

Government Orders

I would like to hear the member explain to me why, and on what basis he can possibly deny the people the right to know, really what takes place in this place. Put television in the committees and then we will see who knows their stuff, who has done their homework and who has not. It gets rid of, with the greatest respect, bombastic oafs from sitting on committees.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I hope the hon. member can wind it up in a minute.

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I will try to wind it up. I always appreciate the intervention of my hon. friend from the west coast.

I do not believe the hon. member for North Vancouver was in the House when I was speaking about this. I do not know because, as I said, I have conflicting thoughts about this.

I do believe the public has a right to know. As I said in my opening remarks, I was a member of the committee that recommended that we have television in the House. Obviously, it has had some effect in the House, but I have apprehension about the committees. We are each entitled to our view.

The technology is there. I also said that the penetrating eye of the camera would cut through the bombasts and all the blarney. Perhaps it will produce.

Having been on a committee as long as my hon. friend, in fact I have been participating longer, I have found that committees do work pretty productively in a non-partisan way because they have not had the attention of the reporters. They certainly have not had the cameras until today.

I must confess that the Constitution committee in 1982 in Room 200 was televised. Of course, that was a very fundamental subject, but televising that committee was very educational for the public.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg Transcona): Mr. Speaker, just when I want to say I am glad to be able to have an opportunity to participate in a debate, I am not really. I wish we were not having this debate.

I wish we had been able to come to some understanding with respect to the changes that are needed in the Standing Orders, because I think that is the way the

Standing Orders of the House of Commons should be changed: by unanimous consent and agreement between the parties. That is what happened in 1983 as a result of the committee chaired by now Senator Tom Lefebvre, and in 1985 as a result of the work done by the Special Committee on the Reform of the House of Commons which was headed by Jim McGrath, now the Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland.

I had the opportunity to work on both those committees. I want to reflect on the changes we have before us here, in light of the parliamentary reform process that I have seen unfold since I arrived here in 1979.

It is always hard to determine just where things began to unravel. Certainly, the Lefebvre committee had its origins in the unravelling which occurred in this Chamber as a result of the debate over, first of all, the constitutional changes, the unilateral patriation package in 1980, the National Energy Program and the behaviour of the opposition at that time. The Official Opposition at that time is the party which is now the government.

It was difficult for some of us the other day to listen to the hon. government House leader speak, presumably sincerely, about his concern about what had happened to Parliament when some of us know only too well, and remember even better, that it was that member who, among others, stormed the Chair and did that sort of thing.

Mr. Cooper: He did not. He was not there.

Mr. Blaikie: I am told that he was not there. It was certainly the case that members of the Conservative caucus at that time were very instrumental in beginning a process which led us to a sorry state then and which was reformed to some degree by the Lefebvre committee and improved upon by the McGrath committee.

I see what is happening here now as stepping back from some of those reforms. I know that the hon. member for Peace River was also on that committee. There are a number of McGrath alumnae in the House. There are a few of us left. He does not agree with me with respect to how this reform either deviates from or is consistent with the McGrath committee. I am going to give my views on how I see it, because I do think that it does take us back from the McGrath reforms.