

place following the debate in 1969. The Prime Minister held a press conference summarizing the activities of that parliament. I cannot quote his exact words, but the reports indicated that the Prime Minister smiled and laughed when saying that he had certainly sucked in members of the opposition by asking for massive reform. He went on to indicate that after a long, protracted and acrimonious debate, which finally ended in a form of closure, the opposition accepted something else.

I am a bit worried when I am faced with that frame of mind on the part of the leader of the government. This is the same Prime Minister who a few years ago said that parliamentarians were nobodys. I suggest it is not surprising that many members of this House are suspicious about this type of reform. We must examine this whole matter of reform carefully before we unilaterally and fundamentally change some of our procedures.

Before we go too far down the road of parliamentary reform we should have the opportunity to express our opinions about the suggestion that we should allow television coverage of our procedures here. I personally believe that if we can resolve this question about television coverage in the House we will have taken a great step in the direction of making this place relevant. Perhaps in this way we can do more than has been done in the past by changing the rules.

Whenever one mentions the word "television" in the context of parliamentary procedure people begin to talk about the ham in everyone coming out. They say that everyone will be vying for position. I suggest that television coverage will prevent a lot of hocus-pocus on the part of members quicker than any change in the rules. It would effectively unmask the clowns and uncloak the fools. I think television coverage would result in every member of the House acting a little more like he does when he is at home, and would result in better attendance here than at home. Incidentally, hon. members are not often at home because they are either here in parliament or travelling around their ridings carrying out constituency business.

I think all the arguments that can be made against television coverage were made in the British House in 1737 in opposition to the presence of the quill, a reference to the reporting of those debates. At page 278 of the British parliamentary debates of 1737 to 1739 we find the following reference, and I might add that this is in a sort of old English, perhaps a bilingualism of that time. Someone was apparently reporting a speech in the House, and this is the report we find:

After which Mr. Speaker informed the House, that it was with some Concern he saw a Practice prevailing, which a little reflected upon the Dignity of that House: What he meant was the inserting an Account of their Proceedings in the printed News Papers—

I should point out that this reference contains some strange letters such as "f's, p's, ff's" and others. What he was referring to was an insertion of a printed report in the newspapers of the day. How long has television been with us; some 10, 15 or 20 years? The complaint to which I referred was in reference to printed newspapers. I like to complain about the press from time to time, but they do attend this place and write their reports. We have learned to live with the situation, the same as I suggest we will have to learn to live with television coverage.

*The Address—Mr. Nowlan*

Referring to these proceedings of the British parliament again it states:

—he had in his Hands a printed News Paper, which contained His Majesty's Answer to their late Address, before the same had been reported from the Chair, the only way of communicating it to the Public. That he thought it his Duty to inform the House of these Practices, the rather because he had observed them of late to have run into very great Abuses; and therefore he hoped that Gentlemen would propose some Method of stopping it.

Good gracious me! I suppose they thought this would likely give a false impression of how the gentlemen conducted themselves. I do not know if television coverage will give a false impression of the conduct of members in this House, but I suggest it will certainly focus the camera on this Chamber, as a result of which we will not be able to conduct ourselves in the manner that some of us have in the past. I for one believe it would fundamentally change the character of this place. It would certainly shorten debates. It would stop repetition. If a member got up and stumbled through his speech he would have something to think about as he might be on television that evening. Some of the catcalling, which I sometimes enjoy getting involved in, would have to be conducted with discretion.

Perhaps I should not waste my entire time on this subject, but I suggest that what was said during that debate in 1737 is relevant to any debate now in respect of television coverage. It is time we came back to the 20th century. That was reform in reverse.

● (1640)

I have many more things I wish to say but I do not know how much time I have remaining. I should like to mention something that is causing concern on all sides of the House. I do not think the Prime Minister appreciates this. In 1968 when he obtained a majority he was clear during the election campaign on two things. One was regional disparity. He said he would do something about it. The other was the official languages bill. He made it clear that if he were elected something would be done. Something was done. At that time he had a mandate.

However in 1974 there was no mandate to the government on any issue because the Prime Minister did not talk about an issue. All he did was promise this and that. He promised material things. He did not make promises in respect of philosophical issues or even economic issues which could be disturbing to Canadians. I think there is a real difference between what the Prime Minister did in 1974 compared with what he did in 1968-69.

On another occasion, because my time is running out, I should like to speak about the matter of transportation and communications. The Prime Minister did not mention much about that, or about bilingualism during the election campaign.

As I cross the country and travel around my constituency I find that people ask me to rationalize the situation in respect of Bill C-22. They wonder, when there is unilingualism in one part of the country, how bilingualism can be developed in the federal structures of the country. I find this question difficult to answer. There are other elements of this on which I should like to elaborate at some other time.