

Routine Proceedings

happens that tempers flare in the heat of debate and someone might say that a certain member is not present. However, it does not necessarily mean that the member who is not in the House is not doing his work, for he might very well not be in the House, for example now when we are debating this motion, but attending a meeting, sitting on a committee or looking after other parliamentary responsibilities.

So I would like to know his opinion on this subject. Will this report allow people through television or radio to have a better idea of the work done by committees? Many committees sit at the same time as the House during the week. Such a report would make the work done by MPs better known, as well as the important role of parliamentary, standing, legislative or even special committees. Could I have my colleague's comments on that?

[*English*]

Mr. Riis: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague raises a good issue. I think that right now is a good example. Anybody who might be watching these proceedings and listening to me at this moment would get the impression that there are not very many people here working.

Well, that is partly true, they are not in their seats here working. I can assure the House that all of the individuals who would normally be sitting in the seats around mine are at work.

As my hon. friend has indicated, televising some of the committee work and providing audio feeds from all of the committees would introduce Canadians generally to the fact that members of Parliament do much more than simply appear and speak in the House of Commons.

I suspect that for most of us this is one of our smaller tasks. We probably spend the least amount of our time doing this.

Last year there were over 1,000 committee meetings of the Parliament of Canada. Those were all of the standing committees, special joint committees, and so on. There were over 1,000 meetings involving over 2,000 hours of work by members of the House of Commons.

As a member of Parliament who has been here for a few years and has had the opportunity to participate in a number of committees over those years, I could say that most of that work was very productive and very positive. Whether it was in the areas of agriculture, forestry, recreation, or taxation, it was time very well spent.

In response to the question from my hon. colleague, I do think that televising some of the committee proceedings and providing audio sourcing for all of the committees will certainly help the public's understanding of the kind of work being done here other than what takes place on the floor of the House of Commons.

Mr. Peter Milliken (Kingston and the Islands): Madam Speaker, I know that the hon. member for Kamloops, as House leader for his party, has taken an active role in the discussions leading to the report that has come before the House. He was not a member of the House management committee that produced the report but I know that he actively encouraged the members of his party who were serving on that committee.

My question to him is whether he agrees with the report in what it does not say. Perhaps this is an odd way to put a question. However I think that, perhaps like me, he expected that the rules relating to the televising of committee proceedings in this House would be liberalized considerably.

This report goes some way to achieving that goal by setting up a single room from which the proceedings of any committee could be televised, if it was in that room. However, it does not permit indiscriminate televising of other committees nor does it permit committees to make their own decisions as to whether they will be televised unless they are able to arrange accommodation in the single room.

He knows as well as I do that at any one time there could be five or six committees of this House sitting. Clearly it will be difficult, particularly when most committee meetings take place Tuesdays, Wednesday afternoons, and Thursdays. When that is the case it will be difficult to squeeze very many committees into this room in the course of a day. There will be some limit.