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BROADCASTING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES IN CANADA

A Question of Democratic Access

by

Gayle Morris Nystrom, B.A., B.J.

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Political Science

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

September 2, 1994

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**BROADCASTING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES IN CANADA:
A QUESTION OF DEMOCRATIC ACCESS**

submitted by

Gayle Morris-Nystrom, B.A., B.J.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Chair, Department of Political Science

Thesis Supervisor

Carleton University
October 4, 1994

ABSTRACT

There has been a strong impact on the Canadian populace resulting from the government's decision to allow broadcasting of the proceedings of the House of Commons. The impact has been the democratization of the process by creating equality of access for Canadians from almost every region, to the daily deliberations of Canadian legislators, through the medium of television. This thesis will demonstrate that the democratization emerged when the broadcasts created a 'third dimension' by integrating the politicians, the media, and the public into the process of governing between elections and transformed the web of their relationships. The 'third dimension' theory is explained by tracing the international historical perspective, and the initial reluctance of the federal government to broadcast. It will show how the provinces pioneered with radio broadcasts, and how the federal government finally accepted and implemented the broadcasts. A case study, illustrates the new tripartite relationship and the thesis concludes the new access has democratized the Canadian political process between elections.

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the media in a democracy is pivotal. However, in the absence of direct access to all political events, it has been the necessary traditional role of the media to disseminate information to the public. Since our popular democracy in North America is based on consent of the governed, and majority rule, the information upon which the governed make decisions, and subsequently allocate their consent to those who govern is crucial. Historically, from Plato's concept of man existing only as part of the state, to Aristotle's theory that man is an individual separate from, but existing in the state, with all of its competing interests, to the Hobbesian theory that the life of man is "solitary, poor, nasty brutish and short", the relationship between the governors and the governed has been analysed.

Throughout history, the one modern form of government that has transcended all others, has been the popularly elected form of government in which the majority of citizens freely cast votes for their preferred choice at election time - the democratic form of government. In his comprehensive analysis entitled Democracy in America, the French author, Alexis de Tocqueville, expounded the theory that while Americans have a natural taste for freedom,

"... for equality their passion is ardent, insatiable, incessant, invincible... ." To ensure a working, functioning democracy, the concept of equality of access to the decision-making debate, and process, is crucial. That is, equality of access to Parliamentary deliberations by the populace, between elections.

From the invention of the papyrus, to the electronic highway of the future, the members of the media have had the responsibility of selecting that information they deem fit to disseminate to the populace. By the term "media" here, I refer to owners, publishers, and journalists in all sectors including radio, television, and the print medium. Their integrated function of filtering information that is disseminated to the public cannot be taken in isolation one from the other. Media owners and conglomerates, whether their holdings are media-dominant or not, that is, whether their chief holdings are, for example real estate but they own a broadcasting outlet or two, have a responsibility as well as a financial stake in news gathering.

Owners, publishers and reporters all make daily decisions about the dissemination of information based on several criteria from profit margins in the case of the owner, to "news value" in the case of the news gatherers. Several internal and external forces have an impact upon,

and influence at the front end, the kind of information the public receives. That process has had as significant an impact on democracy, as word of mouth in ancient Greece and Rome. The process of selection and dissemination of information has constantly been subject to the limitations of time, space, news carriers, and the original source.

It is for this reason that the recent innovation of broadcasting the debates of the House of Commons in Canada during the last decade and more, restored the possibility of direct public access to the actual proceedings of our legislators in our democracy without all of the "filters". The live broadcasting of proceedings allowed Canadians from coast-to-coast-to-coast to access question period, general deliberations and debates as well as major budgetary and policy announcements as they are being made, "live". It eliminates many of the constraints of editing, news-gathering, etc. and hence many of the filters.

This thesis will demonstrate that the broadcasting of House of Commons debates in Canada has significantly broadened democratic access to Parliament for the Canadian public, and has had an integrating effect between the public, journalists, and the politicians creating a new 'third dimension' through the integration of the three sectors in the political process.

To demonstrate the effect, this thesis will provide a thumbnail sketch of the history of broadcasting debates in other international jurisdictions, firstly on radio, followed by television. It will also scan the emergence of broadcasts in provincial jurisdictions in Canada before the federal Canadian parliament adopted the procedure in 1977.

It will also illustrate that while the direct daily broadcasting of all proceedings has broadened democratic access to live proceedings, Canadians do not avail themselves of the opportunity of watching the 'live' proceedings as much as they could, and they prefer to receive their news in the traditional journalistic manner as the primary practical method of acquiring massive amounts of information on a variety of subjects in a very brief period of time. However, the traditional journalistic manner has now incorporated the tape of the 'live' broadcast quotes into their news reports as a regular occurrence, thereby cementing their value.

Throughout history, the reporting of significant political events has been left to professional journalists and communicators and a variety of terms have been employed to characterise the journalistic function from "gatekeepers", to "conduits", to "filters". Whatever the term employed, the merging of the live day-to-day coverage

of Parliamentary proceedings, with the accompanying news reports, has perhaps led to potentially the best informed populace democracy has ever seen.

Although Parliament began debating the question of broadcasting debates of the legislatures and the federal Parliament as early as the 1920's when radio first went on the air, it was not until several decades later, and several studies by a variety of Parliamentary Committees that the decision was finally taken in 1977 to broadcast the House of Commons on television.

This thesis will describe the struggle internationally for broadcasting legislative debates, and will argue that the broadcasting of legislative debates has broadened the democratic process in Canada, and democratized Parliament itself.

This thesis will be divided into five chapters. Chapter one, will examine the international historical perspective, with descriptions of other Parliamentary jurisdictions New Zealand, Australia, and a different jurisdiction - West Germany; chapter two, will discuss radio broadcasting in the provincial legislatures, and how, following the Second World War and the great depression, Canada observed other countries, and some of its provincial legislatures decided to experiment. Experiments became

permanent and eventually evolved into television broadcasting of debates. Chapter three, federal parliamentary broadcasting, will analyse how the federal Parliament waited until 1977 to implement broadcasting and discuss its range and scope, the debate, the final decision, and the impact of satellite broadcasting on reaching the maximum number of people with scarce government and private resources. Chapter four, will be a case study of a question period, the questions asked, the responses given, and how one national media service represented the issue. Chapter five, will discuss the impact on the public and democracy generally of televising the debates of the House of Commons, and most recently, of Committees.

It will also examine where we go from here with the information highway, as Satellite Communication has transformed the ability of individuals and nations to communicate with each other, and the innovation of interactive communication that allows two-way dialogue in selected sectors. The conclusion will be that broadcasting the House of Commons debates has introduced a 'third dimension' to the democratization of Parliament through extension of this access. The medium has now become an integral part of the Parliamentary process between elections, and the political process generally, as

politicians, and the media have formed a new web of relationships on daily deliberations that have had an impact on how Parliamentarians conduct business, how the media report Parliamentary business, and how the public receives the information. The democratization - bringing the business of government to the widest possible spectrum of citizens who are present and future voters - has formed a 'third dimension' in the process of governing, resulting in politicians being more accountable, journalists being more responsible, and televising acted as a catalyst toward a more responsible electorate as all three became linked in a web of relationships one-to-the other in the process of governing.

CHAPTER ONE

INTERNATIONAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The question of broadcasting legislative debates in international jurisdictions emerged following the invention of radio in the 1920's and the international economic collapse that resulted in the great depression. From the outset, the value of broadcasting as a cultural liaison between groups in a society, as well as the more direct desire to inform the public, was recognized by political entities and nations around the world. The challenge for most countries was to determine whether they wanted to utilize the medium in their political institutions, to directly bring their message to the populace.

As individuals and groups demanded more information from their governments about the legislation affecting their daily lives, some countries immediately saw the value of the radio medium in bringing that message, not merely through the news reports as many print journalists moved into the radio sector, however, in a more direct way, allowing the medium directly into their legislative chambers. The driving force of science and technology that had combined to produce radio would also produce an historical political reaction to the potential and power of this new medium.

Although it was a decade after the invention of radio that the first legislative body internationally integrated the medium into the political arm of government, once the process began, other countries hastily began adopting the new technology of radio as a means of explaining their programs and policies, with the result that today, there are radio and/or television broadcasts of proceedings in whole or in part, in over one hundred jurisdictions, from England to Japan, from Canada and the United States to the United Nations.

This chapter will describe the earliest experiences with such broadcasts. The first, in the mid 1930's was New Zealand, and it is also selected because of the Parliamentary system of government. The Labour government of the day launched the broadcasts as the country was coming to grips with the great depression, and the protective economic measures it was instituting from lowering mortgage rates to bailing out bankrupt farmers, had to be 'sold' to the public, along with its desire to ensure openness in government.

This chapter will examine: the nature of the broadcasts in the New Zealand Parliament; the question of Parliamentary Privilege; and the arguments 'for' and 'against' the broadcasts.

The chapter will also illustrate how the success of the New Zealand experiment in radio broadcasts led Australia to broadcast its legislative proceedings a decade later, and how the Australian government expanded the concept of radio broadcasting.

The chapter will also analyse a non-parliamentary legislative body, the Federal Republic of West Germany, which introduced radio broadcasts of its proceedings in 1949 and which first televised proceedings in 1953, one of the first in the world to do so.

