

Routine Proceedings

I think that some of the best moments of people working together in the best interests of the country, of people setting aside their partisan differences in an effort to generate policy recommendations, takes place in committees.

If the people of Canada had an opportunity from time to time to look in at the work that committees do, whether it is on forestry or agriculture or foreign policy or trade policy or tax policy, they would see that when members of Parliament sit down together, with the odd exception, there is a genuine willingness to co-operate and work together in the best interests of developing good policy.

The problem is not the work by parliamentarians, but when those recommendations or proposals go to the government essentially they are often ignored. They are simply left on some shelf to gather dust while the government goes merrily on its way in its sort of "Father knows best" approach to government.

I think that by setting aside one of our committee rooms so that the proceedings can be televised, it would allow people in the comfort of their living rooms, rec rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, wherever they watch television, to actually have a chance to watch the proceedings of a committee at work.

It would serve a number of purposes. First of all, it would on occasion indicate that members of Parliament can work together co-operatively, as I indicated earlier.

Second, and perhaps most important in my judgment, is that often when we deal with controversial pieces of legislation or develop policies in a certain area, we bring in witnesses. Those witnesses tend to be people or groups with expertise in aspects of the legislation or the policy being debated, and they often provide excellent input into the decision-making.

It would be useful for the people of Canada to see from time to time when, for example, we are dealing with cuts to health care or cuts to post-secondary education, witness after witness pointing out why the government should abandon its course of cutting and destroying medicare, or why the government should abandon its course of turning its back on post-secondary education and retraining programs. When we hear witness after witness, expert after expert, point out in very detailed terms why the government should change its course and to know that the government will ignore those recommendations, will ignore what is often the

unanimous recommendation of the committee, I think it would be useful. It would remind Canadians just how out of touch or how arrogant the government has become.

• (1240)

For those reasons, it makes a good deal of sense. While all of the committees obviously cannot be televised—I see that as being rather chaotic when you consider the number of special committees or standing committees that might be sitting at any one time—I think it would be appropriate, at least on this experimental basis for the House leaders to attempt to determine which committees are dealing with subject matter that would be of most interest to Canadian viewers generally, in terms of understanding the inner workings of Parliament.

The fact there is a recommendation that all committees which are sitting would at least be available to others through an audio outlet is another step in the right direction. The more we can open up this place, the more we can expose how the Parliament of Canada actually works, other than simply the floor of the House of Commons, would be a useful step forward.

As we struggle to give more jurisdiction and more responsibility to the committees working on behalf of Parliament, if the people of Canada could look in on those proceedings, I think that members of Parliament would continue not only their generally good work, but the government would feel more inclined to follow the advice and to adopt the recommendations that the committee reports inevitably come up with.

I simply want to say on behalf of the New Democratic Party that I appreciate the hard work that has been done by all of the members, including of course the representatives of the New Democratic Party and that when the time comes to support this committee report we will be voting in the affirmative.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech. I found it very interesting and I see that the New Democratic Party supports this report. This afternoon, I will have an opportunity to speak, but in this period for questions and comments, I just want to tell my colleague that often here in the House we are tempted in the heat of debate during Oral Question Period to say, in asking a question, "In the absence of the Minister of Finance, I direct my question to such and such a minister." It often