

*Routine Proceedings*

monitoring committee to assist the consortium in its duties.

I do not believe that report has been presented to this House, or if it has been it has not yet been concurred in. I am optimistic that that will be done in the next short while.

• (1130)

However, the other major components of this report, I submit, are important for the House and for Canadians and it is those that I want to address my comments to today so that we can consider them as a group of MPs.

There are two principal recommendations that form the basis of this report. The first, and the one that I think is the most significant, is the recommendation that committees of this House be televised.

I would like to read the committee's recommendation in this regard because I think the wording of it is very apt. It is that each committee of the House of Commons shall determine whether any meeting or meetings will be open to the electronic media. Each committee may impose any arrangements that it deems necessary to ensure the decorum of the meeting. This freedom for electronic media would apply in Ottawa and throughout the country.

The committee's intention was to allow committees to make their own decision with respect to television and radio broadcasting. In my submission that was a reasonable exercise. Indeed, since this report was tabled last December, we have witnessed in this House and certainly on our television screens, the spectacle of certain committees of this House having their proceedings televised and made available nationally. I think particularly of the Standing Committee on Finance which held extensive hearings last year. There was another committee that went on on a cross-country tour and also received extensive national coverage for that reason.

In my view the public interest was well served by seeing those committees in action. I think the point that the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections wished to make in presenting its report was that Canadians want to see what else Parliament does. Parliament is made up of this House, but it is also made up of a group of committees. I am using Parliament in its expression in terms of application to the House of

Commons alone. I have no intention of excluding the Senate from this, but this is a report to the House of Commons and deals with the televising of this House only.

The committees of the House are an important component of it. Indeed it is said by many that much of the very important work of Parliament is done in committee, and I concur. The fact that this report was prepared by a committee composed of representatives from all parties in this House is an indication in my view of the importance of committee work in itself. I note for the record that the committee recommendations were unanimous on the part of all parties, except in one particular, and that deals with the financial provisions for CPaC. I am not dealing with that in my arguments today.

In other words, members from each of the three parties in this House met, discussed, extensively reviewed, heard witnesses, and came up with this unanimous recommendation, that is that committees be masters of their own procedure in so far as televising is concerned.

It was our view that the television media would seek permission of committees to televise proceedings where they felt that the televising would be appropriate. We were of the view that the committees could decide, if they wished or declined, to proceed with televising of their proceedings. The chairman would have ultimate jurisdiction over the way the television cameras would be operated in the committee room, that is the chairman could determine whether or not, subject to appeal of the committee, cameras would be permitted to roam in the room or be at fixed locations and how the shots would be arranged, given the varying nature of televising of proceedings, particularly where the committee is holding meetings outside Ottawa.

Obviously the rooms that would be available in other parts of Canada might not be the same as the ones here and different arrangements might be necessary for that reason. Certainly the committee chairman is free to make arrangements as are necessary with the local media to ensure coverage of the proceedings. It was our intention as a committee, that is the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, that our recommendation would allow for the committee proceedings to be shown on the parliamentary network.