

Broadcasting House Proceedings

by the population of Ottawa and Hull, possibly Montreal a little later, and then a bit further? What about the constituents of my colleague from Prince Edward Island? The people there have an equal stake. What about Fraser Valley or Sault Ste. Marie?

A few moments ago the hon. member of South Western Nova (Miss Campbell) said, and I will paraphrase, that the benefits to her people would be less than zilch. If we go into this program, the benefits should extend to the people of Canada as a whole. That cannot be done on the basis of television without some examination of all costs, not only of production but of distribution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member his allotted time has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent. Does the hon. member have unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will terminate. I think the hon. lady from Vancouver-Kingsway should read some of the polls and surveys that have been taken in her city with regard to televising the proceedings in this House. I should like to know just what her reaction might be. Without being personal, I imagine that the hon. lady feels that as a former newspaperwoman—and maybe she still is one—she is a communicator. I should like to have her considered views with regard to how much effect there could be to the people who are going to pay the shot to see, possibly, two or three minutes a day, at most, ten minutes a day in all networks, on all stations, of clips, again subject to editors, of the media, the same as presently applies—and some days we win and some days we don't, but I think that by and large there is reasonably fair reporting.

● (2120)

It will not change. The scrum will not change one iota. Because of the concentrated nature of the question period, only a few people can really participate. Answers are incomplete. Sometimes they are incomplete because the minister is not fully aware of the situation at the moment. I know very well, from past experience, that between the end of the question period and getting down to the scrum, executive assistants come forward and brief the minister anew. We get a sudden change in answers then. This is an old game and it won't change one iota.

In those legislatures where they presently do have television cameras, has anyone consulted provincial cabinet ministers as to the effect? Has anyone consulted leading members of the opposition with regard to the scrum? The scrum is there. I only wish we had better facilities for it, that we had decent interviewing rooms. I would vote right now, if we had an item in the estimates, that we spend a million dollars for the complete reconfiguration and refitting of the interviewing rooms, not only for ministers but for other members. That is a slave quarter down there. Working conditions are way less than

[Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West).]

satisfactory. But, no, we shall spend between \$3 million and \$5 million installing fancy cameras around this place, but the working conditions for those in the press gallery who have to go down there will remain unchanged. In fact some time ago I had to protest to the Management Services Committee that the fire regulations there were not being observed.

Talk about mixed up priorities! If there is to be television here, let us first have a full examination of the technical aspects recommended by the committee four years ago. There are some real problems which have to be investigated. The committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Speaker—we are not going to see this come about in a short while.

I have canvassed this question and I hope I have laid before the House what I believe this is going to cost, and what is likely to be its effectiveness—and how little it is going to accomplish in the end. If the House, in its considered wisdom, wants to go ahead with it, fine. Hon. members will explain themselves to the public on that score.

I agree with those who say we should pay more attention to bringing about some rule changes. The hon. whip on the government side along with other members, including myself and some of my colleagues, laboured mightily last year to bring in some sensible changes. But there has been a deadly silence on the government side. We cannot even get the motion to enable us to go back to work. I recall that when the President of the Privy Council was previously in that office we had some good rule changes to propose. I was chairman of the committee for one whole session, and there was not one reference. This House was denied an opportunity to work on its rules, and at the present time we are still being denied an opportunity to have this committee do its work. And that is deliberate.

I think the sense of priority is wrong. But if the House intends to vote in favour of this resolution, all right. It will have to put its money where its mouth has been.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Ralph E. Goodale (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the chance to join in this debate, if only briefly, for two specific reasons, first, because I am an unabashed and enthusiastic supporter of the resolution and, second, because as a former working member of the press in the electronic media in Saskatchewan I believe that the introduction of radio and television in terms of active, live coverage of this Chamber will yield positive results for parliament, for the effective functioning of our representative system of democracy, and ultimately for the people of Canada in terms of open, accessible, and accountable government.

Mr. Alexander: Oh!

Mr. Goodale: Yesterday opposition spokesmen said our system was already an open one and implied that television was an unnecessary frill which would merely provide illustrations of the functioning of this open institution. That is all very well in theory, I suppose, and perhaps it is a logical conclusion