

of Scarborough Council, Scarborough Development officials and Members of Parliament from Scarborough have focused public attention on this issue and called into question the selection of this downtown site. I raise this question to point out to Members the importance of analysing motions like this which ask the Government to extend services which Canadians may not want and cannot afford.

Before we extend this service perhaps we should better inform Canadians of the existing service which is available. I am sure Members from all sides are continually informing their constituents as to when parliamentary proceedings are broadcast in their area. The simple fact is that many Canadians are not even aware that they can watch these proceedings. Many of those who do want to tune in are forced to purchase a converter to do so. With all due respect to the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria), I think the motion itself is not the ideal mechanism for tendering our suggestion for enhancing television coverage of the House of Commons. Still, there is no reason why we as parliamentarians cannot approach the proper forum in the proper manner to present our suggestions for enhancing either the signal provided by the House of Commons broadcasting service, or the CBC's own parliamentary television network which packages and distributes that signal. That opportunity will occur when we discuss the recommendations made by the Special Committee on Reform of the House of Commons. Indeed, in its report that committee suggested that the distribution of the House of Commons broadcast service might be improved, and mentioned that one idea might be to repeat the proceedings at a time when the potential audience is larger.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, while I support the objective behind the motion, I cannot agree with the mechanism it seems to propose for reaching that objective and I cannot, therefore, offer my support for the motion. Furthermore, the appropriate procedure will be available shortly when the Government and Opposition Parties discuss the special committee's recommendations on the broadcast service, and that discussion will generate additional ideas for consideration.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Robert Gauthier (Ottawa-Vanier): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to take part in the debate and to congratulate my colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria) on his motion to re-broadcast the proceedings of the House after the end of the day's sitting and thus make it possible for more Canadians to see and hear the proceedings for themselves and realize how important the parliamentary process is to our daily lives. It is a positive and constructive proposal, because it would allow a greater number of Canadians to see the Parliament of Canada at work and watch their elected representatives discussing important questions in the House.

I also think it is constructive, because the motion is not asking the Government to do all this right away. It is asking

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the Government to consider the feasibility of such a proposal, and I am thinking for instance of the cost of such a project. I am told the cost will be minimal. I have been informed that one person would be able to take care of rebroadcasting, because Channel 16, which is used for broadcasting and redistribution of the signal, is the channel that announces in the evening: See you tomorrow, when Parliament sits again and we will have the necessary information for you.

I think it would be positive and constructive to consider the feasibility of this proposal, in order to find out what the real cost would be and whether more than one person would be needed. I think it is probably positive as far as cost is concerned because I think we may find to our surprise that the proposal would not be all that costly or a drag on the Budget, and I think it could also be constructive in that more Canadians would know what is going on.

Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria) spoke to us about the time when we started broadcasting the proceedings of the House. I was there, and when I look around in the House, I feel a little older than the average Member because I was here in February 1977, when the decision was made, and I was also here in October 1977, when we started broadcasting the debates of the House of Commons. I must admit that at the time, the lights and atmosphere and all that made everything a bit strange for many of us and many Members and Ministers at the time felt that the decision had been a bit hasty and that we might have quite a few problems.

I must say today how pleased I am to note that this idea of broadcasting the proceedings of this House has enabled Canadians to be better informed about parliamentary activities, more especially, Government activities, the motions discussed and the general items related to our proceedings. Mr. Speaker, I for one think it is important to extend the broadcast of parliamentary debates if only for the average worker who is not at home in the daytime and cannot watch television. A construction worker or an office employee cannot watch television unless they have a special interest.

I wanted to deal with this because in my constituency of Ottawa-Vanier—I will be a little more parochial—there are many public servants who are highly interested in parliamentary activities, because this is part of their daily life. They work for the Government, they know what is going on and would like very much to watch and hear our parliamentary debates. It is not always easy to do so in the daytime, but in the evening they would appreciate hearing from the Minister concerning a projet in which they are closely involved or the Member of the Opposition making a positive criticism of private Members' initiatives. Therefore, to allow a more extensive understanding and perhaps to inform Canadians, I think that the motion of the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has a positive thrust.