

finally the real crisis of today in Canada is a communications crisis. The crisis is that Canadians in one part of our mosaic have no idea what Canadians in the other parts are all about.

The phrase "national unity" is not simply a phony or political word or phrase of propaganda. It is the foundation-stone upon which this country was built more than 100 years ago. It is the foundation upon which the future of this country now must be rebuilt. It is a question of a breakdown in communication so that regional disparities—the needs, the differences, languages, the background of various parts of Canada—are not understood by other parts of Canada. It is the communication breakdown that leads us to the crisis we face today.

From the beginning, the focal point of all these problems was discussed here in parliament. This is the place where it was funnelled down to. The narrow focal point of all our problems and how to correct them has been the Canadian House of Commons. It is here where we discuss and learn about problems faced by our colleagues from other parts of the country. It is here where I learn about prairie wheat, the problems of groundfish in the maritimes, the ambitions and desires of peoples in the Yukon, and the difficulties in northern Ontario because of pollution of the waterways. Indeed, it is here that I learn that people in Vancouver, Montreal, Halifax, Regina and Winnipeg may suffer problems even as I know my own people suffer in Toronto.

This is the focus where we, as members of parliament, as elected representatives, begin to understand the other parts of our country. We, as MPs, have to begin to appreciate the compromise. We must begin to come together and work out a pattern that is reasonable for all, if in each case specific to some. It is for that reason this debate does indeed have great importance. Television and radio in the House of Commons is a crucial first step in what I hope will become over a period of time a massive attack on the failure to communicate with the Canadian public and, thus, their inability to appreciate the great country that we have.

The Canadian public, by and large, does not know the existing laws of Canada. They do not begin to even understand what laws are before this parliament for change. They do not know what proposals are in the new laws that they might question. They are not well aware of what the opposition charges are flaws in the proposed changes which the government has put forward. Today, Mr. Speaker, the government of Canada, in putting forward its program, has the frustration of the public not appreciating the quality or goodness in that program and, in turn, the same public not being able to judge if there are, indeed, serious errors.

● (1650)

One of the great fears, I believe, of many members of parliament in bringing television into the House of Commons is the public's perception of politicians, by some at least, of us as a lazy lot, of us as a group of people who don't care, of us as a mindless lot on the government side or, indeed, within the opposition parties, of us as individuals without the views of

individuals, without the strength to represent the particular area we have been elected to represent.

Mr. Speaker, we are an imperfect lot: I will certainly admit that, as I think most hon. members would. But surely there is nothing more essential today to end that kind of cynicism, that kind of misunderstanding, than to let the Canadian public see what really happens, to see what really goes on and to learn how diverse this country really is, how multi-faceted it is and how difficult it is to govern and, indeed, how difficult it is to be parliamentarians and try to resolve problems within parliament because of its diversity.

In speaking to this issue at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Quebec City in the summer of 1973, and again in Toronto in the summer of 1974, I gave one of my favourite examples of how the system breaks down. It is only one example, but it is one of which I am particularly aware because of my background as a journalist within the broadcasting media. I said that every day in question period history is at least twice rewritten before it reaches the Canadian public.

The print media and the broadcast media sit in the gallery and fervently write and record the questions put by members of the opposition and the charges they make. They also fervently record what government representatives reply. With that, they all fervently run down to the scrum, where they fervently re-do it after cabinet ministers have checked with their aides and changed their facts and straightened out the mess, and certain members in the opposition have picked up the idea or attack of the other opposition party and straightened it out or improved upon it. By the time they finish up with the interviews in the scrum, the print media, with all the notes they have already made, then go back to the people they just interviewed or overheard and rewrite it again as they go over the situation once more.

Mr. Speaker, nothing could be more fundamental than allowing the Canadian public to see exactly what happens, to see the talents and abilities of the opposition, the talents and abilities of the government, or the lack thereof on both sides. Let the public judge at the first instant, without second-guessing or second-judging or rewriting what happened in the parliament of Canada today. That will not for one moment eliminate the right of the print media or the broadcast media to go down to seek further interviews, to seek clarification or to challenge what has been said. But the fact is that the public will at last begin to understand what this country is and will begin to understand the variety of interests and demands, depending on what part of the country is being represented.

We cannot all be here all of the time. I am speaking here about the fear that constituents will say, for instance, that the hon. member for York West is not in his seat today. The fact is that the essence of successful communication is to have people understand what is true, what is real, not misunderstand and therefore not really know what is happening.

I do not feel worried. As a parliamentary secretary for at least another five months—I have held that position for a year and a half already—I am unable to ask a question in the