A) NEW ZEALAND:

One of the first international jurisdictions to institute broadcasting of Parliamentary debates was New Zealand. The Labour government took a cabinet decision to commence broadcasting the proceedings of the New Zealand House of Representatives¹ when the government needed positive real action on change in March of 1936 to carry out an election promise following what the government termed an "agitation

¹ Henry Nelson Dollimore, The Table, XXXV, 1966 XIII. "Parliamentary Broadcasting in New Zealand," p.85

that the Parliament and the people should be brought closer together."²

In 1936, the House of Representatives was the only elected body in the New Zealand Parliament, and the government of the day deemed it appropriate to begin by broadcasting the proceedings of the democratically elected House, rather than the appointed legislative Council.³

From 1936 to 1962 the radio broadcasters in that country were of selected debates at the discretion of the Prime Minister. Also, throughout that period, the broadcasts were conducted simply on the basis of the 1936 cabinet decree. It was not until 1962 that broadcasting the House of representatives received legislative ratification under Standing Order 46. At that time, the government of the day enacted legislation establishing the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, which would administer the broadcasts. Previously, they had been conducted by a Director of Broadcasting, and the government of the day determined it was more appropriate to establish an arms-length relationship between the government and the broadcasting arm. Nevertheless, the Corporation was

² Australia. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting. (Canberra) Eighth Report. Sept. 26, 1945. p.3.

³ Ibid. p. 3.

expected to adhere to government direction on certain specific policy matters.

From 1962 onward, the New Zealand Broadcasts were live and continuous during the regular sitting days, three days a week during the Parliamentary session, from 2:30 p.m. until 10:30 p.m. and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.*

i) PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE:

The adoption of radio broadcasting of legislative debates in New Zealand included a vociferous discussion of the whole question of Parliamentary privilege. Because the New Zealand Parliament is based on the British system of Parliamentary government, there is a question of the protection of the Member of Parliament from prosecution resulting from words spoken in the legislature. The question of 'absolute privilege' as it is called, had to be resolved. The question was raised about whether that privilege was extended when the comments from 'within' the chamber were broadcast 'outside' the chamber.

It was not until 1948 that the New Zealand courts ruled that "protection of the member was nevertheless

* New Zealand. Standing Orders of the House of Representatives Relating to Public Business. June 1963. Standing Order 46.

absolute".⁵ The decision was based on section 242 of the 1908 Legislature Act that said the Parliament of New Zealand had:

...taken unto itself all the powers, privileges and immunities possessed by the House of Commons as at January 1st, 1895, the protection of the Member in respect of words spoken in Parliament was absolute and no further statutory protection was necessary.⁶

ii) ARGUMENTS:

Many of the arguments the British Parliamentary Committee⁷ stated concerning the pioneering experiment with radio broadcasting of legislative debates in New Zealand, were subsequently repeated, often in different forms, through most other jurisdictions in the world that ultimately adopted broadcasting of proceedings, hence it is important that they be mentioned here.

⁵ Dollimore. Ibid. p.88.

⁶ Dollimore. Ibid. pp.88-89.

⁷ Great Britain. Select Committee on Broadcasting. Aug. 1966. First Report. pp. 152-153.

a) POSITIVE: (FOR)

The primary positive argument was the extension of the democratic process to a broader spectrum of citizens as an "extension from the public galleries." The arguments in favour were: that legislators could be heard directly by their constituents as the arguments were being made in Parliament; that people who could not come to the legislature could still have contact with their elected representatives' activities by listening to the radio, thus extending the democratic process to all those who had access to the area of the broadcast; and, that legislators themselves would attempt to be on their best behaviour by better preparing arguments, speeches and questions if they were to be heard 'live'.

b) NEGATIVE: (AGAINST)

The arguments against broadcasts concentrated on questions of maximising exposure: the potential for politicians to play to the gallery rather than concentrating on legislation; jockeying for prime-time speaking positions; and the risk that if constituents did not hear their

representative sufficiently frequently, it would leave a negative impression.

As far back as the British parliamentary Committee reported in August 1966, even those who at first expressed reservations about the broadcasts conceded:

...the pleasure in the broadcast arose from the fact that it was natural, spontaneous and convincing. You saw Parliament itself as it was - warts and all.'

The honesty of the presentation with the audio-visual Hansard, or the electronic Hansard as it was called, minimized the encapsulation of information.

Publication is...the basis of self-government among large groups of people too numerous and too dispersed to interact face-to-face, or in any other personally mediated fashion.'

Within a few years of broadcasting even just the radio debates, members from all sides of the British parliament were lauding the broadcasts, and their contribution to democratic process.

* Dollimore. Ibid. p.88.

* George Gerbner, Human Communication Theory. Frank Dance, ed., (Holt, Rinehart, Winston. 1967). pp. 54-55.

If one considers only the popular reaction, the experiment of broadcasting debates would seem to have justified itself. People have learned much about the purposes and proceedings of Parliament. Some are shocked to find that the tone of the democratic assembly is not that of an Areopagus, or a Roman Senate, but many have developed a live interest in the debates and both parties agree that discontinuance is unthinkable.¹⁰

That was the view expressed by Sir Gilbert Campion following his analysis of the broadcasting in both New Zealand and Australian Parliaments, in 1949.

B - AUSTRALIA

Australia first broadcast its legislative debates, July 10, 1946 after both Houses of parliament adopted a recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on broadcasting. The Committee had recommended that broadcasts be implemented "as soon as circumstances permit"¹¹ after it concluded broadcasts would significantly:

...raise the standard of debates, enhance the prestige of Parliament, and contribute to a better informed judgement throughout the community on matters affecting the common good and the public interest nationally and internationally.¹²

¹⁰ Dollimore. Ibid. p.89.

¹¹ Eighth Report. Ibid. p.4.

¹² Eighth Report. Ibid.

The Australian Parliamentary Proceedings Act spelled out the nature and conditions of the broadcasts. They would: include both Houses; would be brought into effect by the Australian Broadcasting Commission from at least one broadcasting station; and a Joint Broadcasting Committee of nine members of the Australian Parliament would be responsible for determining general principles, as well as the days, and time of proceedings.¹³

Australia allowed the broadcast of the Governor General's Speech, some day-to-day proceedings and questions raised in the Senate and House of Representatives, and allowed rebroadcasts of certain deliberations in the early evening. Australia's scope was more extensive than that of New Zealand which did not allow rebroadcasts initially.¹⁴

The Parliamentary Proceedings Act allowed broadcasts from the beginning to the end of sittings. The Australian Parliament continued with radio broadcasts only until 1971 when the Australian Senate adopted a resolution to allow, in principle, the televising of standing and select committee

¹³ Australia. An Act to Provide for the Broadcasting of the Proceedings of the Houses of Parliament and for other purposes. Assented to July 5, 1946. No.20 of 1946 pp.51-53 (Hereafter to be referred to as Australian Broadcasting Act, 1946) Sections 5(1) 12(1) and 12(2).

¹⁴ Australia. Australian Senate Practice. 3rd ed. (Canberra, 1967) "Joint Statutory Committees." Articles (4) and (5) a,b,& c. pp. 382-383.

proceedings. It is worth noting that both houses of the Australian parliament are elected bodies¹⁵ and the formal televising of the Australian Parliament commenced in 1975.

Televising of debates in both New Zealand and Australia also concentrated on the electronic hansard concept, whereby the broadcasts would reflect a basic transcript of proceedings as it was the spoken word as it was recorded by stenographers of the era. The idea was to minimize distortion of arguments and statements.

In this context, both New Zealand and Australia minimized the role of 'announcers'. Both countries restricted any announcing of debates to factual description of procedure and business in the House. It included as well, declarations of a member's name, electoral district or state, political party and Parliamentary office or portfolio. Political views or forecasts by announcers were prohibited¹⁶

¹⁵ Australia. House of Representatives. A Short description of Business and Procedures, 3rd ed. January 1967. p.66.

¹⁶ Alan Robert Browning. The Table. Volume XXXV 1966. "Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings in Australia." pp.74-84 and Australia Parliament. Senate Practice Ibid. pp.384-385.

C - THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF WEST GERMANY

The federal republic of West Germany, following the Second World War, began broadcasting radio proceedings of the Bundestag in September of 1949 following the partition and the desire to ensure that the dissemination of free information would prevent such atrocities as the holocaust from ever recurring. It was among the first to initiate live television broadcasting, almost since the inception of the medium. Televising Bundestag proceedings began in October 1953, over 20 years before Canada began its televising of Commons debates. At an Inter-Parliamentary Union Symposium in Geneva, Switzerland in 1968, a Member of the Bundestag declared, access to the electronic media is a policy consistent with Basic Law which states: "the debates of the Bundestag are public."¹⁷

The West Germans did not restrict broadcasting to plenary sessions of the Bundestag, but also extended it to Commissions of inquiry. In the mid-1960's, while debates were recorded, they were not all aired. Both major television networks were to decide if a specific debate were

¹⁷ Switzerland. Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2nd Symposium, 1968. (Geneva). p. 148.

to be televised or not. The televising was confined to debates of "particular importance."¹⁴

Although the broadcasting of the Bundestag proceedings was welcomed by the population, in the mid-1960's the audience figures, as in other jurisdictions, remained relatively small. The live proceedings received less than 5 per cent viewership while the recorded excerpts rebroadcast in the evening had a viewership of 20-29 per cent. That was initially because of the novelty.

This chapter has illustrated that the pioneering of broadcasting legislative debates became a matter of public policy in the democratically elected institutions of New Zealand, Australia and the Federal Republic of West Germany. They recognized the value of broadcasting in the democratic legislative process in advance of many other western countries, and their growing pains in developing the link between the democratic legislative process, and extending the day-to-day work in that process to the maximum number of people through radio, then television, served as a basis for broadcasting debates in other jurisdictions, such as the United States and Canada.

¹⁴ Ibid. p.149.

