

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

second time around, the people doing such an index could have put together a list of topics which were discussed in the House on that particular day. This would be most convenient for students and other groups who could then use the information in their activities. It would also, of course, be most beneficial for Canadians who are interested in a specific issue. We all recognize that it is very difficult for us to inform the public as to any particular issue being deliberated in the House of Commons on any particular day. This problem is caused in part by the fact that the House agenda is often changed at the last minute by the Government House Leader—most times, of course, with the agreement of the Opposition House Leaders—but the agenda is not always fixed. Therefore it is very difficult for us to inform our constituents of what issues will be debated in the House on a particular day.

I want to allow a large number of Hon. Members, if possible, to speak on this issue, so I will make my remarks rather brief. I just want to draw to your attention, Mr. Speaker, an article written by Pierre Ménard in the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Autumn 1985 edition, entitled "Parliament and Television". I would just like to quote one paragraph in the article, which states as follows:

Many different topics and issues are covered every sitting day, each with its own interested public. The spontaneous nature of the live proceedings makes it difficult to predict when a particular issue is to come up. Few interest groups and individuals can monitor proceedings all day long to determine what is said on a subject of special concern to them.

I indicated that earlier in my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Once the House has adjourned for the day, however, an accurate viewer guide to the replay becomes available. If 20 topics are raised one day, 20 publics can be advised when to tune in for debate on their own areas of concern. Canadians would, first of all, be home to watch and secondly, they would have prior knowledge as to what subjects were coming up and at what specific time. Viewers could record portions of special interest to them.

Teachers who use the Parliamentary Network as a teaching aid could do so much more effectively. More schools might begin to use such a valuable resource. Though Parliament Hill is one of the best known sights in Canada, far less is known of the process that takes place inside.

● (1720)

[Translation]

I therefore ask, Mr. Speaker, that Members from all political parties represented in the House support the motion which I have moved today, calling on the House to show again in the evening the broadcasting of the daily proceedings of the House of Commons, which already cost a significant amount, something like \$3 million a year and, for a pittance more, and some even argue that the costs would be almost the same, to make it available for a greater number of Canadians, who would then have the opportunity to watch Hon. Members defending their interests.

[English]

Mrs. Pauline Browes (Scarborough Centre): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to offer some thoughts on the matter before us today, particularly because the broadcasting of parliamentary business makes such a positive contribution to the Canadian political process, indeed to Canadian identity.

However, while any attempt to improve television coverage of parliamentary proceedings is certainly worth while, I have some doubts about the motion before us. The motion proposes that the Government should consider the advisability of recommending to the CBC the feasibility of rebroadcasting the daily proceedings of the House of Commons. It might be helpful to outline how the CBC provides national distribution of its parliamentary service and the role it plays in doing so.

The House of Commons broadcast service, which comes under your direct responsibility, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, provides the video and audio signals to any broadcaster who wishes to distribute them. The CBC is licensed by the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission to carry on a network operation for the distribution of these proceedings. The CBC's parliamentary television network takes the signals, packages them and uplinks them for satellite distribution to cable companies across Canada in both official languages. Cable operators may then receive and carry the service at their own discretion. The CBC does not have an exclusive licence to distribute these proceedings, but it is the only national distributor at this time. In doing so, it provides a valuable service to Canadians and contributes immeasurably to fulfilling the objectives set out for the CBC in the Broadcasting Act.

The fundamental questions raised by this motion are: Do Canadians want the additional service? Would they watch it if they had it? I believe that before we advise the Government to extend this service it would make sense to ask Canadians if they want it. Broadcasting parliamentary procedures at present costs Canadians \$2.5 million to \$3 million per year. Most of us would agree that money spent on familiarizing Canadians with their Government is money well spent. Broadcasting Parliament's procedures give Canadians an opportunity to better understand their Government and how it operates. As today's article in *The Gazette* notes, these broadcasts reach literally thousands if not millions of people across Canada and the continent. For the past eight years this service has served an important function in educating and informing Canadians on their Government. However, before we undertake an extension of the service, I believe we must be absolutely certain that it is wanted. As elected representatives we must ensure that tax dollars are spent wisely and with the public interest in mind. This holds true for the CBC as it does for other Crown corporations. Let me point to an example which illustrates the need for proper management of tax dollars consistent with the wishes of Canadians.

As many Members may be aware, the CBC is planning to build a new broadcast centre in Metropolitan Toronto. When plans for the new building were prepared CBC officials selected a site in downtown Toronto and proceeded to estimate construction costs. In March of this year the City of Scarborough made a proposal to the CBC for construction of this centre in Scarborough which could save Canadian taxpayers over \$90 million. The CBC resisted this proposal and has continued to insist that the centre must be located in downtown Toronto. Fortunately, the persistent efforts of members