

Broadcasting House Proceedings

sentimentality about loving your neighbours and loving Quebec. That is not the issue. You treat the people of Quebec as you would treat people in other parts of this country. However, I think it would be very useful for the committees of this House to visit the various parts of this country and demonstrate the capacity of this parliament for dealing with major issues. These committees should be properly seized of jurisdiction on major issues.

Take the case of a committee sitting in the city of Montreal, just as the immigration committee sat in Windsor and elsewhere. That committee experienced obstruction; there were instances of people who challenged members of the committee. Imagine a committee sitting outside this parliament and an altercation arises between a member of the committee and a witness or a member of the public. Certain statements are made which normally would be slanderous under the laws of that particular province. If its proceedings are broadcast under the authority of the proposal we are making, then is it a proceeding in parliament and are those people protected? What are the rights of members of the public who might think that they are labelled or slandered? I suggest it would be highly improper for this House to leave this issue without members giving an injunction to the government and to the committee which will be studying this matter to give this issue a tremendous amount of examination.

I close with another caveat, Mr. Speaker. Today we heard some discussion in the House about a certain black list. This was dealt with yesterday when the President of the Privy Council (Mr. MacEachen), in introducing this motion, said as reported at page 2297 of *Hansard*,

Clearly, broadcasting will influence these functions. It will inform Canadians about what the government is doing—

And then again:

Parliament represents the people: and one of its prime responsibilities is to inform the people.

That is, of course, correct and I agree with it, but it is not the case today. Parliament is not being informed, the media are not being informed and the public are not being informed. Despite the fact that by far the greatest number of members of the House are keen, intelligent, good people, in many respects because of the inhibitions placed upon us by the rules and the extent to which we have been seduced in our capacity to exercise responsibility—a seduction during which we relaxed and enjoyed—there is not in this House a capacity to exercise that jurisdiction which we should exercise. We are not able to challenge the government. We are not able to compel the government to produce in detailed form information about its expenditures.

The last two Auditors General have said publicly not only that expenditures have passed beyond the control of parliament but they have passed beyond the control of the government. Is this the kind of thing that the people of Canada will see when they watch television or listen on radio to the proceedings of this House or its committees—a lot of zombies who are incapable, despite their anxiety, of exercising the jurisdiction that they should?

[Mr. Baldwin.]

I suggest that before the year or year and a half—whatever it is—passes when we have completed all our studies, this parliament should have a freedom of information bill. This House should reform its proceedings so that members of the House are active, creative, able to challenge the government, and with a greater degree of independence and objectivity on the part of members of the House, particularly on the part of members on the government side. I know what it is like to be on the government side. I sat over there when we had 205 members, and it is not easy.

If this House is to operate properly and if parliament is to do the job it is responsible for doing, independence and objectivity must be a very substantial part of our duties. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that all of these things must be taken into account.

The mere fact that tonight, tomorrow, or some time we will quite glibly pass this motion does not mean that we can leave the matter there. We have a very definite responsibility to ensure that when we do come to broadcast the proceedings of this House the public of Canada will see a parliament that is functional, operative, active, and with powers and responsibilities equivalent to its duties. If that is not the case, then in my opinion all that will happen through the passage of this motion is that we will be accelerating by a substantial period of time the demise of the system of democracy under which we function.

● (2030)

Miss Coline Campbell (South Western Nova): Mr. Speaker, I find myself in some difficulty in speaking on the resolution before the House this evening; however I would not like to take too much time in this debate.

I fully agree that Canadians should have the opportunity to see and hear what is being done on their behalf in the House of Commons. Bringing parliament to Canadians is a noble goal and should enhance public participation in the parliamentary process. I am, however, concerned as to what we are doing, and I would like to take this opportunity to register my concerns. The cost is only an estimated cost. I can see many other priorities for putting these large sums to better use, especially when one thinks of the number of people who will actually watch the sittings, and I stress the words “actually watch”.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Campbell: Certainly the reporters will be able to talk over the pictures so that the press will still be interpreting the proceedings. In short, there is no assurance in the motion before us that we will get a better coverage of the proceedings of the House of Commons.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Campbell: The television facilities in my area leave much to be desired at any time. We do not have full CBC coverage in some areas in my riding. In other areas there is no ATV coverage, and in most areas cable TV is still non-existent in Nova Scotia. At present the CBC does not have a regional desk for feedback to the maritimes on matters which might