OTHERS

The United States adopted broadcasting of the Senate proceedings following an experimental broadcasting period, July 29, 1986, by a vote of 78-21. Opponents of the broadcasts such as Louisiana Democrat Russell Long had argued that T.V. in the Senate would result in "an increase in political expediency at the expense of statesmanship."¹⁹ But those in favour, such as Tennessee Democrat Albert Gore Jr. (who subsequently became Vice-president of the United States), declared that television had not disrupted the institution of the Senate, but rather , "television has helped to keep the Senate on its toes." The then Senate majority leader, Kansas Republican, Robert Dole, hailed television in the U.S. Senate as an "electronic bridge to the American people." The impact was felt to be so strong that a study found there was a 250 per cent increase in the number of "special orders" or speeches made by Senators on a variety of subjects. The experimental broadcasts had also convinced some opponents of T.V. in the U.S. Senate to change their minds and they subsequently voted in favour of the permanent T.V. in the Senate. Republican Mitch

¹⁹ United States. Congressional Quarterly. August 2, 1986. p. 1744.

McConnell of Kentucky is a case in point. Support for televising U.S. Senate proceedings crossed party lines, and ultimately garnered an overwhelming majority support.

Television cameras were brought into the British House of Commons after ten debates and various special committee studies following a free vote February 8, 1988. The cameras were brought in for an experimental period initially, then made permanent. During the debate, then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher opposed televising the House claiming it would be "quite different from the House of Commons as we know it... ." ²⁰ The Prime Minister's objections were voted down by a 54-vote margin. Among those who favoured broadcasting the British debates, Tory Anthony Nelson, argued the televised coverage would "strengthen our ability to do what we are here to do, namely to represent the interests of our constituents and to hold accountable the government of the day." ²¹

It is interesting to note that following decades of formal debates in Westminster, the British House of Commons adopted broadcasting of the debates only after a Committee

²⁰ Canada. Parliamentary Government. Volume 8, Number 2. December, 1988. p. 19.

²¹ Ibid. p. 19

of 13 British MPs studied the setup that had been established in Canada and the United States many years before.

We have seen that the debates in all jurisdictions were similar, that the basic premise of the public's "right to know" directly from the sources of legislation, the legislators, was a paramount right, and worth the price politicians had to pay to have their exact words heard, and seen. With this overview of the first efforts at such democratization of the legislative 'process', we now turn to Canada's struggle.

CHAPTER TWO

RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING OF PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES IN CANADA: A Prelude to Federal Broadcasts

When the Parliamentary broadcasts were being introduced internationally, one Prime Minister said the "ideal Parliament" would be one in which debates were held with all of the people present. The ability of individuals to personally attend legislative debates in Canada and in most other jurisdictions, is a function of a number of factors from the ability to travel, to the economic cost of travelling to the provincial capital, to the time available to attend. The invention of radio made it possible to to realize to a greater extent the concept of Abraham Lincoln's, "government of the people, for the people and by the people." Radio and television allowed a potential for openness with a government 'in front of' the people, as well, and with the advent of interactive technology, it opens up the possibility of direct participation of the people without the mediated groups. Canadian provinces, not the federal government, took the lead in providing coverage of legislative proceedings.

In this chapter we shall examine the introduction of radio broadcasts in the provinces, beginning with

Saskatchewan in the 1940's, describing the nature of the debates broadcast, some of the criticism of their introduction, the need to extend Parliamentary privilege, and the impact on other provinces of the Saskatchewan decision. We shall also examine Alberta, Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick and P.E.I. as the major impetus toward the federal government's later adoption of broadcasting the debates. This chapter will also describe the question of image and influence, and how the politicians initially expressed stronger concerns about their own ability to project themselves and their policies on radio and television, than about the democratization of Parliament and the extension of public access to decision-making through the direct broadcast of legislative proceedings.

Various political scientists and sociologists described the role of the media in a democracy differently as the symbiotic relationship between the media, politicians, and government evolved. One U.S. author, journalist Richard Reeves, quoted in a book written by Keith Davey, called, The Rainmaker: A Passion for Politics, wrote in 1975, that tension existing between politicians and journalists is necessary because their two functions, although intertwined, responded to different drummers.

Tension may be mistaken for struggle, but it does not necessarily make adversaries; in this case it only makes press and politicians loving and hating partners in a marriage of necessity.²²

And Theodore H. White in his book, The Making of the President 1972, draws the media and legislators into a greater clash of roles. White's contention is that as the Democrats were defeated and Republican Richard Nixon was elected, the media would not abandon the quest for truth in the Watergate scandal that had emerged during the campaign. The new role was defined:

There was, however, the other level of contest - the ongoing fight between the President and the press which an election could not settle: control of the agenda. The Washington Post, followed by the Columbia Broadcasting System, followed by the New York times, had decided they would place squarely on the agenda of public talk the matter of corruption in government and specifically, corruption of power in the Nixon campaign. Once there, it could not be removed...²³

It is also true that individuals assess their political candidates and elected politicians from different cognitive bases, and composed of varying cognitive elements. That's the argument put forward by Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang in Politics and Television. In their sociological study of

²² Keith Davey, The Rainmaker A Passion for Politics. (Toronto: Stoddard Publishing, 1986), p. 248.

²³ Theodore H. White, The Making of the President 1972 (New York: Atheneum Publishers), p. 268.

the political implications of television, they say viewers assess three components:

television performance,... as a debater his fitness for the political role in which he is cast,... and personal image- what kind of a human being is he? What is he like as a 'real person'? The appeal of a political personality is a function of the way the man on the screen projects along each of these dimensions and whether they are related or isolated in the viewer's cognition.²⁴

The performance of government and opposition members during the daily Question Period debate is of significance in terms of individual perceptions of their legislators. The Langs wrote about the impact of televised leaders' debates, analyzing the Nixon-Kennedy debates and others. Following extensive analysis they concluded that "new or negative" information did not necessarily alter perceptions of legislators enough for individuals to change their vote. But, the 'style' of debate did have an impact on the individual perception of the 'image' of their legislator. They argue voters take the longer-term view following an election to consider a number of factors from party loyalty, to peer group and pressure group activities. They argue that how a government or party deals with that, and attempts to enhance its image while considering the societal factors are central to the study of the impact of television.

²⁴ Kurt Lang and Gladys Engel Lang, Politics and Television (Chicago: Quadrangle books), p. 239.

They conclude that "many will continue to approach what is really specialized information through their own preconceptions." However, there is the potential for a cumulative effect. "... the preconceptions and impressions that enter into a vote decision are gradually built up throughout the years between elections and television plays a large part in shaping that political imagery."²⁵

Television broadcasting, between elections, of Commons debates can influence the populace. Although the visual component is added with television, the initial broadcasting of legislative debates throughout the world had been conducted on radio before the 1950's, and most of the arguments presented concerning the accuracy in quoting MP's statements, and the context, have been found to be equally applicable to television.

Let us now examine how Canada, through its provinces' efforts in radio eventually led to the adoption of television broadcasting of the House of Commons.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 305.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES

i - Saskatchewan

In 1946, a year following the end of the Second World War, the Saskatchewan government became the first provincial government in Canada to broadcast its legislative proceedings on radio. The legislation was introduced in February, and broadcasting began in April.²⁶

Broadcasting time was allocated according to party representation in the legislature, and 36 hours of broadcasting were reserved at a cost that seems minuscule today: \$900. Initially, broadcasts were restricted to Speeches from the Throne made by the Lieutenant Governor; debates in reply, budget debates and the like.²⁷

Initially, there was significant controversy as the years progressed. The broadcasts had been brought in under the CCF government of Tommy Douglas. Opposition parties challenged the method of broadcasting by party representation (a representation that seems to be the proportion of air-time granted by CBC over the years to the

²⁶ Saskatchewan. Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. Vol. 45 Feb. 18-19, 1946 pp. 5-6 and April 4, 1946 p. 132.

²⁷ "Legislature will be on the air again," Regina Leader Post, Dec. 9, 1946. p. 3.

various parties at the federal level during election campaigns - perhaps it was a prototype for that policy, but not for the ultimate policy of broadcasting live televised debates when they were finally introduced.)

The Saskatchewan government which pioneered radio - broadcasting of legislative debates in Canada encountered many of the same arguments encountered in international jurisdictions that did not immediately adopt complete and comprehensive live coverage but selective coverage. The question of distribution of air-time, and the selectivity of what should be broadcast, and what should not in many cases it was financial constraint. In the end, the government of the day argued it was in the "interest of democracy and free speech" to continue the broadcasts. But the opposition parties of the day, Liberals and Social Credit, at various points opposed continued funding for the broadcasts, and argued unfairness.²⁸

Nevertheless, the government of the day won the battle. It also grappled with the same question that other provincial governments were to grapple with later, the question of Parliamentary Privilege. As in the New Zealand example, in Parliamentary legislatures, the British North

²⁸ "Accusations Fly," Saskatoon Star Phoenix, March 18, 1958, p. 2.

America Act and the House of Commons Act grant immunity from prosecution to Members of Parliament and Senators for words spoken within the Commons and the Senate. The question arose, would the broadcasters who broadcast these words be immune from prosecution as well.

Section 34, Article 1 of the Legislative Assembly Act in 1949 granted provincial members in the Saskatchewan legislature immunity from the prosecution, and in 1955 the Statute was revised with Article 2 stating:

the immunity provided by subsection (1) applies notwithstanding that words spoken by a member before the Assembly are broadcast provided that the broadcasting takes place while the words are being so spoken.²⁹

ii - Alberta

Alberta was among the first to have full televising of proceedings of legislature. In 1972, Alberta permitted, only after a trial run two years earlier, the televising of its legislative debates. It began with the Friday Session, and only with the Question Period segment, taped. The CTV

²⁹ Saskatchewan. Revised Statutes, (1955), The Legislative Assembly Act, Chapter 3.

