

Business of Supply

printed and circulated through all Parts, both of the Town and Country... if you do not either punish them, or take some effectual Method of checking them, you may soon expect to see your Votes, your Proceedings, and your Speeches, printed and hawked about the Streets, while we are sitting in this House.

Thomas Winnington, Esquire, said:

—if we do not put a speedy Stop to this Practice, it will be looked upon without Doors, that we have no Power to do it, for the public will very justly think that if we had such a Power, we would exercise it. And then, Sir, what will be the Consequence; why Sir, you will have every word that is spoken here by Gentlemen, misrepresented by Fellows who thrust themselves into our Gallery. You will have the Speeches of this House every Day printed, even during your Session. And we shall be looked upon as the most contemptible Assembly on the Face of the Earth.

Sir Robert Walpole made this contribution:

I have read some Debates of this House, Sir, in which I have been made to speak the very reverse of what I meant... had I been a Stranger to the Proceedings and to the Nature of the Arguments themselves, I must have thought this to have been one of the most contemptible Assemblies on the Face of the Earth. What Notion then, Sir, can the Public, who have no other Means of being informed of the Debates of this House than what they have from these Papers, entertain of the Wisdom, and Abilities of an Assembly, who are represented therein to carry almost every Point against the strongest and the plainest Argument and Appearances.

A crack of light appeared, though, in the remarks of Sir William Windham, the leader of the opposition:

I don't know but they may have a Right to know somewhat more of the Proceedings of this House than what appears upon your Votes; and if I were sure that the Sentiments of Gentlemen were not misrepresented, I should be against our coming to any Resolution that could deprive them of a Knowledge that is so necessary for their being able to judge of the Merits of their Representatives within Doors.

Before the end of the 18th century that view, so gingerly advanced in 1738, was to prevail. Although the rule of secrecy was never formally rescinded, reports came to be tolerated. In 1803 reporters were assigned the back row in the Strangers' Gallery, and a special press gallery was built in 1831 at Westminster. Parliament, now opened to wider public view and criticism, was forced increasingly to recognize its responsibility to the electorate.

Today parliament's resistance to the modern, electronic news media seems as difficult to budge as was the bar against the dangerous print media of centuries past. And the need to sweep it away seems to me as great. Once again parliament needs to be more

[Mr. Stanbury.]

effectively exposed to its electorate; our means of democratic choice needs to be broadened by the freedom which knowledge gives.

To my colleagues who are fearful of this exposure I would refer the great parliamentarian, Edmund Burke, who said this:

It ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest communication with his constituents.

Since democracy began the key to its success has been participation. In the Greek city state, the people could see their government being carried on. In our burgeoning societies since, this has become increasingly difficult and government increasingly remote from those who choose it and whom it serves.

In my view, the electronic media offer the golden means to bring the people back into intimate contact with their institutions and their leaders, stimulating an awareness and a crackling circuitry between them which will ensure that our institutions are responsive to our needs and wants. That may be, indeed, the only way to save, or even justify saving, the institutions on which rests the future form, even the existence, of our country—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please.

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the house appreciates this opportunity to discuss the subject of televising or broadcasting over the radio the proceedings of this house. It is only natural we should have this opportunity because this question has been discussed outside the house in many places across Canada, and I think this is the forum where it should be discussed.

It is high time we had the opportunity to air some views on this very important question in view of the fact that the New Zealand parliament has been broadcasting, either by radio or by television, its proceedings since 1936. The first broadcast of the proceedings in any Canadian parliament was in the legislative assembly of Saskatchewan in 1946. The Australian parliament has been broadcasting and televising its proceedings since 1946. On October 15, 1958 the opening of the parliament of Canada by the Queen was broadcast for the first time. So, as time moves on it seems only natural we should come to this point in our history and discuss this important subject.

When you go back in history, Mr. Speaker, you find debates were held in the British House on the subject of even allowing the