

Broadcasting House Proceedings

The minister in his comments made several points which I should like to mention again if I may. The televising and broadcasting of the House of Commons proceedings would be under the authority of the Speaker who survives in his office only because of support from all sides of the House of Commons. This is a guarantee of objectivity and efficiency in the recording or broadcasting of the events which take place in this Chamber. Further, the government House leader gave us his assurance that all parliamentary rights and privileges will be observed and upheld, and that if they are abused by anyone taking advantage of those broadcast tapes they will be answerable to the House of Commons which is, of course, finally the highest court in the land. And yet the media will continue to be free to edit and select as it sees fit, at its own discretion. For its competence or lack of competence in doing so it will be answerable to its viewers, to the Canadian public, and to the Canadian Radio and Television Commission. Finally, it will be answerable to this House if abuses take place.

Technical problems will of course occur, but not ones which are in any way insurmountable. Lighting can easily be arranged to avoid causing extra heat or difficulties to the eyes of those within the House of Commons. Those kinds of difficulties with television were conquered several years ago. Cameras can be placed unobtrusively, as the study done last year under the authority of the House leader at that time showed. There is no need to use "on air" lights or things of that nature which would be distracting to the on-going business of the House of Commons. Something very important to me as a member of the Chamber is that this Chamber and its beauty can be maintained and not damaged in any way.

● (2010)

Costs are something which the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton chose to comment on, especially when he interjected several times during the speech of the government House leader. At one point I believe he commented "What about our pensioners?" when there was mention of costs. I should like to point out that the annual cost of running television and radio in the House of Commons, of having these recordings available and of telling and showing Canadians what is happening, would be less than \$1 million. On the other hand, if we were to say that we were not going to let the Canadian public understand better what is going on here but instead are going to assist our pensioners, this would work out to 50 cents per pensioner per year.

Mr. Yewchuk: That is fine.

Mr. Fleming: The hon. member says that is fine, Mr. Speaker. I suspect that if the hon. member thought this out thoroughly rather than simply interjecting he would say, if the issue of pensions is an important one and there should be an increase, what better way of focusing on that than allowing the Canadian public to see issues like this debated in the House of Commons of Canada? I know that the hon. member has some pertinent and wise things to contribute to this debate, and I look forward to hearing him when he gets Your Honour's attention.

[Mr. Fleming.]

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that when *Hansard*, as vital as it is, has a circulation of 14,000, when the operating cost is going to be about one third the current annual cost of *Hansard* but is going to reach not multiples of tens, 20's or 50's but will reach a hundred or even a thousand times the current circulation of *Hansard*—and a thousand times 14,000 is 14 million—then surely for an investment that represents an increase of less than 2 per cent of the budget for the operation of parliament we could better tell Canadians what is happening and what this country is all about.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Would you pay it?

Mr. Fleming: Mr. Speaker, I often find that when I speak in the afternoon the Conservatives are fairly well mannered, but after dinner they become very noisy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Fleming: It seems to me to be an incredibly negative reflection on us all that we should not sooner be prepared to show the public their House of Commons and their elected representatives.

Mr. Alexander: That was a cheap shot.

Mr. Fleming: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) says that that was a cheap shot. It is only because I respect that particular member that I have not replied to a number of cheap shots that have been made since I rose to speak. No matter how opponents of this resolution fog this debate, essentially it is: will the Canadian public at last be able to see and hear by means of modern technology what happens in the House of Commons, how it works and what the issues are, or will most of them still have this denied to them?

It seems to me that all of us as members of parliament are terribly anxious, when we receive visits from groups in our ridings, and when those with constituencies not too far from the capital have groups of school children coming here by the thousands in the summertime, to have them come in and see our Chamber in operation, and to speak to them. Yet when we try to keep together a country that stretches thousands of miles from shore to shore, is it fair to people in British Columbia, the maritimes, the north, and in remote areas that they not be given a better perception of what is happening here, what the issues are, and what other parts of the country are all about, as represented by various speakers in this House?

The committee fulfilling the directions of the motion will be made up of MP's from all sides of the House of Commons. Surely they can reasonably consider the problems involved and find answers to technological problems. To stall further and deny access to these basic instruments of communications to Canadians seems to me to be nothing but simply and directly unjust.

Radio has been in Canada, Mr. Speaker, as a tool of communications for almost 60 years. We have had television