

Broadcasting of House of Commons Debates

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Gray moved the third reading of the bill.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

BROADCASTING OF DEBATES BY RADIO AND TELEVISION

The House resumed from Monday, February 2, consideration of the motion of Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale):

That the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, in consultation with Mr. Speaker, be directed to study the question of radio and television broadcasting of the proceedings of the House and its committees, including the legal, procedural and technical aspects thereof, and the question of arrangements made for reporters for the electronic media in the Parliament buildings.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I believe I had had the floor for about 30 seconds when this motion was being debated on February 2. Some of my friends are wondering whether I intend to speak for another 39 minutes and 30 seconds. I assure them that I have no such intention.

● (9:10 p.m.)

As I indicated on February 2, the members of this party are happy to support this motion for reference to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization of the whole question of radio and television broadcasting of the proceedings of this House, its committees and interviews within this building. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, some of us have supported this idea for a long time. Some of my colleagues who are here at the present time have presented motions in previous sessions for the broadcasting of the proceedings of this House, and some of us have to admit that we were urging that the proceedings of the House be broadcast by radio back in the days before there was television. Therefore, it is good to see this motion, which is in line with views some of us have held for a long time.

There is one particular reference in the motion which I would like to commend in a special way. I refer to the requirement that the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization, when it deals with this matter, should do so in consultation with Mr. Speaker. I am quite aware of the reasons for the change that was made a few years ago providing for our committee on procedure to be

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

chaired by a member other than Mr. Speaker, but I still think there was merit in the pattern we used to follow in having Mr. Speaker as the chairman of committees on procedure. His presence always produced a certain unifying effect that was not completely there in all the proceedings of our committee in the last session or two. This issue is such an important one that I think it is particularly advisable to have Mr. Speaker meet with the committee, and I am glad that has been included in the motion.

The rationale for considering the broadcasting by radio and television of our proceedings, both of the House and of committees, has been stated a number of times, Mr. Speaker. One hardly needs to repeat it tonight. Let me simply say that although there was a day when there was no *Hansard* record of what went on in the Parliament of Westminster, and although there was a day when the press were not allowed to cover Parliament, the fact of the matter is that those days were superseded and it came to be recognized that the public had a right to know what its Parliament was doing. Surely just as in the past the public had the right to know what Parliament was doing through the medium through which people got their news, namely the press and the printed word, so the public has that right today through the electronic media which are the main ways by which people know what is going on.

Whether we like it or not—and we may as well like it because it is here—we are in an electronic world. People know what is going on, whether it is in the educational, religious, sport, political, international sphere or what have you, and they know it instantaneously by hearing it on radio or seeing it on television. If it is important for the people of Canada to see the Stanley Cup play-offs or Grey Cup game instantly on their television screens, I think Parliament is also important to the people of Canada and they should have the right to hear and see what is being done on their behalf and in their name in this place. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues I want to register our wholehearted support of the proposal that this matter be studied as set out in the resolution that is now before us.

I would like to emphasize the point that there will be problems and difficulties. They are bound to arise, but that is no reason for our not going ahead with this. As a matter of fact, not only will there be problems to iron out but if, as I believe we will, we get to the