

*Routine Proceedings*

mechanism to decide which committee will go and sit in the room.

Essentially that is what we have here. The difference is that there are far more standing committees in this House than there are in the Ontario Legislature. There is a far greater regional diversity of interest in this House than there is in the Ontario Legislature and for that reason, there will be greater demands for the use of the single room.

In addition, adoption of this report does nothing to ensure that the room will in fact be made available. That requires the expenditure of public funds. The funds will have to be found by the Board of Internal Economy, set aside, made available, the work completed, the room established, the television costs, costs of preparing the televised proceedings will have to be borne by the House, and so on. It is a major financial commitment amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Unfortunately, it is by no means clear that this particular development will occur between now and the end of 1992 or indeed before the end of this Parliament.

In other words, adoption of this report may do nothing to further the televising of committees. It may be that it is simply an exercise in futility. I am optimistic it would not be, but I have no reason to believe that the government, complaining as it does about the high cost of Parliament, will loosen the purse strings for the purposes of this report.

I am wondering if we have some undertaking for what it may be worth, from the government House leader with respect to the funding of this proposal. We have heard nothing from him so far and certainly his parliamentary secretary is unable to give any undertaking. I suggest it would not be worth much either based on the previous undertakings we have had from him in respect of these rule changes.

The other aspect of this report that is of interest to the House and to members is the one that allows for radio broadcast of the committee proceedings.

It now appears that when a committee sits, its proceedings which are currently recorded and placed on tape will now be made available by a radio system throughout this building, in fact throughout all the parliamentary precincts.

In other words, a member who is unable to be present at a committee meeting would be able to tune into the

proceedings of the committee on radio. That may not tell him exactly who it is that is speaking at all times, although I understand there is some kind of announcement that comes on that so-and-so has the floor. But at least the proceedings will be relatively intelligible to members of the House and their staffs who are able to listen, and of course to the media who through their various tapping sources in the building, legitimate tapping sources I want to say, will be able to record those proceedings and then use them for subsequent broadcast.

In other words, all committees will have radio coverage but none will have TV coverage, at least until such time as the special committee room is established.

Why we would favour one of the electronic media over the other is a mystery to me. I have had no explanation from the hon. member for York Simcoe in his speech as to why radio would be favoured over television. But that apparently is the aim of this report, to give the broadcast media different rights. Audio feed will be available, visual feed will not be available, except from the one room whenever it happens to be established.

I suppose we can be thankful for small mercies. I suspect that the opening up of the committees to radio is of some assistance and certainly will be helpful for news broadcasters and the radio media.

It is also possible that an imaginative television crew taking videos as they do of a committee about to start its meeting could play the sound of the committee over the photographs of the members sitting around the table, and thereby make at least some semblance of sense out of what it cannot otherwise do. But I fear that the approach is one that is sadly lacking.

I am sorry that we have only been able to go this far. But, as indicated by the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, we in this party are prepared to support the changes as far as they go. But I think the chairman of our committee knows full well my profound regret at the failure to live up to the commitments made that I outlined earlier in my speech.

The arrangement that is here for meetings and which was referred to by my very learned colleague from York South—Weston whereby the House leaders may make a decision in respect of the committees that may meet, in the special room, I suggest is one that needs to be dealt with.