Network affiliate was given the first contract to tape the sessions which were rebroadcast the following Sunday.³⁰

Initial experiments with these broadcasts were paid for by the television network. The Alberta experience was so successful it became a prototype for broadcasting in other provincial legislatures as well as the federal Parliament. Speaking to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in 1973, Alberta MLA, James Miller said the opening up of coverage to television was a wise decision:

The opening of the procedures to the broadcast media has increased the awareness and knowledge of Albertans in the manner in which their province is governed... explains to the people the traditions and values of the system ... (and) we feel that it is indeed a major step in open government.... Indeed, the broader are the communication and the understanding throughout the province and among people from all corners of it, the better it is going to be for our democratic institutions. The people of Alberta and members of the legislative assembly, generally are pleased with the coverage given and that the introduction of television coverage has proven to be a wise decision.³¹

iii - Ontario and Manitoba:

In Ontario, demands had been made repeatedly throughout the late 1960's and into the early 1970's for

³⁰ Alberta. Standing Committee on Order and Procedure, Minutes, pp. 4:16-4:17.

³¹ James Miller, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Minutes. August 18-25, 1973. p. 61.

televising debates. Although the Ontario Committee on Standing Orders and Procedure had a mandate to study broadcasting debates in the Ontario legislature February 20, 1970, the then Conservative Premier John Robarts continued to reject the idea, while the Liberals favoured having television broadcast of the legislature."

Ontario did allow live coverage of the Opening of the legislature and the Speech from the Throne, and in 1969 the budget debate was allowed to be televised. The watchword seemed to be incrementalism.

Manitoba also allowed live broadcasting of the Speech From the Throne from 30-40 minutes and conducted its first experiment with live coverage of a Question period in 1970."

32

" "New Body Gives Debate on Television," Globe and Mail, February 26, 1970.

"No Unlimited T.V. at Queen's Park," Toronto Telegram, October 27, 1970.

" "MLA's Asked to Decide," Winnipeg Free Press, January 6, 1970.

iv - Quebec:

In the initial stages, Quebec, even in 1971, only allowed the broadcasting of the opening of the National Assembly, but at the end of the decade introduced more broadcasting on both radio and television.

V - Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland

In March of 1972, P.E.I. and New Brunswick permitted broadcasting of the Speech from the Throne but no other televising of the legislatures had been undertaken.³⁵

In Newfoundland, in 1971 radio and television broadcasting of the Speech from the Throne, the address in reply, leaders of the opposition and the Premier had been allowed. Radio and television broadcasting in that province

³⁵ Thomas R. Cullen, Clerk of Legislative Assembly, P.E.I., March 1972. Correspondence.

was broadened to include the budget speech made by the Premier of province.³⁶

vi - Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia undertook the most ambitious experiment at the time to provide complete televising of legislative proceedings. The legislation was introduced by the Liberal government of Gerald Regan March 18, 1971.

Resolve that television and radio broadcasting of the proceedings of the House be permitted for a trial period of the next three weeks hence, and that the mechanics and control thereof be within the Promise of his Honour, the Speaker.³⁷

The three week experiment was undertaken with the CBC producing and absorbing most of the costs.

As in most other jurisdictions internationally and provincially, the debates surrounding the introduction of television into the Nova Scotia legislature centered upon questions such as members: "playing to the cameras"; some members of the Assembly felt they were being "made fools

³⁶ Hugh F. Coady, Clerk of the House of Assembly, Newfoundland, September 30, 1971. Correspondence.

³⁷ Nova Scotia. Assembly Debates. March 18, 1971, p. 1060.

of" and the less confident legislators felt the "star system" was taking over."

In a book entitled: Packaging the Presidency, the argument is made that during election campaigns, those who can afford the "slickest ad campaigns" are at a greater advantage than those who cannot, but the candidate's 'speech' is important." The same can be said for between elections.

The politicians who had been elected to their legislatures were concerned about putting on the best possible appearance before the public. Their concerns, often personal, about manner of dress, personal speaking styles, the question of more experienced politicians having the advantage because their 'image' had already been established, and their speaking styles refined, along with their political acumen, were similar to the concerns expressed by most political aspirants during election campaigns.

³⁸ Robert McCleave, (PC) and Bill MacEachern, (Lib). Confidential Report to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization. April 6, 1971, pp. 3-18.

³⁹ Kathleen H. Jamieson, Packaging the Presidency. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 490. Jamieson says there is not a presidential general election in the television age in which each candidate did not deliver at least 2 major televised speeches.

None of the politicians wanted the broadcasting of their legislative debates to turn into a 'negative' for their political images. The provincial politicians who debated endlessly in many cases before finally putting democracy and public access first, had wanted to ensure that the democratization would not be at the expense of their political careers. For those that kept in mind the U.S. 1960 Nixon-Kennedy debates, they knew the impact of visuals when something such as Nixon's "five o'clock shadow" became an issue, when it would not have been one on radio.

In the final analysis, the politicians put the people's right to know "first", and as provincial legislatures continued to broadcast their proceedings. they were a catalyst for the federal government to follow suit. In the next chapter, we shall look at the federal Parliamentary broadcasting of the House of Commons in Ottawa, which took place three decades after the first provincial broadcast.

CHAPTER THREE

FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING - TELEVISION

The provinces had, for decades debated, experimented with, and ultimately implemented broadcasting of debates of their legislatures at various stages when it seemed the time was propitious. The political rationale was different in each case, and the legislatures implemented it with different political parties at different times as we have seen from the previous chapter. It is a wonder that since radio broadcasts had been carried out since the 1940's that it took until 1977 for the Federal Parliament of Canada to decide, and implement radio and television broadcasting of the House of Commons debates.

This chapter will not restate the arguments that were resurrected in the international and provincial jurisdictions. This chapter will examine some of the discussion based on the history of the debates over the subject in the House of Commons, debates that actually began in 1925 over the potential introduction of radio, that was rejected. The brief history of the federal struggle will be followed by a description of the scope of the broadcasts throughout the country which began in a limited way through cable distribution, and subsequently integrated the

satellite distribution system. The chapter will also review the number of times the subject was raised formally in the federal parliament in the 1960's, and 70's, and how the federal parliament almost implemented the broadcasts in 1972 before an election was called and the subsequent minority Parliament placed the process on hold for many more years. Finally, this chapter will discuss the decision to broadcast, how it has been carried out, the nature of the broadcasts, and the long delay in implementing broadcasts of Committee hearings. Finally it will give a general overview of the effect on legislators, on the Commons generally, and the positive impact on responsible legislation.

A - A Brief History - Federally

Although the provinces preceded the federal government by many years in broadcasting their debates, federal politicians had debated the matter since the great depression.

Back in February 1925, the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons requested: "...the installation in

the Chamber of a radio apparatus of sufficient power to broadcast the debates throughout the country."⁴⁰

However, the request was denied because, it was argued, it "might lead to abuse and was not in keeping with the dignity of Parliament."⁴¹

The question was raised a number of times over the years, including a request to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts, in 1966. on December 13, 1966, a subcommittee recommended:

"consideration should be given to radio and television broadcasting of a committee's proceedings on an experimental basis."⁴²

There were a number of other requests from other subcommittees of Parliament, and motions presented by MPs from Liberals, Conservatives, and the NDP but they had been repeatedly turned down.

⁴⁰ Canada. House of Commons, The Journal. Sessional Paper No. 92, February 20, 1925.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 92.

⁴² The Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts. Evidence REcorded by Electronic Apparatus. Monday, January 9, 1967. p. 1449 (Note: At that time, there was a delay in printing Committee Minutes of a few weeks).

The question was referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and Organization in 1970, which, in June of 1972 recommended an "electronic hansard". That is, the verbatim transcript of the day's proceedings on television and radio, would be the optimum method of broadcasting debates. However, even that attempt did not proceed because an election was called, and a minority government ensued until 1974.

Finally, on January 24, 1977, a motion to broadcast proceedings of the House of Commons was introduced by the Liberal government of the day, and, almost as if they had decided a sufficient number of years and debates had taken place it was adopted the following day, January 25th, 1977, on division with no recorded vote.⁴³

The general provisions were to:

- provide coverage of House of Commons proceedings, and of committee proceedings;
- and
- to strike a committee to oversee the implementation.

⁴³ Canada. House of Commons. Hansard Debates, January 25, 1977, p. 2375.

The Committee wasted no time in making a recommendation, based largely on a feasibility study already conducted by the CBC and other broadcasters.

The reasons given by various politicians over the years in favour of broadcasting can be summarized in an eloquent speech given by former Conservative MP Gerald (Jed) Baldwin back in 1969.

... immediately outside this chamber are microphones, and television cameras which, I would hazard, are being used at this moment by certain honourable members of the House, members of the government ... busily engaging in expanding, varying and changing what was said ... From our mass media we obtain too often an abridged, distorted and frequently illusory version of the proceedings of this chamber. It has been suggested there will be too much grandstanding, and that the people will feel they are always on display. Well, we are always on display, even now."

Baldwin's argument echoed those of British and Australian MPs who claimed it was important for democracy to extend the private gallery of the House of Commons beyond the walls of the buildings, directly to the people.

Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau had supported the principle of broadcasting commons debates from 1968 when he told a Canadian Association of Broadcasters Convention May

" Canada. House of Commons. Minutes of Proceedings,
March 26, 1969, pp. 7158-7160.

8, that he was aware of opposition to the idea, but in principle it was something he would "not oppose."

It was his government that ultimately struck the Standing and Special committees to study the matter in 1970 and 1972 and finally brought television cameras into the Commons on a continuing basis in 1977.

Since the introduction of cameras, the daily proceedings of the House of Commons have been broadcast from the opening of daily debates at 11 a.m. to the end of the Parliamentary day at 6 p.m. Initially, there were evening sessions and they were also broadcast until 10:30 p.m. when the so-called "late show" for Private Members' business was over. When evening sittings were terminated, only special evening Sessions of the Commons are broadcast on a per occasion basis.

All of the daily Question Periods are broadcast, (except when the Satellite ceases functioning, but the broadcasters were able to switch satellites after just a few days) along with all orders of the day, speeches, presentation of petitions, budget debates and the like.

