

As a participating addict and admirer of the CBC parliamentary television network, I want to see something done about a system which sits there unused except when the House of Commons is in session. There are decisions which have to be made in conjunction with the McGrath Committee on Reform of the House of Commons; in conjunction with the Minister of Communications; in conjunction with the Special Task Force on Broadcasting, and in conjunction with you, the viewer, if I may say through you, Mr. Speaker. As individual Members of Parliament, we should be hearing from the people who really admire this service and who want to see it expanded, enhanced and extended.

We have ways of making use of this hugely expensive electronic instrument of Parliament. We MPs own and operate all the broadcasting facilities within these buildings. We must, in my view, take advantage of those installations and decide how we wish to put the parliamentary television network—

[Translation]

—in both official languages—

[English]

—to further use for the public good.

● (1800)

[Translation]

Mr. Gabriel Fontaine (Lévis): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to be able to discuss here in the House the motion presented by my colleague, the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, which says:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should consider the advisability of recommending to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation the feasibility of rebroadcasting the daily proceedings of the House of Commons *in toto* during the evening hours.

I understand and share in my colleague's desire to make the noble institution we represent better known to the public. In that regard, television is the perfect media to make Canadians familiar with the works of Parliament.

I confess, Mr. Speaker, that the motion puzzles me somewhat, because the action it calls for would, in my opinion, create an embarrassing precedent if it were fully implemented.

Our colleague wants the Government to consider recommending to the CBC that changes be made in the services it provides, a matter which comes under CBC internal management. Under the provisions of the Financial Administration Act, the CBC is a proprietary corporation and as such is solely responsible for internal management and day-to-day administration.

It is therefore up to the CBC to decide which programs are to be aired, and were the Government to act as suggested by the Hon. Member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell (Mr. Boudria) it would run the risk of opening a debate on the autonomy of the corporation. Such a debate would undoubtedly cloud the issue, for our main objective is to make viewers

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

even more interested and convince Canadians that they ought to take a more active role in the political process of their country.

I believe that to really grasp the question at issue, the role played by the CBC in providing this service has to be further explained. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings comes directly under your jurisdiction. CBC has obtained from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission a licence to establish a French and English parliamentary television networks broadcasting every day the House is sitting a direct coverage of its proceedings.

This coverage is supplemented with explanatory comments provided by CBC's own announcers. Those programs are then conveyed by satellite to the affiliated Canadian cable companies.

Statistics show that in early 1985, parliamentary broadcasts were shown by 188 cable companies. These cable operators could reach 66 per cent of Canadian homes and were effectively received by 50 per cent of all households.

Those figures, Mr. Speaker, show the popularity of this service and encourage us to do even better.

The question at issue now, Mr. Speaker, is this: what are the best ways to attain our goal which is, and I will remind you of it, to make Canadian people more aware of parliamentary life?

This question leads me to discuss the mechanism proposed in the motion put forward by the Hon. Member for Prescott-Glengarry-Russell, that is rebroadcasting the daily proceedings of the House of Commons *in toto* during the evening hours.

As you know, the Special Committee on Reform of the House of Commons, chaired by the Hon. Member from St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), has devoted a chapter, Chapter 9 of the report released last June, to the question of televising the House.

What makes the value of any debate is the relevance and variety of suggestions made. I say that, Mr. Speaker, because the motion before us calls for a definite action, the choosing of a mode of rebroadcasting.

● (1805)

I would not want anyone to believe that I am trying to downgrade that solution. Rebroadcasting during the evening hours would certainly give a larger proportion of the population the opportunity to watch the proceedings. At the present time, Question Period is the most popular part of the broadcast. Given the fact that it is already rebroadcasted at the end of the daily proceedings of the House, I wonder, and reasonably so I believe, if rebroadcasting *in toto* is the best or only means of improving that service. Would it not be better to increase the variety of parliamentary activities being broadcasted, as suggested by the report?