

Broadcasting House Proceedings

any pressure from the public to produce this service, and his answer was a flat no. From that followed the question, what size of audience would there be, and the estimate given by Mr. Picard was less than 1 per cent. Yet we have had suggested already this evening that televising this House would reach a majority of the population at any one time. I do not believe that.

I will not discuss the issue of cost at all. If televising this place would improve its basic roles and functions in any way; if it would mean better debate and better legislation, then the cost would not be important at all. But when we know that it will not achieve any of those things, when we know it is a cynical trade-off of something the government is now willing to allow in order to prevent something else from happening to it, and that other thing it dreads so much is open government, then we should not for a moment accept this when we want that other.

There are great minds who question the desirability of televising the House of Commons. The debate we are engaged in can be intellectual on the negative side. It does deal in myths and theology and sacreds and profanes. It is time that some hon. members on all sides of this House began to sort out the myth from the reality, and began to look with some objectivity at the proposal before us that, if permitted to proceed, could well destroy this institution which is the one bastion of our democracy that remains.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Max Saltzman (Waterloo-Cambridge): While following this most interesting debate, Mr. Speaker, and I think it has been interesting, I could not help from having my mind go back to a situation that took place about 13 years ago. It was my first experience with television just after being elected when I was as green as grass, or even greener than that. I was invited to go to Montreal to attend an all-party television show that was supposed to discuss the future of political parties in Canada.

I went to Montreal and walked into this all-party show. The leading player was the hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie). There was also in attendance a non-partisan chap by the name of Egan Chambers, who was a former Tory MP. The unbiased, impartial chairman was the present hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). That was the group that met me in Montreal for this unbiased, all-party show. In thinking back on that it would seem to me I would rather take my chances with television in the House of Commons.

Let me say through you, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston) that I listened to his speech with interest. I have always admired the sincerity of that hon. member. He said something by which he hoped to make his point, but as I listened I thought in fact he was reinforcing my position in supporting television in the House of Commons.

That hon. member was suggesting that he wanted to speak only to his constituents. I know that hon. member, and I do not

[Mr. Johnston.]

think he meant to say that or suggest that his responsibility was only to his riding, or that those of us who come here are here only responsible—

An hon. Member: He said just to those in the Chamber.

Mr. Saltzman: I know the hon. member, and I am sure he would not want to leave that impression. He said he wanted to speak directly to this Chamber and to his constituents. We are not here to speak to each other, we are here rather to speak to the nation. Our oath of office is not to our constituents or to each other. Our oath of office is to the nation. This is a national forum, and this country is in serious trouble for one reason or another, as a result of economic problems, problems in respect of confederation with provinces trying to opt out or change the terms. One of the reasons for this trouble is that too much of what takes place in this Chamber that is not noticed by the public takes place on behalf of a particular group, a particular section or a particular region instead of the nation as a whole.

Instead of coming here to try to keep this country together we come here to represent specific groups or regions when we should be trying to do as much for all the people of this country wherever they may live. I suggest regionalism is one of the sicknesses of Canada. It is too easy to make the kind of speeches I have heard in this House which are directed specifically to an individual's constituency or one group. If such speeches were read by other people in this country they would be appalled. It is too easy to clip out sections of *Hansard* and send them out to a local area, making a hero of yourself in that locale, while at the same time tearing down this country and the confederation we should all be trying to uphold.

It is about time the people of this country had an opportunity of looking at the performance of their members of parliament. Perhaps this is not the way a member wants his constituents to see him, but the people should have an opportunity of seeing the performance and behaviour of their member in this House. Let them see him directly without interpretation or the particularization that comes with selections from *Hansard*.

● (2140)

I heard the hon. member who preceded me speak about the people who are going to watch television, that there may only be one per cent, which may be true. I do not know but I suspect there may be a very wide audience if we televise the House of Commons. My wife complains to me that ever since I became a member of parliament I never take her to the theatre. I say, why should I go to the theatre, I make my living there! I am there all the time.

We tend to underestimate the vitality of this place. I know that this place can be a bore and I know it can be awfully foolish, but it is also capable of high drama and of the noblest of sentiments. I have come to appreciate and admire not only this institution but the people on all sides of the House who are in this institution. I do not know why we are afraid of exposing this institution to the public gaze. I think it is strong, I think it is worthwhile, and I think it will benefit from it. The weak-