

EVIDENCE

WEDNESDAY, December 18, 1963.

The CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen I see a quorum.

In this report presented by Mr. Ervin he makes reference to experiments that were carried out during a period of debate in the House of Commons. This morning he has brought with him some tapes that he made on that occasion. The tapes that he has made on March 21, 22 and 23 of 1962. I have asked Mr. Ervin to play back these tapes for us this morning so we can listen to them. After you have heard a few of the recordings perhaps there will be questions which you may wish to ask in respect of certain portions of the recordings. That is, how it would work if it was installed in the House of Commons, and other questions that would be of interest to the committee.

I should like Mr. Ervin to identify very carefully for the reporters the different belts that he will play for us, but there is no need for the reporters to actually record the recordings.

I wonder now, Mr. Ervin, whether you would go ahead and let us hear your testimony.

Mr. A. M. ERVIN (*Management Analysis Officer, Civil Service Commission*): Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could just have a minute to describe the background of this experiment and some of the conditions which applied. I think this will make the experiment itself more meaningful to the members of the committee.

First, of all, the procedure for capturing debates in the House of Commons, as presently exists, I think is familiar to you. If you will bear with me I will just run through it.

There are seven reporters, six of whom are on duty at one time. The drill is for them to go into the house for ten minutes at a time except for the first time, which happens to be a five minute period. They take shorthand notes of the proceedings of the house for ten minutes and then return to their own offices where they dictate this verbally to an amanuensis, a very fast typist, who is able to type this, without having to go through the intermediate medium of dictating it on a dictating machine. During this process a certain amount of editing takes place. The reporter does not dictate exactly what was spoken but does a small amount of editing which is quite normal and desirable under these circumstances. As a result of this a transcript is produced, triple spaced, which is then reproduced.

I am sure you are all familiar with this edition that comes out for the purpose of the press and members who have spoken, so they have the opportunity, soon after they have spoken, to review what they have said. This is a very rough and rather crude copy. It is even more rough and more crude by the time it gets to the Queen's printer, because following this it is then edited by the editor or assistant editor. Notwithstanding the marks that are on that copy, it is still sufficiently good printer's copy to allow *Hansard* to be published from it. That is the present procedure.

I tried to duplicate this procedure as best I could with the equipment that was very quickly put together. I would like to describe the set-up which we used in an attempt to do the same thing.

We first of all installed two dictating machines; Dictaphone Time-Master machines, which use red plastic belts. These were so arranged that they would