

Business of Supply

make a preliminary study of the question of working out appropriate procedures for broadcasting in the house. I repeat, however, that I believe we should let the committee complete the work we have given it. This debate provides a good opportunity to place before the house a number of problems which arise from the proposal to televise the proceedings of the house. I think we all agree that televising the proceedings would have a very strong influence on the way the house works.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Dr. Marshall McLuhan has indicated that house proceedings now are essentially a linear medium. Of course, if television comes into the chamber it will very much change the manner of our proceedings. Indeed, presenting our proceedings on television will make as much change in the proceedings of the house as was made to the procedures of the British house when Mr. Hansard first commenced his work of reporting its proceedings.

I share the concern of the hon. member for Peace River, and will not repeat his observations, with regard to the misunderstanding that could take place on the part of the public as to the work being done by the house, particularly with regard to the question of all hon. members not being present at all times. All hon. members are not present at all times, just as all the members of the press gallery are not present at all times because they are engaged in other activities elsewhere in the house with respect to their responsibilities. So are members of the house engaged in other activities elsewhere. We will have to make it perfectly clear, if and when television comes into this chamber, that there are many and multifarious activities in which hon. members engage. This was referred to by the hon. member for Peace River. We will have to make it clear that the business is being carried out effectively and carefully.

There are a number of purely technical questions which arise. For example, there is the question of the clutter of wires, cables and equipment necessary to televise the proceedings in the chamber. Much of this equipment will be located in the chamber. The discomfort created by the glare of lights and the great heat from them at the start of this session will be recalled. These technical problems would have to be solved.

Probably the most serious question is the one already touched upon by hon. members. I refer to the question as to what would be

televised and what would be broadcast. First, who would direct the cameras? Who would decide what member and what view of the member would be selected? Second, who would decide what part of the film would be broadcast? The second of these two questions, namely, who would decide what things on film would be broadcast, could be answered if we broadcast all of the proceedings of the house all of the day. However, I think there would be general agreement that such non-selective treatment of the proceedings of the house would be favourable neither to the house nor necessarily favourable to the viewer. There would be, of course, the matter of the extra cost involved if we had, for example, an educational television channel and the proceedings of the house were carried on it.

Mr. Baldwin: You could get a sponsor.

Mr. Macdonald (Rosedale): I am afraid I did not hear the hon. member's remark. I think we could draw some interesting conclusions from the examinations made of this question by the two houses of parliament in Westminster. The select committee on broadcasting the proceedings of the House of Lords, in June, 1968, recommended that both the actual act of televising and the selection of the material to be broadcast should be left to the broadcasters themselves. In this way, as the Lords pointed out, it would not be necessary for the house to maintain its own staff and it would be left entirely to the broadcasters as to what they presented on the air.

I think it is interesting to contrast this with the view set out by the select committee on broadcasting the proceedings of the House of Commons at Westminster. I quote from its first report:

In the view of your committee, the most interesting, informative and shapely programs would consist of edited extracts from the proceedings of the house. For this purpose a recording of the whole of the proceedings should be made available to the broadcasting organizations. Many different types of program, making use of such material, could be produced—

The report goes on to suggest the kind of material that could be used. On the question of control, the British Commons' committee, unlike the Lords' committee, was not prepared to let the broadcasters decide. I quote again from the report of the British House of Commons committee:

Your committee consider that the house should retain control of the preparation of the full television and sound transmission which would be "piped" from the house.