

*Routine Proceedings*

Granted, today's debate is not an exciting one for the people of Canada. It is a process debate more than anything. When we are using the full Chamber I would much rather be talking about something related to the economy and getting people back to work. However every now and again we have a process debate about changing the structure of this place, so we ask Canadians to bear with us today. Obviously when there is such deep economic pain going on out there it is tough for people to understand why we are spending this much time on this bill.

If we are going to really reform this House of Commons we cannot just televise some of those committee meetings because once again we are going to have a two-tier system. It is sort of like the star system. My colleague from York South—Weston and I talk about this all the time. People organize events for the stars. The bottom line in this Chamber is that we are all equal. It does not matter whether you are on the finance committee, culture and communications, or environment, all that work is just as important as the next committee. To have a situation in which we are only going to have one committee being televised does not make sense to me.

The argument I heard earlier was that we only have one room around here to take television and we are going to have to make renovations. My goodness, each of us has a caucus room that is large enough for television. There is the railway committee room. There are more rooms around here that could hold television. This idea of not having the rooms is not accurate.

If we do advance with this motion—and I understand most parties are onside with it—I would ask for an amendment that we do not set up the two-tier or the three-tier system and that we cover all the committees. As I mentioned earlier today, tourism is the biggest job creator in this country. We had a committee meeting yesterday and we could barely get a quorum. We had eight tourism experts there from all over the country. This is another thing that Canadians do not realize. These committee meetings are not just MPs talking to each other and debating aspects of bills. Some of the best and brightest minds, not only in our country but in the world, come and give testimony at these committee meetings.

I do not know how the House would differentiate. Are we going to have the finance committee televised but

decide that the environment is not important? Would you want to be the member of Parliament who voted against televising what we discuss in the environment committee? I would not. Would you want to be the member of Parliament who voted against televising something that happened in culture and communications?

We have the rooms. We have the talent here. There are a few TV cameras and we already have the sound systems set up. If we are going to do this, let us do it correctly. Somebody will say that we do not have the time on the parliamentary channel. Most Canadians would never accept that. We can easily get another channel, that is an easy thing to do.

However, there is another factor. Look at all the repeat time on the parliamentary channel. Half the time it is music and the agenda for the following week. On the weekend there are 48 hours of nice background music on a continuous loop.

There are a number of us in this House who have requested the use of the parliamentary channel during the repeat portion of the day for the week of the 5th to 12th to televise the young hockey tournament at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto. We did get the consent of all members of the House, and we hope the CRTC will accommodate us. If Canadians could see something more productive happen on that parliamentary channel, rather than just watching the credits roll or the agenda of the following week, plus the nice music, I do not think Canadians would object to that. In fact, I think they would probably appreciate us using our brains and not being so apathetic about leaving that rotation of music and menu going.

• (1430)

I am all for this but I am not for the half measure. People today are really a lot smarter than we sometimes give them credit for. By putting those committees on television, not only are we going to show up on time, we are going to have our questions prepared and the committees are going to become more important than Question Period.

Right now Question Period is what drives the national journalists of this country. Now there will be real, honest thinking going on by the press gallery of this country. Right now, as most people know, the press gallery comes in and basically tries to get that 10-second clip, that 20-second clip from that little sparring match that goes