatically televised. Which committees would sit in those rooms? There would have to be some choosing. In Toronto, the committee that sits in the one committee room equipped for full television coverage is automatically on the parliamentary channel. They are working on a second committee room to be equipped for television coverage.

I think we recommended a total of four rooms. The committees that sit in those four rooms would automatically be televised at staggered hours. We felt that the committee chairmen would decide among themselves which ones should be there. In almost every case, we felt that the committee chairmen would be able to work out either alternate times of sitting to accommodate the room or would decide that one committee is of greater national interest than the other and should be televised.

That would be the first level. If the committee chairmen could not work it out, then the chairman of chairs of committees which is made up of all the committee

chairmen or the "liaison committee" as it is called—we like to refer to it in more exalted terms—would make the decision on behalf of the group. In other words, a decision would be made at that point.

The other committees could all be televised. The committees that are in the four rooms would be televised automatically by House staff, but television cameras would be admitted to the other committees if the networks wished to cover them. For example, a television station in Vancouver might hire somebody in Ottawa to cover a committee on which the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam was sitting because the people in Vancouver were interested in the issue that was being discussed on a particular day.

Those people could get a tape of the committee proceedings done and broadcast in Vancouver subsequently. All those would be available because of the openness in committees as long as the committee itself allowed its proceedings to be televised. We are not stopping—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have to interrupt the hon. member. The time for questions and comments is now over.

Mr. Scott Thorkelson (Edmonton—Strathcona): Madam Speaker, as a member of the committee on Privileges and Elections, I am pleased to rise today to address some of the issues.

When we entered into this study there was a lot of apprehension about how this would affect the role of a member of Parliament and the collegiality of committees. Would it distort the proceedings of the House? Would it give Canadians a biased view of what we were doing? We ourselves had many of these apprehensions.

• (1200)

The committee received a reference on June 8 of last summer. It had a few preliminary meetings and then it travelled to Washington to look at the C-SPAN television station. C-SPAN is the televising of Congress. There is C-SPAN 1 for the Congress itself and C-SPAN 2 for the Senate.

We went there with many apprehensions. We talked with Democratic and Republican Congressmen, interest groups, and a number of players and lobbyists. We asked them how they felt about the television station C-SPAN, if it was biased, or if there were any problems with it.