

*Routine Proceedings*

body else, would like complete coverage of committee proceedings so that people can get all the information they need. There is, however, a financial problem, a problem with the costs involved, but also with knowing which committee should take precedence over which, when, and so on. That is why we have concluded that the best thing would be to have a room, either here in Center Block, or in another building on Parliament Hill, equipped for the broadcasting of committee proceedings. It would then be up to this House, to the three parties, to our House leaders to get together, as we are doing now, and discuss the matter and come to a decision. A number of important things have happened over the past few years, including the repatriation of the Constitution, the Al-Mashat incident, and the GST. It is easy to recognize the great significance of an issue or a policy change such as those. Therefore, an agreement could easily be reached as to which committee should meet in a room equipped for the broadcasting of its proceedings. There will always be a committee whose proceedings will be broadcast.

Another step forward. Unfortunately, my various duties as Whip have prevented me—because I never want to be too far from the House—from travelling as extensively as some other members of the committee who have visited the Ontario Legislature to see how things are done there. It appears that there were some things to learn from that legislature, some innovative ideas. Committee members spent an entire day there and had a very nice welcome. The operation of the system was explained to them and they talked with members of the Ontario Legislature to determine whether some elements could apply here.

Another group of members visited the Quebec National Assembly also to check what kind of innovations could apply in this House.

These two visits were significant enough to allow the committee to draw conclusions and prepare the report being debated today, which has met with approval from all three political parties. I imagine that pretty soon we will be able to implement this new system.

• (1310)

As I was saying, part of the problem was solved by having one room permanently equipped for television broadcasting. For the other committees we decided to use the system they have at the Quebec National Assembly. I do not know whether the legislature in

Toronto has the same system, but in Quebec City they have an audio system which provides a feed from all committee meetings. This feed is available to members in their offices, where they can listen to committee proceedings and there will also be a feed to the press gallery.

So we have made some progress. Once the report is adopted, we will have a room that is permanently equipped for broadcasting committee proceedings. However, it will be up to the House to decide whether broadcasting will be gavel to gavel, while all other committees will be able to provide an audio feed of their proceedings and debates.

I think perhaps it was not understood that the main objective was to televise the sittings of House committees, but I think we have made some very important progress. Once the report is adopted, we will be able to broadcast major committee proceedings.

At the present time, all Canadians watch the debates of the House, including Oral Question Period, but very few people except for members, their assistants and a few journalists are aware of the important issues being discussed in more than 20 standing committees, in addition to the legislative committees. With this system, people will not only be able to listen to exchanges between members but also to testimony by experts and important groups in Canada which appear before those committees and provide further material for discussion, to help us improve our laws and improve the well-being of our young people, our children and grandchildren, so they can look forward to a decent future in this country.

Consequently, the committee first recommends that the audio feed provided by the House of Commons of public committee meetings be able to be recorded. The committee also recommends that the audio feed of all public committee meetings be made available to members of Parliament, their staffs and the Parliamentary Press Gallery on Parliament Hill, and be used for broadcasting purposes. So if the press wishes to do so, it can use the audio tape for its news reports.

Here are some more recommendations, and there are quite a few. The committee recommends that the House of Commons should initially equip one committee room for broadcasting, and the proceedings of all committees meeting in this room should be taped in full, made available to the media, and broadcast as part of the parliamentary channel.