A former long time Clerk of the House of Commons, Alistair Fraser, in his book on television in the Commons, says the impact has been not the "grandstanding" show that many had predicted.

Fraser says:

The concern over the possible rush of prima donnas anxious to usurp the floor has not occurred. Speeches remain much as they were, neither brighter nor duller."

He contends the impact, from the MPs point of view is almost a neutral one.

The one area that the Commons has not yet had full television coverage of is standing committees. Although the original proposals included covering committees, except for televising special committees such as the Committee on the Constitution in 1980-81, and other more recent special committees such as the one studying the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) following the 1988 election, the full daily coverage of all committees has not yet begun, (as we shall discuss later. In many cases it is because the costs of covering all committees would be prohibitive.)

Questions raised at the time emerged from the implications of the motion that was moved by House Leader Allan MacEachen to approve the radio and television broadcasting of Commons proceedings on the question that had plagued other jurisdictions and provincial legislatures:

⁴⁵ Alistair Fraser, "Televising the Canadian House of Commons." The Table. 1979. Vol. XLVII. p. 70.

the question of immunity from prosecution for words spoken in the House, known as Parliamentary Privilege.

The onus was both on MPs to use their sagacity and the courts to determine, consistent with the BNA Act, the question of immunity.

Let me point out, ... the infinite damage and irreparable injury that may be done to some member of the public against whom an accusation is made, perhaps an improper unjust accusation, in this House, free from the liability of prosecution, challenge or civil suit when instantly such an accusation reaches millions of people across Canada."

The provincial courts had already granted immunity but, within certain limitations of potentially litigious statements. Individual MPs had to exercise their own vigilance, but as recently at 1993, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on a different issue.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled 7 - 1 in favour of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, which requested the right to BAN cameras from the floor of the House of Assembly. The CBC challenged the Assembly's right to institute such a ban.

However, in the judgement, Madam Justice Beverley McLachlin wrote:

" Canada. House of Commons. Hansard Debates, January 25, 1977. p. 2377.

The issue here is the power of the legislative Assembly to restrict what members of the public may do while in the chamber, and to expel them if they refuse to comply.⁴⁷

This question does not deal with the Privilege of the individual member as defined by Parliamentary Privilege, rather it deals with the Privilege of the House of Assembly as a body to ban camerapersons. However, most legislatures have already circumvented that problem by having remote-control cameras mounted in the legislative chambers. There are two totally separate issues. One of the issues involves protection of the individual elected member through Parliamentary Privilege which is already established by enabling legislation in many of the provinces, the other deals with the privilege of the legislature to expel members. On the question of the member's immunity, Joseph Maingot, Q.C., the former Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel to the Canadian House of Commons, wrote an extensive analysis of Parliamentary privilege, published in 1982. Maingot concludes that the broadcasting of debates is a publication of debates, and while third parties may be affected by any potentially defamatory statements, the words

⁴⁷ "Court restricts media freedom", Globe and Mail, January 22, 1993.
pp. 1-2.

uttered in the House of Commons emanate "from within the ambit of the function of the member during a debate in Parliament and accordingly, as in the case of the printed Hansard, the member's immunity is not affected."⁴³

B - Committees

Over the years the Committees that were broadcast were often recorded and replayed in prime-time hours for those who wanted to watch. In the summer of 1992, the Standing Committee on Consumer and Corporate affairs studied the question of competition in the airline industry and was broadcast live.

Until the end of 1993, broadcasting of committee hearings was a discretionary decision by the Committee. If there was all-party consent to broadcast, and if it could find the funding, then it was broadcast.

Even for the committee broadcasts, the MPs used the argument of the public's 'right to know': "The public has a

⁴³ 43 Joseph Maingot, Q.C. Parliamentary Privilege in Canada. (Toronto: Butterworth Publishing, 1982), p. 45.

right to know what's going on. What prompted the decision was a discussion we had in the steering committee."

One of the arguments that had been brought up against the broadcasting of Committees is that the arguments for amendments and changes, combined with the numbers of changes that would be often required to bills before they become legislation, might not allow for the fullest discussion of the merits or lack thereof of given pieces of legislation.

There was significant debate surrounding the broadcasting of Committees following the tabling of the Ninth Report of the standing committee on elections, privileges, procedure and private members' business, under the chairmanship of then Conservative MP, Chuck Cook. It recommended among other options that two committee rooms, fully equipped for broadcasting be set aside. It also argued that the House of Commons is a legislative body, "an important governmental and democratic institution. It is not a television show, staged for the benefit of viewers."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ "Consumer committee televises proceedings," Hill Times, August 20, 1992.

⁵⁰ Ninth Report of the Standing Committee on Elections and Privileges. "Watching the House Work," December 1989. p. 9.

The Committee had viewed first-hand the broadcasting of the United States House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, as well as the Legislative assembly of Ontario. It concluded at the time that all of these legislative bodies allowed great leeway to responsible producers and none of the legislative bodies reported any major complaints or bad judgments resulting from the broadcasting of their Committee hearings.

The Committee's proposal to allow considerable leeway to producers, and allow more private sector involvement was not ultimately totally accepted, but in part.

Some of the arguments at the time centered on questions of culture, and cost. The CBC President, Gerard Veilleux, told the Committee that broadcasting Parliamentary debates, and Committees, constitute an important part of Canada's Culture. Veilleux said:

Culture is what we are as a country, and as a society, and it is what we would like to become. That's what culture is. It could be a hockey game for one person, and a concert or an opera for another. The House of Commons is part of our political culture. ... The Corporation must continue to play a leading role in reflecting what we are, and what we have the potential to become.⁵¹

⁵¹ Canada. Standing Committee on Elections and Privileges. Minutes of Proceedings. 2:11:89, Issue 12:33.

The Chairman of Communications for the Canadian Bar Association expressed the opinion that all proceedings should be televised and open to the public and the media. However, he did also express concerns relating to security clearances, and potential disruption of proceedings by roaming cameras. He suggested the fixed camera positions, which had already been experimented with in other committees, would be the optimum method of broadcasting committees.

The continuing discussion surrounding televising of Committees during the hearings touched on the questions of "visual image", rather than substance. One MP was concerned cameras would view MP's in Committee without their jacket's on with the shirtsleeves rolled up. But others were concerned about editorial content, and one Conservative cabinet Minister said while there is that concern, he was "perfectly accountable for anything" he does in the House of Commons.

The proposal of allowing the private sector to run Parliamentary broadcasts was rejected by one MP who questioned whether the public would have to be charged for the broadcasts, and if they would then have to be put in the position of "selling" Committee and Parliamentary broadcasts.

But it was the Committee chairman who put it into perspective when he said: "Are we here in the House of Commons to look good? Are we doing our committee work to gain public acclaim? Or are we here basically for the public and representing the public,...?"⁵²

Some MP's who opposed broadcasting of Committees also complained of "grandstanding". In the words of former Conservative MP Blaine Thacker (Lethbridge, Alberta),

"When the TV camera is turned on, we all become Perry Masons and we're completely unable to address the substantive issues in the bill."⁵³

This view addresses the inhibitions of the MPs to speak as frankly as they would like. At the present time reporters are allowed into committees, they cover them, but they are not allowed to be broadcast without all-party approval.

Perhaps one of the rationales for not providing live, full coverage of standing committees by some of the opponents is that individuals at home, might not understand that many of the provisions of a bill, are merely proposed

⁵² Standing committee on Privileges and Elections. Minutes. Nov. 8, 1989. Issue: 13:78.

⁵³ "MPs Cool to TV Coverage of Immigration Committee". Hill Times. August 13, 1992.

legislation at the initial stages, and they might support or oppose a section that may not ultimately become law.

Since the outset he CBC was in charge of the broadcast of the House of Commons through what was called the Parliamentary Channel. In the next chapter, we shall examine the impact on Parliamentarians.

C) Canadian Parliamentary Channel (CPAC)

Since the new Broadcasting Act was proclaimed in 1991, the Canadian Parliamentary Channel has changed dramatically. Initially, and until September of 1993, the Channel carried primarily the House of Commons debates and related matters along with selected public hearings. However, its role has expanded as CPAC is now partners with 35 cable companies which are public service nonprofit organizations, serving approximately 6.4 million people. A total of 635 cable systems (some companies own many systems) carry Parliamentary and related broadcasts to a total of 6,553,353 subscribers.

The potential audience is broken down as follows:

	NUMBER OF SYSTEMS	SUBSCRIBERS
ENGLISH	491	4,210,414
FRENCH	122	1,217,414
BOTH (Eng. & Fr.)	222	1,125,525 ²⁴

The expansion is consistent with the CRTC objective that stated minorities, the disabled and those in remote communities should have full access to the broadcasting system.

CPAC has expanded dramatically its coverage of public hearings, in a number of sectors including CRTC hearings and the like.

The CPAC broadcasting system has a reach of potentially 6.5 million people. However, the latest Nielsen ratings for the service, conducted over three-month periods each time indicates under 20 per cent of the potential viewers avail themselves of the service.

The ratings for the period August 30, 1993 to November 28, 1993 showed a viewership of 1,231,000 . The numbers for November 1993 to February 1994 (following the election) increased to 1,375,000 viewers.

²⁴ Statistics courtesy of CPAC Ottawa, April 1994.

The CPAC broadcasts today are not the narrow House of Commons broadcasts of old, in that the numbers reflected here include broadcasting of public hearings on a number of issues from aboriginal rights to public meetings. CPAC is planning to provide a significantly more extensive service in the future. It is difficult to ascertain the percentage of Commons only viewers with the present numbers because it includes all viewing. Also these figures reflect a three-month span, whereas regular news ratings reflect only a two or three-week span.

