

*Parliament**[Translation]*

Mr. Speaker, having said that, it appears obvious to me that if Progressive Conservative members did show up more regularly at committees where detailed examination can be made of the expenditures of the government through its various departments, then their complaints today would not be necessary. Today, we could have talked about unemployment, inflation or positive remedies but we only get destructive criticism.

Mr. Speaker, another major reform in the last 15 years—and we all know about this one because it took place during this parliament—was the introduction of television in the House. That was the result, Mr. Speaker, of a motion introduced in January, 1977, by the Deputy Prime Minister (Mr. MacEachen) whom I have the honour to serve as parliamentary secretary, and we know how the broadcasting of the debates of the House brought parliament closer to the people of Canada, and that major reform was made by a Liberal government, by this government, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) talked about the broadcasting of the debates of the House. But let me recall his attitude in the debate on the motion to approve broadcasting of the House proceedings.

[English]

Broadcasting of the House proceedings is another unquestionable proof of the government's support for the fundamental functions of parliament. Broadcasting has allowed Canadians across the country to see what is being done here on their behalf.

If opposition members want to call this a steady destruction of the parliamentary process, they must at the same time admit a contempt for the Canadian public and a fear of having their ineptitude exposed.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. My friend is quoting from someone, but certainly not me. He was about to attribute certain remarks to me. Those were not my remarks. If my friend will recall, it was as a result of an amendment originally placed by me and, firstly, ruled out of order but agreed to by the government House leader at a later stage in the one day debate. The government supported the proposals I put forward and our party supported the proposals the government put forward, and this matter was dealt with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think the hon. member has had ample time.

Mr. Pinard: If the hon. member will be patient, I am coming to his remarks. Let me refer hon. members to the speech made by the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) on the motion to approve broadcasting. He said grudgingly:

Indeed, it is difficult to counter the weight of the argument that the people have a right to see and hear what is happening in parliament. But there are some deep reservations felt in this place and elsewhere—

He then went on to express concern that the cameras would not give an accurate picture of the proceedings, that the public would not be able to understand the rules, that the media would misuse the broadcasting clips, and that anyway the public just would not be interested. He summarized his nervous attitude about the openness of broadcasting in these words:

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.

Deep reservations and deep suspicions. That, Mr. Speaker, is how the hon. member and many of his colleagues felt about bringing parliament closer to the Canadian people.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, may I add that this welcomed initiative to further democratize this institution by allowing broadcasting of the House proceedings will lead us to propose new amendments to the rules of procedure which we must follow. Earlier I have had the opportunity to suggest that from the point of view of government spending and budget estimates review, the 1968 reform which had been proposed with unanimous consent—including that of Conservative members—had very much improved the situation and that if these members had been up to their obligations, if they had co-operated and regularly attended committee meetings, they would have had every opportunity to study carefully these expenditures. I can hear the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) who moved the motion—and who is seldom in the House and does not even sit on the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization—I can hear him say that it is not true. He knows very well that last Thursday, the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates had to cancel its meeting because there was not even one Progressive Conservative member to study the estimates. Under the circumstances, I am surprised that it was the hon. member who moved the motion now under consideration because he is well aware that his party was not represented on this committee and that the committee had to cancel its meeting last Thursday evening. I had the honour of appearing before this committee on Friday morning and I was able to provide all the explanations asked by the two Progressive Conservative members who were present about the expenditures of the office of the Privy Council.

I come now to the third point I wanted to make which concerns positive suggestions for changes in the procedure of this House. Mr. Speaker, I would have liked very much to hear something constructive on the part of Progressive Conservative members this evening. For a number of months, the Canadian people have been able to see our proceedings on television. They realize that there are certain anomalies in our rules and they would like to see some improvements made to allow members of parliament to play a more human and more effective role in this institution and be more representative of those that we represent throughout the country.