

*Broadcasting House Proceedings*

do not have a right—and this has been consistently abused—to use this position to influence others who are not inclined that way. It is frustrating, when this country is in such critical danger and when events are moving so fast, to try to decide what action we can take.

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) says that English Canadians have to demonstrate to French Canadians that we love them. I am paraphrasing the Prime Minister, but I think that is essentially what he has been saying. How can we say “We love you” when the carriers of the Valentine are not going to let that message get through? I know my own constituents may grumble about bilingualism and other things in connection with Quebec, but when we really get down to it there is no doubt in my mind that my constituents want this country to hang together. They want Quebec to stay in confederation, and I feel somewhat frustrated in trying to get that message across to the people of Quebec. I think that by televising the proceedings of the House of Commons we will be able to say what we feel and what we know to the people of Quebec without worrying about what kind of distortions will take place once our words get into the hands of the French media.

I want to refer back to something I started to talk about last night. I was talking about our responsibility as members of parliament. Without television in the House, and with the prodding which takes place in the corridors, there is a tendency for members of this House to think of their ridings in particular, rather than to see themselves as part of one of the great parties which exist. There is a tendency to see themselves as other than part of something called responsible government. We do not sit here as freelance individuals, but as members of a group who have taken a certain position. We have gone to the electorate with that position and we hold ourselves collectively responsible for that position.

One of the great difficulties, and perhaps one of the reasons democracy is fragile and falls into danger, is that people become too particularized. People tend to listen to loud voices, whether they come in the form of a letter or from someone on the street, and think these are the voices of the grass roots. A member of parliament can get a misleading impression by reading only the mail that comes across the desk or by listening only to the loud, broadcast voice or organized group voice.

● (1620)

On the question of English and French Canada, for instance, we could think that everybody in English Canada is ready to bid Quebec goodbye. That is the kind of mail we get. I am sure the same thing is true of the people of Quebec and the mail Quebec members get: Let English Canada go, sort of thing. But if you probe a little more deeply, as many of us do with questionnaires, and ask everyone—not just those who feel constrained to make representation to their member—you get an entirely different impression.

Another impression that comes through quite clearly in my riding, and I am prepared to say this and take whatever

[Mr. Saltzman.]

political risks are consequent upon it, is that people want the member of parliament to be a leader; they want the member of parliament to make a decision. Basically, they say, “You are there. You are in the debate. You are listening to the argument. You accept the responsibility and we will judge you at election time to the extent we think you have behaved responsibly, wisely, intelligently and to our benefit.”

A member expressed concern that television was going to give him a national audience and he does not want a national audience; he just wants to talk to his constituents. We have to do more than talk to our constituents, Mr. Speaker. The problem of talking only to our constituents is that it reinforces the bigotry and prejudice that exists in every riding; it is to assume that such is our riding when in fact it is not. It is really to play, not to the gallery but to the dug-out. We have to avoid that even if it means political risk. We have to be able to go back on occasion—and I think the time is ripe now—and say, “We are in trouble. We are in danger. Those loose lips, those irresponsible remarks, are no longer in fashion. There is too much hanging on what we say and what we do.” I think that message has to come from this House.

I will give an example, Mr. Speaker. Members know where their constituency is itching. Maybe it is in respect of textiles, shoes, storage of grain, the price of cattle—who knows? It may affect one constituency only, or a few, but it is reasonably important in those constituencies. Yet the party position is just the opposite. So members make a speech, send it back home, and nobody in the press pays any attention because they know it was just a throw-away speech that pleases the people back home. It reinforces all the misconceptions that exist. Then the party takes some other position because, after all, the party has to speak nationally. I think that is wrong, Mr. Speaker.

We cannot always agree with our party—there are cases where we have to digress—but we have to take the consequences. The party system is important. We are not a rabble, not a group of anarchists. We belong to groups of people who have come together for certain kinds of programs so that we can be identified, and when people vote for us they know what we stand for. Parties are important in this House in a way that the individual is not. Parties have to be held responsible and the individual has to be held responsible within the framework of the party. Some of us who are more inclined than others to be mavericks may not like this, but it will result in a great deal more discipline and each member being held responsible for what he says in this House. It will not be a matter of mailing an excerpt from *Hansard* to a constituency; everybody in the country will hear what a member of a party has to say on a given issue. I think that is important.

Mr. Speaker, my time is nearly up. I would say to my hon. friends on the right that I understand their reservations. I know there will be some problems, but I ask them to consider with some urgency the fact that we must have television in this House so that we can speak directly to the people of Canada. I know my friends on the right, as members of the opposition, understand that the nature of television is to favour the government and not the opposition. We can quarrel about that,