

*Point of Order—Ruling of Mr. Speaker***COMMUNICATIONS****BELL CANADA—REPORTED PLAN TO REPLACE FLAT RATE
LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE**

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct a question to the Minister of Communications. Is he aware that for three years Bell Canada has been actively planning to abolish the flat rate local telephone service, which led, as the Minister knows, to almost universal use in Ontario and Quebec, and planning to replace it with a pay-by-the-call system? This will cost local residents millions of dollars in extra charges. If the Minister is aware of the plan, what does he propose to do about this very backward step by Bell Canada?

● (1500)

[Translation]

Hon. Marcel Masse (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, like the Hon. Member, I read about this matter in the press, and it seems to me that the responsibility for defining and analyzing such policies lies primarily, as everybody in Parliament knows, with the CRTC.

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[English]

CLERK OF PETITIONS' REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the petitions, with the exception of eight, presented by Hon. Members on Monday, January 20, 1986, meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

Certain petitions presented by the Hon. Member for Ottawa-Vanier (Mr. Gauthier), one petition presented by the Hon. Member for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault), and one petition presented by the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Keeper) do not meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

The petition presented by the Hon. Member for Victoria—Haliburton (Mr. Scott) by filing with the Clerk of the House also meet the requirements of the Standing Orders as to form.

I am also in a position to respond to a point of order raised by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) on Tuesday, January 14, 1986.

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POINT OF ORDER**RULES REGARDING TELEVISIONING OF HOUSE OF COMMONS
PROCEEDINGS—RULING OF MR. SPEAKER**

Mr. Speaker: I have had the opportunity to review the representations made to the Chair on Tuesday, January 14, 1986, by the Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain (Mr. Deans) and the Hon. Member for Windsor West (Mr. Gray) regarding the televising of the proceedings relating to the joint

address of the Prime Minister of Japan. May I say to the House that I have also had the last seven joint addresses to the House reviewed, going back to May 5, 1980, when Prime Minister Ohira addressed the House. The review demonstrates that all the joint addresses by visitors to this Chamber since 1980 were televised in the same style and format. In every instance there were a number of what I could call cut-away shots taking in the reaction of such persons as the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the New Democratic Party, the spouses of the visiting dignitaries as well as other dignitaries in the Chamber.

Whether this method of televising special events constitutes a breach of the guidelines and is therefore out of order is a difficult question. In the first place, when the existing guidelines for broadcasting were agreed to in 1977, the coverage of special events was not addressed. In the second place, the standard reference used in House Orders for such events is not as clear as both I and the Hon. Member for Windsor West had thought. The words of the Order are that the speech, and I quote, "be made available to the media for transmission in the usual way", by the House of Commons broadcasting system. I ask myself, is it the transmission that is available in the usual way or is it the method of broadcasting that is to be followed?

The Hon. Member for Hamilton Mountain is perfectly correct when he requested that the guidelines be followed or changed. On May 28, 1985, on a similar point of order I asked that the reform committee inquire into this matter. Again, I strongly urge the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization to consider at least the specific question of what guidelines the Broadcasting Branch should operate under for special events such as joint addresses. I should indicate to the House that I intend to write to the committee on that matter.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to announce the business for tomorrow of which I have already informed the Opposition House Leaders. The business tomorrow will concern Bills relating to amendments to the Divorce Act and ancillary legislation, including Bills C-46, C-47 and C-48. I hope we can make progress on those important items of legislation tomorrow.

Mr. Deans: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might ask the Government House Leader whether it is still the Government's intention to prorogue early in February.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Mr. Speaker, the premise of the question is of course incorrect. It is a fiction of the Hon. Member's very vivid imagination which is manifested by a lot of white hair.