

imported into committee proceedings. Others are concerned that the presence of cameras, microphones, and lights, as well as the necessary technicians and cables, will interfere with the running of committee meetings. None of these fears have been realized either in the broadcasts of committees in the U.S. Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, or the Ontario Legislature. Nor can the fears be verified in the Canadian experiments, such as the 1982 constitutional hearings, the 1987 Meech Lake hearings, or the GST hearings of this past autumn.

The Committee believes broadcasting the hearings of committees should be allowed. In Appendix IV, amendments to the Standing Orders are proposed to implement this recommendation. Canadians have a right to know what takes place in committees during public meetings. Very important work is conducted by committees, and it is unfortunate that people are denied an opportunity to see this. The proceedings of the House of Commons are necessarily very formal, and involve only Members. Committee hearings, on the other hand, tend to be more informal and cooperative, and frequently involve members of the public as witnesses.

Since much of the work of Members of Parliament is done in committees, we feel that it will enhance the public's perception and appreciation of the work of Parliament if they are able to view hearings. It has been suggested that part of the reason that Question Period is emphasized so much by the media is that other work of parliamentarians, such as committees, cannot be broadcast. Moreover, Question Period and other House proceedings tend to involve primarily senior Ministers and a few Opposition critics; several witnesses before the Committee argued that the televising of committees will allow Canadians to see more of the work that is done by other MPs.

Another argument in favour of televising committees was made by Mr. Don Blenkarn: he feels that "it is a distortion of the legislative process to allow television into parts of the process, namely the House of Commons, while prohibiting television in other parts of the process, namely the committees. If Canadians are to appreciate the Canadian legislative process, and understand how it works, they should be afforded an equal view of its parts. No one would expect a biologist to study only half the human body, and likewise voters should not be expected to study only half of the legislative process." (Letter, dated July 26, 1989, to the Committee.)

One of the concerns with broadcasting of the House of Commons has always been that viewers will see all the empty seats, and get the wrong impression that parliamentarians do not work. One of the best ways of defusing such misconceptions would be to allow committees to be broadcast, so that the Canadian public can see where Members spend so much of their time.