

● (3:40 p.m.)

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. St. Pierre:** I would draw the attention of the House to the pundits. Certainly we have plenty of them. Every morning they get up and put their fingers on the pulse of the Canadian public. They have never been elected, but somehow they know exactly what the public is thinking and they inform us of the success or failure of this or that government motion, what the feelings of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) are, or what sort of power play is operating within this or that party.

We get that familiar Parliament Hill news story in which significant facts are as scarce as a piece of pork in a can of beans. Of course, the pundits are never defeated. They never stand for election, and they are never defeated. In recent months they explained to us how the Social Credit government was going to lose the election in British Columbia, how Wilson was going to win the election in Britain, and how Mr. Smith was going to win the election in Nova Scotia.

Failure does not bother them, because a pundit is a man who can predict what is going to happen tomorrow, the next day, next month or next year and is never at a loss to explain why it did not happen. They are entertaining fellows; their writings are often witty and certainly highly enjoyable. But, Mr. Speaker, where have all the reporters gone? Where are the men who can give the Canadian public the plain, unvarnished facts about what goes on on Parliament Hill?

Where is the respect which the parliamentary press gallery should claim from members of this House? It does not command it, from my observation, from what I can sense of the feelings of Members of Parliament after two years here, which is not a long time but I have taken care to try to sense their feelings. The feelings toward the parliamentary press gallery are equal measures of fear and contempt. Members fear the gallery because the press is for many members the only consistent means of contact with the constituency at home. This is why I say it is vital to the process of democracy. A bad press for a member can be devastatingly damaging. The contempt arises for the reasons I have already listed.

It was interesting in the course of this debate to observe the reaction of the House to the attack on the French language CBC made by the hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette). He has made it before. Yesterday I made a particular point of scanning the House while the hon. member for Témiscamingue was launching his familiar attack. In the time I had available I observed that every French-speaking Canadian member of this House, in all parties, applauded his words. This, surely, is a serious matter.

I cannot discuss French language television because I do not see it. In fact, I very rarely see English language television; on the few occasions that I do, I have usually found the reporting rather tendentious. But there is no doubt, I suggest, as to the mood of this House concerning the services of the CBC, and I do not think it will be

### *Invoking of War Measures Act*

good enough for the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) to continue to shrug his shoulders and say the matter is out of his hands.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. St. Pierre:** I return to that part of the media I observe more closely, that is, the newspapers. I am not enjoying making this speech, because the gallery contains some very able and hardworking newspapermen and I feel a temptation to single them out by name. This would scarcely be fair because by force of circumstances I have come to be acquainted with the work of some of them and not of others, and to name one or two while ignoring others would be unfair. But I should not fail to exempt one organization from my criticism, and that is the Canadian Press. I suggest we do not give enough recognition to that organization, Mr. Speaker. Hour after hour, day after day in this House we look up, and of the some 130 men in the press gallery one only is there—the Canadian Press reporter.

The general public does not realize that members of the gallery seldom attend the House except for the brief circus of the question period. From my own observation, the Canadian Press still clings to the principle of objective reporting and the reporting of fact. It was drilled into that organization by a very fine newspaper man named Gil Purcell. However, there is another fact about the Canadian Press that most hon. members in this House may not know. It is a co-operative news-gathering agency whose funds are provided by a number of newspapers; and with their typical parsimonious and niggardly attitude, the Canadian publishers starve it.

The Canadian Press does not have enough men here to staff the many jobs they are doing or could be doing so well for us. The publishers, I submit, bear the responsibility for much of this breakdown in communication between Parliament and the people of Canada. The publishers should get down here and take a look at what is going on. They should know, some of them, that what they are providing here is a gaggle of old hens who cluck around in the parliamentary restaurant over a few grains of gossip. The Canadian public deserves better.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. St. Pierre:** They should send down here some young, eager and curious men. Reporters, Mr. Speaker, are what we need, not somebody with a degree in political science and an exaggerated sense of his own omniscience. I suggest they should come from the police beat, which is one of the hardest in the newspaper business because policemen do not provide facts freely or easily. It is a great beat for gathering news and a fine training ground for reporters.

I blame the editors. Sitting hundreds or thousands of miles from Parliament Hill, they take it upon themselves to decide what is happening down here. Time and time again they send a reporter down here and say, "Go your own lick. Get in deep and find the stories." Two days after, the correspondent's phone is ringing. The editor