

*Broadcasting House Proceedings*

could—and there are 175,000 families—on very short notice on an experimental basis see at home what is going on in this House, and we all know that the Ottawa-Hull area is probably the area in Canada where voters are the most aware of federal politics since they hear about it everyday through their traditional media.

It would be just as easy to extend this service to the Montreal and Toronto cable networks using what Bell Canada is using, its occasional network of television channels. This would allow to reach an additional one million homes. After that, the rest of Canadian homes could be reached via satellite or other appropriate means. I will come back to those technical considerations later. But seeing that someone on the other side wants to speak to me I could perhaps excite him a bit by saying a few words about the veiled opposition coming from the other side of the House to the resolution now before us. I say “veiled opposition” because we are told they want to introduce an amendment which far from going against the principle would seek to amend it somewhat. It is not difficult for a parliamentarian who has been in this House for a few years to distinguish dilatory tactics from normal amendments. But I think that what they are proposing is much more like something aimed at giving a nice second class burial to the resolution before the House.

But what in hell does Her Majesty's Official Opposition have to hide? Are they afraid that soon Canadians will be able to see what is going on in the House, everything that is said here on one side as well as the other? I do not know exactly, but I have my idea. Maybe they are afraid that the non-constructive attitude with which they are discharging their opposition responsibilities would become apparent and visible to all Canadians. They always say: The government is wrong in all respects, the government is responsible for all evils on earth. The policies proposed by this government are always irresponsible. Well, if the opposition wants to hide this fact I have no objection. And I have no objection if the government proposals—I usually find them correct, but I can be mistaken—I do not see why all Canadians should not see them as they are presented in the House and I am ready to submit to that examination.

Would the official opposition of Her Majesty like to hide the fact, for instance, that its leader is very seldom in the House, that he was not here yesterday at the opening of the debates, preferring to travel across the country and shake hands with people, an approach which is probably more beneficial politically but much less efficient for a party leader anxious to level constructive criticism at the government here in this House where the action is. Maybe that party wishes also to hide or delay as long as possible the knowledge on the part of Canadians that they have no program and no solution to the problems facing Canadians? It might be for those reasons that the opposition tries through dilatory tactics to delay the adoption of this resolution.

Well, let us turn to something more cheerful. I would like to suggest a way of broadcasting the programming of the House

[Mr. Guibault.]

debates and one such method to get our message across to the homes of Canadians would be to use the cablevision network.

I must be understood that Canada has the greatest number of cablevision networks in the world. No other country has as many independent cablevision networks nor as many cablevision outlets in private homes. A simple example would be the hearings of the Quebec Commission of Inquiry into Organized Crime which, as we all know, are broadcast by Quebec cable distributors to more than a million viewers, which is a considerable number. Although important the Quebec Commission of Inquiry into Organized Crime has certainly not the weight of the federal government. Nonetheless, it interests a million viewers who want to see what is going on. We can well imagine the reaction of Canadian viewers to debates on subject that interest them more closely and are discussed here in Parliament.

I would like to describe a bit more precisely the way the message of the Quebec crime probe is transmitted to the viewer. The commission hearings are prerecorded, that is they are filmed by a group of technicians working for the various cable distributors. The cassettes are then transmitted during the night to the various cablevision networks and the prerecorded message is broadcast the following day. At first hand, this would seem to be less advantageous than direct broadcasting but it turned out to be quite the contrary.

What happens is that that very same night the constituent sees something exciting during the news broadcast. He sees a short thirty second sequence on a certain point of the inquiry, he is thus interested in seeing the full proceeding, and seeing what the various protagonists have said, in length and in context. We might perhaps consider this method of broadcast for our debates? I offer this as a suggestion.

● (1640)

[English]

I would now like to go to some arguments in my favour which are worthy of mention because they back up this proposal rather strongly. The first is that little or no discomfort will be caused because new cameras can operate without increasing light levels in the House. The cameras themselves and the technicians will be unobtrusive and will not be placed on the floor of the House or allowed to move about. It would arouse interest in parliament and in the democratic process. Every member of this House knows that is badly needed.

This place is the weaker if it is not fully reported to our fellow citizens and reported in ways which they can plainly see, understand and feel involved in. It would focus attention on the way in which we conduct the nation's business. We would do it more efficiently and the broadcasting of our proceedings would show up our deficiencies and help us to overcome them. That is for those of us who are not afraid of being scrutinized.

We should use the most effective medium of communication that is available to the public today. That is, without doubt, television. Television will be good for parliament, not because it will allow us to keep our traditions completely but because it