

thoroughly with detailed and complex business, a medium which is judged by its ability to entertain? I want to deal with the second question first. We have to be concerned whether the selective cameras will give an accurate picture of what is really happening on the floor of the House. Despite our rules, it sometimes happens that more than one person is speaking at once, or is competing for the attention of the Speaker by a process which is somewhat undignified. Mr. Ward, the Associate Editor of *Hansard*, has made a comment with respect to that matter which I should like all hon. members to read. However, the question of the camera's view is the smallest part of our concern: the use made of film by various news editors will be the most important cause of concern to us all. What will those editors look for? Will they look for evidence of hard work, careful preparation, intelligence, persistence, perception? Or will they look for excitement and drama—and, in the process, attempt to create it? Will the questioner be in the evening news film clip, or will it be just the minister replying, however reluctantly? A need will arise, so far unfulfilled in the print media, for commentators who understand our procedures; and we must assert that those procedures are not irrelevant simply because they are complicated.

If television does bring about a change in our chamber—as many hope, and some fear—will that change be for the better or for the worse? Will we get along with it a freedom of information bill to provide the depth in our debates which people will expect, or shall we merely be driven to shorter speeches for the sake of better television as opposed to better debate? We must hope—I certainly hope—that television and the public reaction to it will not compel us to sit here during the discussion of business which does not immediately concern us and at times when we should be in our offices or in committee discussing things which do.

There is an expectation that television will highlight our so-called archaic rules. I imagine the government looks forward, as a result, to acquiring more power because the exercise of power is more entertaining than the tedious process of probing, delaying, exposing and qualifying, which is the task of the opposition. I assure the government that we shall continue to discuss rule changes which will give parliament the power to provide those checks on executive action which it is the purpose of parliament to provide, but that we shall resist any change which confuses relevancy with entertainment.

If I have been expressing anything, I have been expressing the doubts of one forced to run across unknown fields when prudence and experience dictate that we walk. We grow weary of watching the government advance with blind and extravagant confidence, and then retreat with banners flying, and public relations men trumpeting as though predictable defeat was justified by blatant confession.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to emphasize that our reservations are put forward on behalf of the institution of parliament. As a party, we feel that the government's rashness will be its own undoing. Viewers are bound to tire of the government's persistent assertion that the release to parliamentarians of studies done at public expense is, somehow, never in the public

interest. They will demand more than slick answers in the question period, and will wonder at the casual passing to powerless parliamentary secretaries of important policy questions, which we saw today. They will be astonished to see billions of dollars of estimates whisked through after only cursory examination. That is the effect of the rules of this House now. It is going to make very depressing television for Canadians. I think it will be so depressing to them that the advent of television—and I support it for more than just this reason—is likely to speed the Liberal party's demise and its removal into a period of rest, which it deserves beyond measure.

● (1550)

Perhaps for all of us our constituents will appreciate the grinding tasks that we must perform, and perhaps they will come to reject as inadequate analysis the fashionable cynicism purveyed about us from time to time. I hope that will be the case. In short, Mr. Speaker, we must hope that good television and good parliamentary democracy are natural companions. We will have to wait and see, though, because no one in this chamber can predict that.

Will television bring out the best, or the worst, about this institution, or make no difference at all? That should be a sobering question for parliamentarians, and it is a shame that in the resolution as it is now framed we will not have the chance seriously to study the possibilities.

We are not without forerunners in this experiment, and we are not compelled to jump into broadcasting with all its unknowns. In Alberta, viewer ratings are so low that the networks are discussing turning over the broadcasts to the educational channel. In Nova Scotia, where a three-week experiment in televising the proceedings took place in 1971, no one has made any further demands for its continuance. In Ontario, where cameras have been admitted to the legislature, very little actual coverage takes place. In B.C., after many reports on the subject recommending broadcaster access, the government indicates that they have no immediate plans to allow television in the House.

As well, these arguments are related to the type of coverage that is, in the end, permitted. Saskatchewan has had radio broadcasts of House proceedings for almost 30 years with very little negative consequence. Television brings its own impact, but radio, in fact, may not. Perhaps the only clear message in all of these pro and con arguments is the need to discuss carefully, and introduce slowly, any major broadcasting efforts. Even the most trivial change in our rules seems to get more attention than is implicit in the resolution that is before the House with respect to broadcasting.

Where, for example, is a study on the implications of this move for parliamentary privilege? We can accept the platitudes of the government House leader, but where is the study and where are the conclusions? Is parliament to take part in this, or is it all to be done in the privy council office? Should we not have a committee report on our vulnerability to libel and slander laws before approving this motion? Will we be