

Business of Supply

know, but a matter of giving the people proper information, a sense of the real debates that take place, a sense of the issues with which we have to grapple, a sense of the urgency with which we grapple with matters that are urgent, and a sense of the real way in which their representatives in parliament and the institution of parliament itself, serve them, so that if they form an opinion it is not based on something unrepresentative but on something that is truly representative of parliament.

They may then tell us to do our job a great deal better than we do it now, and I hope they will; but at least they will be doing it based on an accurate and representative presentation. We support the idea, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, we agree in principle with the motion asking the house to study the possibility of televising and broadcasting the debates of the house; but when we try to figure out how this can be achieved, a whole series of questions come to mind.

In theory, of course, this might be one way of upgrading the role of the member of parliament, because unfortunately, as we know, at the present time the people often have a very distorted view of his work and his role in the House of Commons. The people have often been given the impression that the member of parliament comes here to sit, wait, and leave when all is done. Most of the time he is absent, which is really quite improper in view of his role as a legislator.

Fortunately, since I have come to this house, I have noticed that this is not really the case; the members take their role as seriously as possible, and really serious and at times efficient work is done here. I say at times, because it is not always so, due to the system which is inadequate.

This makes one wonder what will happen if we try to realize this project. To do so, certain factors will have to be taken into account. The first on which will depend the efficiency of the programs will be the necessity of being objective which cannot be achieved merely by focussing the cameras on all the parties in the house. But how can the role of each one be determined? How are the essential parts of a debate, which should be made known to the public, to be chosen? That is the initial difficulty we run into at the very start.

In addition, who will decide what interventions deserve the attention of the Canadian people and what criteria will be used?

If we succeeded in doing that, it would be a very good thing, of course, since the people could see that members are playing their part in the best way they can. But I believe it is impossible, on account of our parliamentary system.

I assume that should such a project materialize, the party that would get the worst of the bargain would precisely be the party in power since—this is another thing we have noted—most of the government members are scarcely allowed to express their opinions and should the broadcasting reflect their work, it would not be a good omen for the next election campaigns. I cannot stand up beyond measure for the party in power, but the fact remains that this is what would happen.

● (4:00 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, I wonder how the government party could approve of such a thing since its role, considering the present parliamentary system, is limited as we noticed last evening, to that of a voting machine. There would not be anything spectacular in showing the people how the voting machine is working. I believe it would be a disaster for the party in power, considering the great regard we have for all members.

We expect to be in power also one of these days and we would be pleased with such a system since it would give everyone greater freedom of speech and would enable the people to note how objective we strive to be.

Mr. Speaker, how could we also avoid discrimination? How could we avoid the star system? The broadcast time would therefore have to be divided evenly.

Perhaps I forgot to point out, Mr. Speaker, that should such a project materialize, there would have to be a half-hour or an hour of television broadcasting per day, which would give a summary of a day's debates.

The producers will then have to draw objectively from the debates their very essence and to illustrate it with the contributions of the members. This is the way I see it in view of the fact that otherwise what is said in the House of Commons can sometimes lead to utter boredom. In fact, it would be unthinkable to impose such torture all day long to the Canadian viewing public.

That is why I think that we should rather present a program which would summarize what has happened during one sitting of the house; but how to distinguish what is important, how to determine who has made a real