Hence, one can say that while the potential to broaden democratic access to the institution of Parliament is there, people are not availing themselves of the opportunity as much as it was perceived at the outset.

It appears the public still prefers to acquire its information about Parliament from newscasts which have numbers in the 1.7 to 2 million range for the major national television networks at 11 p.m. and a cumulative audience of close to 6 million for the dinner-hour shows on local affiliates. However, those newscasts incorporate the actual "clips" or "soundbites" from the Commons broadcast, with the result that the public acquires the information from the live broadcasting of debates

in a digested version on the newscast by viewing the recorded section of the live broadcast. The public receives the actual newsclip, not a second-hand version of what was said, as had been the practice before televising of the Commons debates.

The system of broadcasting debates has now inserted itself firmly into the daily news-gathering exercise. Major television networks, CBC, CTV, RADIO-CANADA, TVA, and GLOBAL networks, all have made arrangement for live feeds into their Parliamentary Bureaus (in offices located within a block of Parliament Hill) of the daily proceedings of the House of Commons, and special committees. They are all recorded live ' in-house ' for instantaneous inclusion in their news reports.

Hence, if the public is not availing itself of watching the proceedings of the Commons, they still receive the abridged version of significant statements on the newscasts. Reporters are able to pull "clips" or "soundbites" directly from the commons proceedings, usually the daily Question Period, and insert them into their news reports. The reporters acquire the verbatim statements of the individuals speaking from the recording of the live action in the Commons.

The impact of this system on news-gathering has been significant. It has also placed the MPs, Cabinet Ministers, and, in many cases the 'up-and-comers' in a more accurate light. MPs' careers have been made and broken on Parliament Hill, but their words, or their actions, or both have been the cause, not the medium through which their words or actions have been represented. The instantaneous broadcast of the Commons debates may, in the minds of some have had a neutral effect on decorum, however, it has had a significant effect on the accuracy of reporting the substance by the reporter, and the accuracy of the statements being made by the politician who can no longer walk outside the House of Commons and change the story of what went on.

In the past, some politicians changed their story, their version would appear on the news, and the next day's Hansard might leave a different impression as the verbatim transcript was read. And, just as it has become incumbent on the politician to accurately say what he means and not have the opportunity to change the impression (as Gerald Baldwin had pointed out earlier in this thesis), it has also become incumbent on the reporter to accurately reflect the words because they are there for all to hear, and see.

Since the inception of television broadcasting of Parliamentary debates in Canada in 1977, Canadians have had

the opportunity of viewing first-hand the activities, policies, and arguments of their legislators. Through the cable distribution system, 'question period' can be seen from the largest metropolitan area of Toronto, to the remote areas of the Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

The viewers can view proceedings first-hand from the beginning of Parliamentary deliberations five days a week beginning at 11 a.m., debates on proposed legislation, followed by a series parliamentary activities during which individual members can make statements, present petitions from constituents on matters of national and/or local importance before the 'House', and the full debate of Question Period. In all cases, the exact statements made, can be viewed by the constituents who can make their own assessments of the actions of legislators if they so desire. The live daily broadcast is sometimes rebroadcast in evening hours to allow working people and others not able to view activities live to catch-up on what happened. The advent of, and broadening home use of videotape (VHS) allow individuals to tape their own segments as they so desire. This allows the individual to select what Parliamentary activities are of interest. This individual selection is by its very nature 'democratizing' the process.

Before live broadcasting the public relied on media reports of condensed information to determine what was transpiring in Parliament. The televising of debates altered that, but did not replace it. The media reports are now viewed by many as adjuncts to, rather than prime sources of, the original information. The media's role has become one of explaining the complexities to a greater extent than in the past. However, like the motorist who slows down when the police-car comes in to view, there is a heightened awareness operating on the journalist to be as accurate as possible because the information, and context can be checked on the "tape". There is a symbiotic relationship that operates between the politicians and journalists as a result. There is pressure exerted on the politicians as well, to be as informed and comprehensive as possible in presenting their political point of view, and similarly the journalist, like the referee, is under heightened pressure to ensure the report stands the test of accuracy in the instant replay. All of this can be a very positive step forward for democracy.

Back in 1987, Roy MacGregor wrote, on the tenth anniversary of broadcasting Commons debates, that :

It is here to stay, for just as 10 years ago U.S. President Jimmy Carter's media guru, Jerry Rafshoon, could say that 'the Presidency has become an ongoing series for television', 10 years later Canadians believe that the House of Commons has become an ongoing series for Canadian television viewers.⁵⁵

Although at one time issues were not considered the primary basis of voting, increasingly, as people were directly affected by the recession, the demands for substantive changes by politicians became powerful just as the demands of the U.S. electorate when it demanded substantive action that resulted in the New Deal of President Franklin D. Roosevelt following the U.S. recession and during the Second World War.

One U.S. communications specialist, Ithiel de Sola Pool wrote for the Voice of America series that with television in 90 per cent of the homes (in the 1960s), that the media can influence the voter, but not often convert the voter:

the media have mostly supported the Republican Presidential candidate every four years since 1932, but the Democrats have won six out of eight times...⁵⁶

⁵⁵ "Canada's Own soap Opera Marks 10 years in H use," Ottawa Citizen, October 17, 1987.

⁵⁶ Ithiel de Sola Pool. The Effect of Communication on voting Behaviour. The Voice of America Forum Lectures. p. 3 (undated, but circa 1965).

Hence for all of the criticism, the MPs themselves are aware that the medium they are presented on, especially through television, is one in which they must present themselves in the best possible light.

So they have accepted Commons television, and have examined it several times since its inception in 1977, most recently in 1989 when the standing Committee on Elections and Privileges spent nine months studying broadcasting Commons debates. It visited several provinces, and the U.S. Congress.

In its final report, it said the major criticism was that MPs were not shown in context of their parties etc. However, since many MP's are on committee work often during regular sitting hours of the Commons, or have constituency responsibilities, the old arguments of the "empty seats" was resurrected.

Although the questions of use of Split Screens, and wider angles were suggested to the Committee, the idea was never adopted. On December 11, 1992, the Commons "made permanent" the restricted camera angles for Question Period and votes on division (that is calling the members into the Commons for a vote.)⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Canada. Standing Committee on House Management. Minutes. Eighty-third Report. Issue: 53:145-147. April 2, 1993. (See also background paper, Television and the

The debates that led up to the adoption of new legislation were equally vociferous. Government House leader, Harvie Andre said :

People didn't understand what was going on. It was all very confusing.' All they saw was shouting heads, screaming and yelling. It was without context. To see someone in isolation, ranting and raving -it looks strange.⁵⁶

In May of 1992 when the 20-day experiment took place, the MPs debated the impact. Some, like Liberal David Walker of Winnipeg said it was an improvement, and the wider-angles prevented much of the movement on the Commons floor that takes place during question period. "They're very conscious of paying attention to the questions."⁵⁷

Nevertheless, the fixed camera positions, became the positions. The angles are slightly wider, but the usual cutaways to reactions, wide overhead shots and the like remain forbidden.

Some members over the years have attempted to use the visual prop as a method of gaining national exposure such as one British Columbia MP slapping a B.C. salmon on the desk

Commons.)

⁵⁶ "A New Political Angle," Edmonton Journal. May 14, 1992.

⁵⁷ "Better-Behaved House under Wider Spotlight," Hill times, May 7, 1992.

of the Deputy Prime Minister Don Mazankowski during a fisheries controversy. The Rules state that the director of the broadcast must only keep the shot on the officially recognized Member of Parliament at the time of the action. Therefore, in most cases, the camera will not pick up the grandstand play, the camera cuts immediately to the Speaker who is usually quick to stand up and call for order. As long as the Speaker of the House of Commons is standing, the camera cannot go to any other individual. Many of the most tumultuous times in the Commons have not been recorded on television. The speaker thus retains full control the Commons proceedings, and such activities can no longer be caught on camera.

If anything, the trend-line for broadcasts has been an oscillating one. Initially there was very little latitude, with a wide shot of the opening and limited visuals of a few feet around each MP on his or her feet. Then in the mid-80's the shots were tightened up again. After some protest and the 1989 Committee review, the visuals were broadened just slightly.

We still do not get the visual reaction shots of, for instance, people wincing in pain at a particularly difficult political jab, or the disdain or laughter of the government or opposition members who are reacting to the person

standing, making the point who is officially "recognized" by the Speaker at a given point. The broadcasting is of the subsequent reaction.

However, often, the opposition members still save the best of the political jabs until the last question. Nevertheless, the government always has the final response, therefore, the government response often is the one that has not only the final say, but can score the final political point without the opportunity for a comeback from the opposition member.

Who is in charge?

The Speaker of the House of Commons made it clear in a statement to the Committee on Elections and Privileges in November of 1989 that Parliament should bear the responsibility for overseeing the broadcasting of the House of Commons

Several witnesses have suggested that these editorial decisions might best be made by your Speaker. I would like to go on record as stating that is not a workable solution to involve the speaker as arbiter of these decisions. There will be editorial decisions. They will involve value judgments. They will inevitably involve political judgements.

Undoubtedly from time to time they will be very controversial. I do not think a Speaker can be charged with the responsibility for those decisions without compromising his or her neutrality. I would strongly urge you to seek a different solution to the problem.⁵⁸

Finally on June 13, 1990, the Standing Committee on Elections and Privileges in its 15th report said the time had come, for reasons advanced by the Speaker and others to "delegate the responsibility for supervising the broadcasting of the House to a committee of Members."⁵⁹ The Speaker would retain administrative responsibility for operations of the broadcast, but the monitoring committee will deal with "general policy directions, and general policy directions, and complaints regarding broadcasting."

⁵⁸ John Fraser, Speaker of the House of Commons. Appearance before the Standing Committee on Elections and Privilege, November 29, 1989, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, Issue 16:6.

