

*Routine Proceedings*

Period, the House of Commons is basically just a record of how members feel about different matters.

Last year our committee struggled to write a report and get concurrence in that report. I would like to thank all members of the House for giving us concurrence. We were able to replay the proceedings of the House of Commons and that is very important.

We have this channel with dead air time on it, there is a lot of important business going on, and we would like to share that business with the Canadian public.

Following the McGrath reforms, a lot of important work is done in committee. Committees have been bringing out reports that have had a lot of influence on government policy. We would like to share with Canadians those deliberations and discussions. Canadians are not participating in one of the more important democratic reforms that has been undertaken by the House of Commons in many years. We must open up the House so that Canadians can share in that.

Committee chairmen have come to the House and asked: "Will you please televise my committee?" The chairman of the finance committee has come before the House on several occasions asking for permission to televise his committee and sometimes he has received it, other times he has not. The chairman of the communications and culture committee has come before the House asking for permission to televise his committee. Other committees have been asking for the same permission. The pressure is building. This report is asking for the right to organize how we are going to do it so it is fair to everyone.

Another point I would like to make is that the McGrath report said that committees were the masters of their own destiny. Why should committees be beholden to the House of Commons for permission to share their proceedings with Canadians? That is very unfair and it is time that we as members of Parliament in the House of Commons gave concurrence to this report and allowed committees to be the masters of their own destiny. We need to foster the independence and the spirit of goodwill that committees have in trying to influence public policy and allow Canadians to see how influential committees have become and perhaps Canadians will come forward and share their ideas and concerns with those committees.

Committees presently allow print journalists into a committee room. It is very unfair that committees exclude the electronic media. Under this system, the electronic media would not be excluded. Networks could come in with the permission of the chairman and the committee itself and take some clips, and I would hope that they would be longer pieces, and broadcast them if they wanted. That is very important.

• (1210)

In asking for concurrence, we are saying that we in the House of Commons take some control over what should be broadcast. There are a few recommendations of importance, one we have already concurred in, and two or three which are very important which I would like to address.

One is that a programming director should be responsible for the production and direction of the broadcasting of the House of Commons, subject to the over-all direction of the monitoring committee of the House of Commons.

What we as a committee have said in this report is that the Speaker controls the House of Commons broadcasting, but the Speaker is in no position to make editorial decisions or deal with complaints. That should be vested within the privileges and elections committee which ordinarily deals with complaints, revising the Standing Orders, and how committees operate.

The monitoring committee would be able to work with the C-PaC organization and come up with over-all policies and programming guidelines that would be satisfactory to everyone. Members of the House could easily approach the privileges and elections committee. A programming director, under the supervision of the monitoring committee, would make the day-to-day editorial decisions such as what goes on and when, in co-operation with the liaison committee when it comes to the televising of committees. I presume this programming director would be meeting with a number of programmers because it would be too big for any one person to handle.

Each committee of the House of Commons shall determine whether any meeting or meetings will be open to the electronic media. I have already covered this and, as I said, committees should be masters of their own destiny.