

*Business of Supply*

press to come into the House of Commons and report. There was a debate on whether any of the happenings in the house, the debates or arguments, should even be published. There was a great and fiery debate on that subject. There was another great debate in the United Kingdom about whether to have *Hansard* in the House of Commons. We now come to the use of the news media of television and radio in our own Canadian Parliament.

There is little doubt, from the individual point of view and more particularly from the point of view of individuals in political life, that an opportunity to appear on television is attractive. We are all human in this regard. One of the dangers of the question we are now debating is that this attractiveness makes it very difficult for members to look at this proposition objectively. It is all too easy to accept the argument that televising the proceedings of this house will bring parliament to the people raw and unedited, thus overcoming the distorted picture of us that some members claim is given out daily by newspaper, radio and television commentators.

It is natural for any member to see himself as the continuing star of a national television show with a captive audience of millions. Despite its attractions and despite all the ready arguments in favour of televising house business on a daily basis, I must confess that I personally have begun to have second thoughts about this question. As I speak I cannot say that I have definitely made up my mind on this matter. However, this is the sort of airing that will give each and every member of the house an opportunity to make up his mind. I do not think for one moment that all of the members of my party are going to say that they are in favour of television, or likewise on the other side of the house.

I have no criticism of the principle of televising our proceedings. I am wholeheartedly in favour of the principle of the voters' right to know, to see and to hear all aspects of public business. For that reason I ignore the arguments advanced in an earlier day in the United Kingdom and here in Canada regarding coverage of house business by the daily press. Those arguments centred largely on quite another point. They were mainly concerned with the basic question of the public's right to be informed and, conversely, the right of elected representatives to keep secret the manner in which they did the taxpayers' business.

• (4:50 p.m.)

How things have changed since then. This point is no longer relevant. The right of the public to be informed about our business was conceded long ago. What we are concerned about here is an amplification of the means by which our proceedings are brought to the public and whether providing for additional coverage of house business by an additional information medium will confer more benefits than drawbacks it might create. It is in this area of discussions that I have reservations. As I have said, I uphold the principle of television coverage of the house but have serious misgiving as to whether it can achieve all or any of the things its proponents promise for it. I wonder whether it will not actually damage the quality of parliamentary business.

For instance, it has been argued that television coverage of the house itself is necessary if we are to do away with the daily interviews before television cameras in the rotunda. If hon. members look outside the chamber they will see three or four television cameras, floodlights and all kinds of equipment. That degrades the dignity of the rotunda and of parliament. If we are to televise house proceedings, let us do it properly and give the public the original viewpoint instead of the second hand version they obtain from the media in the rotunda. If we are to have television here I think the public is entitled to see the actual proceedings taking place in the house. For instance, if television had been present in the house today the Prime Minister would have made a much longer, more explanatory and more informative report on his trip to Washington. I think that other hon. members who spoke after the Prime Minister, including the Leader of the Opposition, would have been listened to throughout the country with great interest and the public would have been delighted.

We face tremendous technical questions in this field if we agree to permit house business to be televised. We should all ask, on what basis will we permit television? Will proceedings in their entirety every day be televised? Will they be televised on a selective "great occasion" basis, or on a limited every day basis. For example, would each day's question period be televised? Would budget night be covered or would supply days be covered? On what basis would there be coverage?

Then, too, we face the problem of what programs to bring to the public. Who is to say how much will be given to the public, and at