⁵⁹ Canada. House of Commons. Fifteenth Report of the Standing Committee on Elections and Privileges, Wednesday, June 6, 1990. Minutes of Proceedings. Issue 31:4.

CHAPTER FOUR

BROADCASTING QUESTION PERIOD A CASE STUDY

The precursor of television broadcasting of House of Commons debates, the experiments and implementation originally of radio broadcasting in international jurisdictions, and many Canadian provinces, laid the groundwork for the full broadcasting of debates as we now see them.

However, it is an acknowledged fact that the daily Question Period, is the most watched and most approximates the true definition of 'debate' in the traditional sense of the word. Although it is not made of the stuff of gladiatorial combat, the politicians from all sides of the House of Commons have even hired professional television "trainers" for their performances. The training is not merely on image and presentation, but not surprisingly on the optimum method of presenting the substance and the responses.

To best illustrate how television has had an impact on Parliament, the Case Study method appears to be the most suitable method.

For the purposes of this paper, we shall look at a daily Question Period, the major questions raised, how they were presented both in the Commons broadcast, and subsequently, in a representative television newscast of that day.

The selected Question Period is of March 22, 1994. The newscast selected is the CTV national news of the same day.

The Question Period of Tuesday, March 22, 1994, featured the Leader of the Official Opposition, Lucien Bouchard with the 'lead off' question as it is referred to in parliament who asked the Prime Minister about the possibility of tying economic links to China and Mexico to human rights abuses.

Prime Minister Jean Chretien had responded that Canada has trade links with both of those countries, and there are diplomatic channels through which Canada can protest human rights abuses, but the economic ties are not the method of protest being used.

There was no discernible difference between the visual shots of the Opposition Leader asking the Questions, and the Prime Minister responding. There was a balance in the number of angles, medium wide, and wide shots of the members. The questions and responses by Bouchard and

Chretien were all in French, both illustrated debating skill and confidence in their positions as they made the following points:

[Lucien Bouchard: (Translation: Note while the live exchange between Chretien and Bouchard took place in French, I am using the English translation here for thesis purposes.)]

...I also want to ask him whether on his trip to China, he will allude to the oppressive policies of this dictatorial regime only in very polite terms and in private, on the weak-kneed advise of his Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁰

The colourful language Bouchard used in his first question was followed up by a tougher second question:

...I would like to ask him whether that is why Canada did not express public support for U.S. protests against China on the issue of human rights.

Here, the camera caught the indignation expressed as Bouchard shouted and pointed.

Jean Chretien's responses were equally tough:

⁴⁰ Question Period. House of Commons Broadcast. March 22, 1994 and Hansard Debates. Official Report, Vol. 133, 1st Session, 35th Parliament, 042. pp. 2619-2620.

Mr. Speaker, we always raise this issue, and we did. We have an international policy that is different, and does not depend on the United States, and I think Canadians want Canada to take an independent position in that respect.

Chretien pointed out that Canada was the first country to recognize China, and then he used sarcasm to drive his final point home, a sarcasm that came out strongly on television:

If I told the President of China, who represents 1.2 billion people, that the Prime Minister of Canada was telling him what to do, he would laugh in my face. I think the best way to accomplish something is to help the country develop its potential.

While this exchange was broadcast to an estimated potential of 7 million viewers, through the cable distribution network, fewer than a million might have chosen to view it live, which remains considerably more than the number that would have viewed it live personally in the public gallery.

However, it was not the issue of the day. What became the issue of the day was the Dominion Bond Rating Service downgrading Canada's rating.

A Bloc Quebecois member asked the question in French, and Finance Minister Paul Martin also responded in French.

Yvan Loubier, the Bloc Quebecois member for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, attempted to score points by saying the

lower rating would translate into hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs to the taxpayers of Quebec and Canada. He asserted the question in such a way as to say Quebec and Canada, rather than saying Quebec and the rest of Canada. (This is not surprising since the Bloc Quebecois assertion of its intention to separate Quebec from Canada, as party leader, Lucien Bouchard, has repeatedly told the Commons since he crossed the floor of the Commons to form the Bloc Quebecois on May 22, 1990. Bouchard had been Environment Minister in the Conservative Government of Brian Mulroney before resigning his cabinet post and crossing the floor of the Commons to lead a group of dissident Conservative MPs to form a federal wing of pro-Quebec independence MPs. The following winter the Bloc Quebecois announced it would work with the Quebec Parti-Quebecois toward Quebec independence. Since that move the party rose to form the Official Opposition in the federal Parliament of Canada in the general election of October 25, 1993.)

Finance Minister Paul Martin responded to the economic point of the downgrading saying his only relates to 2 percent of our debt, "namely foreign currency." Then Martin said he would achieve the goal stated in the budget of cutting the deficit to 3 per cent of GNP within three years

Reform Party Leader Preston Manning's questions, were the ones that made the National news, on the same subject, also with the relative balance between wide-angle and tight camera shots. The 'content' in Manning's questions varied, in that he linked the Bond Rating reduction to the interest rates rising, the dollar falling, and blamed the government for not cutting deeply enough into the deficit.

[Preston Manning: (Reform Party Leader)]

Surely the finance minister is not suggesting that this downgrading was done lightly or frivolously. Surely members across the way know that the eyes of investors and borrowers are on the front benches of government, looking for signs as they are worried about the government's fiscal situation.

Is not the minister concerned that this downgrading could be the beginning of a trend, and what steps is he taking to prevent downgrading of all of Canada's outstanding debt?

Most members of Parliament have been coached, (the governing Liberal Party uses Tremblay-Guittet Communications) some of the parties have had a series of seminars to teach MPs how to deliver their questions and responses on television, and the ability to score a political point with the punch line of the question is one of the factors most concentrated on. For instance, as you

saw from the full question above, the final punch line that scores the political point is brief, often in less than ten seconds, so that it can be used in a newscast if that is the story of the day.

Preston Manning's final part of the second question, is the one that made the CTV newscast:

[Preston Manning: (Reform Party Leader) - Question aired⁶¹]

Is not the minister concerned that this downgrading could be the beginning of a trend, and what steps is he taking to prevent the downgrading of all of Canada's outstanding debt?

[Paul Martin: (Finance Minister)]

Our budget, first of all, was well received by the majority of the rating agencies.

The part of the Paul Martin response that was used was the beginning of the response to the question, and it was representative of the points he made repeatedly in all answers.

Since the main story was about the Bond Rating Service, and since the main questioner on the matter in the

⁶¹ C.T.V. News, March 22, 1994. Craig Oliver Report.

Commons for the official opposition was in French, the CTV news used a clip of opposition leader Lucien Bouchard from 'outside' the Commons.

[Lucien Bouchard: (Opposition Leader)]

As long as they only see the current budget, and they only hear what the Minister has to say, they will be worried and there's a danger, I'm sure there will be a snowballing effect."

The reporter then added a section about the rising interest rates, and used a couple of clips of the Minister from outside the Commons:

[Paul Martin: (Finance Minister)]

I'm not going to comment on Interest Rates, I'm sure you know that.

And a final clip was from outside the Commons:

Interest rates rise and interest rates fall, and the best thing I can do is get out of the way of the process.

The final part of the report was an interview with an economist.

The full text of the report is as follows:

VOICE OVER:
(Reporter)

FOR WEEKS NOW PRESTON MANNING HAS WARNED ABOUT THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT HE SEES AS THE GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO CONFRONT THE DEFICIT.

NOW MANNING SAYS, INTEREST RATES ARE RISING BECAUSE OF IT. HE BELIEVES THAT MARKET SKEPTICISM IS ALSO TO BLAME FOR THE DOWNGRADING OF CANADA'S FOREIGN DEBT.

PRESTON MANNING:
Reform Leader

"Is not the Minister concerned that this downgrading could be the beginning of a trend, and what steps is he taking to prevent the downgrading of all of Canada's outstanding debt?"

PAUL MARTIN:

"Our budget, first of all, was well received by the Finance Minister majority of the rating agencies".

VOICE OVER:
(Reporter)

WONDER OF WONDERS, THE REFORM PARTY AND THE BLOC QUEBECOIS AGREE ABOUT THE RESPONSE OF THE FINANCIAL MARKETS.

LUCIEN BOUCHARD:

(Oppose. Leader)

"As long as they only see the current budget, and they only hear what the Minister has to say they will be worried and there's a danger, I'm sure, there will be a snowballing effect."

PAUL MARTIN:

"I'm not going to comment on interest rates I'm sure you understand that."

VOICE OVER:

(Reporter)

IF NOT THE FINANCE MINISTER, THEN WHO?
BUT MR. MARTIN DOES OFFER THIS PLAN OF ACTION.

PAUL MARTIN:

Interest rates rise and Interest rates fall, and the best thing I can do is get out of the way of the process."

VOICE OVER:

AN ECONOMIST SAYS THIS WAS MR. MARTIN'S BEST AND PERHAPS ONLY CHANCE TO MAKE DEEP SPENDING CUTS. HE SAYS MARTIN SHOULD HAVE EXPLOITED THE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE OF CANADIANS WHO WERE READY FOR TOUGH MEASURES.

ECONOMIST:

" He chose not to do it and it may turn out to be a very bad decision for him and for his government."⁶³

⁶³ Ibid.

Unlike Shakespeare's "the play's the thing", the 'content' of the play in the Commons, in Parliamentary broadcasts of live proceedings, and the final news items, is the driving force. The general restrictions on camera angles and general rules of the House of Commons in their rules of order prevent using the 'props' part that could turn the Commons into more of a theatre.

The Members' concentration on issues of the day remains the primary goal, and the issues of the day geared to the strongest appeal to the public and the issue that has the most widespread impact is often the same for the politician and the journalist.

