

*Broadcasting House Proceedings*

for members who are either in or near to the national capital to draw. But for those of us who come from areas far from the national capital and whose constituents seldom, if ever, have the opportunity to visit this city, the issue of an open parliament—not merely an illustrated one but a truly open one—takes on a special importance. Television is one way to provide that kind of open and accessible parliament to Canadians who live, for example, two thousand miles away in Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, and I think this is an important consideration.

Why should the proceedings of this House be broadcast and telecast? What would be gained? Most of the merits have already been summarized by the government House leader, by the Minister of Communications (Mrs. Sauvé) and by her former parliamentary secretary, the hon. member for York West (Mr. Fleming), as well as by others in the course of this debate.

Through this proposal we shall develop an electronic *Hansard* which will be a unique and innovative archival tool complementary to the printed record which is presently the only record available of the proceedings here. Further, it will be a useful educational tool for scholars and for regular use in schools and universities to assist in a realistic way in explaining what this institution is all about. I do not share the skepticism of my hon. friend from South Western Nova as to the usefulness of this instrument as an educational tool.

In this latter connection, it will—in itself—help to alleviate the concern which some members have expressed as a basis of their argument against the resolution. Some have complained, for example, that the public is not knowledgeable enough and insufficiently aware of parliamentary idiosyncracies to be able to make a rational judgment about what they would be viewing. If that is a valid criticism,—and I am not sure that it is, but if it is—as some across the way have suggested, then surely the only way to counteract that lack of information and understanding is through readily accessible educational tools such as an electronic *Hansard*.

● (2130)

In addition, I believe that an electronic *Hansard* which this particular resolution would provide us with would be a very useful informational tool for the media and others. We have just heard some discussion on this subject by my hon. friend from Edmonton West, and I should like to deal with the matter for a very brief moment.

At the present time, except for the customary broadcasting of ceremonial events such as the opening of parliament, the electronic media, namely, radio and television, are barred from active live coverage of the proceedings of the House of Commons. As a weak and often inaccurate substitute for direct access to the House, once an announcement, speech or debate has taken place here the radio and television reporters literally have to scramble to catch the main participants outside the Chamber so as to have them in some small way repeat or re-enact what happened inside so that the reporters can get it on tape or film. The result is sometimes a frantic and occasionally unruly crush of people, with lights, cameras, tape record-

ers and other paraphernalia in the halls of the Parliament Buildings, and all too often there can inadvertently be serious omissions, distortions or misinterpretations of what has been said or done inside the Chamber. Surely some of these problems could be alleviated by providing live coverage of Commons activities in the first place.

There are a great many other advantages to this particular proposal which I should like to take some time to describe in detail in the House. Many of them have been mentioned in passing and briefly by others in the course of our discussion in the last two days. Some have raised concerns, for example, about the cost, or about possible disruption of established parliamentary procedures, or about this vague notion of trivialization which some are worried about. Some are worried about the technical problems that may arise. Some are concerned about the question of rights and immunities of members. To all of these points of concern I think there are valid and full answers. Many of them have been given in the course of this debate by those speaking in support of the resolution; many will be found in the committee reports that preceded our debate in this House.

I hope that the expression of the kinds of concerns that we have heard does not represent a fear of progress or essentially a mistrust of the ability of the public to understand the workings of parliament, or indeed a worry or mistrust about parliament itself. We may need technical tests. We may need further examination by the committee, which this resolution proposes, to see how the facilities will work. But surely we do not need further examinations, studies and tests of our own courage to appear before the Canadian people. I would hope that the merits of this resolution will commend themselves to all members this evening, and that before the clock reaches ten o'clock I hope we can in fact see this resolution adopted by the House and very quickly see parliament in a very real sense brought to the Canadian people via television.

**Mr. David MacDonald (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak very briefly in this debate, or perhaps “debate” is too strong a word for what has been a very useful discussion in the past couple of days with respect to an important change to the procedures of this House and its committees. It has already been indicated by previous speakers that we are not, in a sense, dealing with new subject matter. The motion itself has been before this House for well over a year now. Prior to that there was a considerable period of time in which both a special committee of this House as well as individual members considered at length the implication of giving broadcasting access to the House and its committees.

As I was preparing to make a few remarks this evening I flipped back through some of the previous pages of *Hansard* and realized that it was almost ten years ago to the day, on February 10, 1967, that I made a strong and impassioned plea for the broadcasting of the proceedings of the House and its committees. I do not know whether that makes me somewhat of a senior citizen with respect to advocating this particular subject matter, but I would just like to quote briefly—I know