When international issues are at the forefront, they take center stage, and whether it's finance, health and welfare, unemployment, inflation or whatever, they are the issues facing the public in a democracy. They are the issues that face the politicians and the electorate, and the presentation of these issues in as 'real' a form as possible, through the live coverage of broadcasting of the commons has enhanced the true nature of the debate, and democratized the process.

It was argued that the problem with televising was that it would place a great deal more emphasis on 'image', However, the image factor has always been there at the most

grass-roots level of politics. It is axiomatic since the days of early democracy analysed by Alexis de Tocqueville, that a candidate's appeal to the public, to garner the greatest number of votes at election time is a combination of factors from personal policies, to the method of presenting them.

Broadcasting is merely one more 'stage' in the process. Although some have argued that on straight visual appeal, former Quebec Liberal leader, Claude Ryan, or Parti-Quebecois' founder and former premier, Rene Levesque, may never have been elected. There is, nevertheless, an image created that has little to do with the "looks" of the candidate, but often has to do with the influence of the individual relative to his or her environment, the works they promise to do for others, and their policies generally. The straight visual attractiveness, without the substance, does not make for success in politics. In politics, perhaps more than in many other occupations, the combination of policies in tune with the times, plus the marketability of the candidate, have more to do with the candidate's ability to defend arguments, and put forward policies, than with the straight visual image. In other words, the marketability of the political candidate includes an ability to deal with the most complex

as well as the most simple issues, as well as day-to-day acumen. One could extrapolate from that, that a John F. Kennedy could not have been elected 'solely' on the basis of his looks. His political success was also a function of, and combination of the traditional factors that included party, personal background and name recognition, party policies, the tuning in (the ability of the Democrats to tune in to America's soul at the time), political party, acumen of the candidate and party, as well as interest group politics.

The two above-mentioned examples illustrate that the reporters' use of news-clips from the commons for the day-to-day newscasts which receive much wider audiences, gives as accurate a representation of what actually was said as possible.

It is not unusual, in fact, it has been the practice for many news affiliates and regional networks to tailor their news items to the region they are broadcasting to on radio or television. While the sample shown here was a "national" sample, most radio and television outlets have affiliates that can regionalize or particularize given items. For instance, there are Ottawa Bureaus for Vancouver and Toronto, and for many years, Montreal as well, in the CTV network.

Major issues such as the economy, employment, trade, constitutional issues and the like are often angled toward the particularized market. For instance, the Toronto and Montreal reporters would cover the Consumer Price Index and Unemployment statistics out of Ottawa with a focus on their regions after giving the national overview. The focus included interviews with MPs from the areas concerned, statements they would make in the Commons on the issue, questions they would raise in Question Period, and so on.

The local focus does not in general alter the context, it simply places the information coming out of Parliament Hill in a more local context and in a manner more relevant to an individual area.

If we follow from the examples of the CTV News and the Commons Question period described above, we could just as easily have shown similar examples with CBC at the national level, or Global, which would have originally placed more of an Ontario focus on reports before it acquired new stations across certain sections of the west to form the Can-West Global network.

For the province of Quebec, Radio-Canada, and TVA are the two largest networks, with Radio-Canada broadcasting to a larger segment of the country than TVA because of outlets in Vancouver, for instance.

In this context, the Question Period examples we used above with Preston Manning asking the question in English, and the Minister's response in English, are covered in Quebec with the reporters using the Questions from the Bloc Quebecois instead on the same economic question, with the Minister's responses in French. This kind of journalistic selection tailoring to regions, as well as to language, has been the standard practice.

Because television 'pacing' requires certain constraints, if the content is roughly equal in the questions, reporters often opt for the best audio-visual clip. They use the original of another questioner often, in the given language of the report, which, means the question itself and content and language takes on the importance, more than 'who' is asking it in some cases. By the same token, the Minister responding in that language is the one most often used for pacing.

Throughout the years, MPs have found that the instantaneous nature of television with live portable satellites, as with radio in the early days, means they must be cognizant of saying the same thing in whatever part of the country they are speaking. That is particularly true from the Commons, since their words are going out to all parts of the country at the same time, there is no longer

the latitude once accorded, in which they could try to explain away their perceived inconsistencies.

Therefore, although the 'real' visual and words spoken are reported in national newscasts which receive more widespread viewership than the Parliamentary Channel, it is a quantum leap from there to determine whether the populace will change its attitude based on the televised version.

Political behaviorists have argued for decades that a number of factors influence voting behavior, and determine political attitudes as we have seen earlier in this paper. They include family patterns, community groups, education, employment, religious beliefs etc. As recently as 1991, in a comprehensive study of Media and Voters in Canadian Election Campaigns, edited by Frederick J. Fletcher, the case was made that those who watch political news are largely those who already have a predetermined political opinion, and they view the news largely to confirm their beliefs. But this study also points out that political campaigns with the massive advertising, indicate some volatility either in the uncommitted voter, or the disaffected one. (Examples of the disaffected voter are legion in history as protest movements spring up from time to time, and as we have observed in the most recent Canadian general election, 1993, that saw the Reform Party emerge as

a powerful force in the west, and the Bloc Quebecois independence party coming on so strongly in Quebec that the voter-split led the BQ to form the official opposition in the federal House of Commons.)

In general however, whether it is between elections, or during the election, this study points out that half the people who claimed to have watched one of the network news shows were unable to name even one story within an hour of viewing.

The retention of information on complex matters is often a function of the way the information relates to the individual and/or the individual's group.

For instance, if the issue of the day is interest rates, and one is about to renew one's mortgage, the attention paid to such a news item about interest rates would be higher than if one does not have a mortgage. Consequently, questions in the House of Commons about such subjects, and the government's response, would be of more interest to such a viewer. One could go down the list of subjects such as day-care, international affairs, unemployment etc. The point being made is that the lowest common denominator factor that had traditionally been the basis of news, has a different focus when it comes to Parliamentary matters, broadcasting of Parliament, and

broadcasting of news items arising out of actions taken by our legislators.

Nevertheless, the real impact of broadcasting the Commons debates on a daily basis is in its representation in the newscasts, more than in the 'gavel-to-gavel' type coverage of the Canadian Parliamentary Channel. Because the newscasts have a wider audience, it is there that a greater number of viewers see their legislators' comments directly.

The determination of what information makes it to the newscasts depends on a number of factors from producers, to editors, to its relation to other "stories" in the newscast that day, to related actions of other institutions (for instance the Bank of Canada rate increase, that has an impact on mortgages, that is then brought up in the House of Commons), to the individual station or network's news load that day (for instance a local story of import could take precedence), to the "length" of stories and whether there are other more pressing stories in the opinion of the news organization.

The potential for subjectivity and bias is potent. An analysis of this question by political scientist, Conrad Winn, published in 1976, concluded that data collected "lend no support to the notion of the CTV as an instrument of Conservatism, but do lend support to the view that the

French language network of the CBC tilts toward the left."

" Winn also concludes there is a possibility of a less establishment view, or less pro-Liberal tendency on the private network but says that would be a question of another analysis. Overall, however, Winn says in general, impartiality of Canadian networks leads to fair treatment. Winn also wrote that because "politicians are largely inaccessible to the ordinary public, citizens are obliged to rely on newspapers, radio, and television for all kinds of political information." That study was conducted before television was introduced into the House of Commons, and it can be concluded that while politicians had hitherto been accessible only through the "reports" or "in person", by the general public, the advent of television broadcasting of proceedings has granted greater accessibility to the hitherto generally "inaccessible" politicians, policies, and ideas as they are being enunciated.

Taking all of these factors into account it is nevertheless a giant step forward for the democratic process to have the politicians who are making, and responsible for, legislation being presented directly from the Commons forum to the populace whether live from the Commons broadcasting

"Conrad Winn and John McMenemy, POLITICAL PARTIES IN CANADA (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976). p. 137.

channel, or through news encapsulations, or rebroadcasts of Question Period.'

In the mid-1960's, James Corry and R. MacGregor Dawson wrote in their study entitled, Democratic Government and Politics, that government affects almost every aspect of our lives, and:

In democratic countries, we enjoy the privileges of citizenship. Through voting in elections and other methods the citizens who are members of the state collectively decide in broad outline what government will do and how it will behave. ...It is not necessary, or even possible for every citizen to understand the nature and problems of government. But democracy will certainly be a failure unless there comes forward voluntarily in each generation a large number of citizens prepared to give the time and thought necessary to the understanding of government and then to participate actively in political life. By the attitude we take towards this responsibility, we decide the fate of democracy."

In the next chapter we examine the impact of broadcasting debates on the politicians, the media and the populace in extending the access by the populace to direct political activities in Parliament.

" James Corry and R. MacGregor Dawson, Democratic Government and Politics. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), pp. 12-13.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

In this final chapter, we shall examine the overall impact on the public and the democratic process of broadcasting the Parliamentary debates.

Although there have been general audience surveys completed on the penetration of the market by the Commons broadcasting channel, the internationally known Gallup organization in Canada says it has conducted no surveys on peoples attitudes, preferences or any surveys on the impact of the broadcasting of the House of Commons debates in Canada on the population generally.

However, the democratization of the process is evident as it is a departure from past practice whereby all reporting of Parliamentary proceedings was through the media without the statement as spoken by the politician involved. In American Politics and Government, Douglass Cater wrote that the Communications media with the necessity to meet immediate deadlines and their selectivity, "constitutes a power far more formidable than the purely editorial preferences of the press."⁴

⁴ Douglas Cater, in Bailey et al, American Politics and Government, (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 155.

The multiplicity of layers in the system, in the decision-making, and in the distribution that has evolved since he wrote those words 29 years ago, has diluted the role of the individual reporter. Since there are many more links in the chain now than previously, and the movement toward the electronic highway allows hundreds of choices being offered to individuals on a daily basis, the 'smorgasbord' from which the individual is selecting information is so vast, that the decision to select the "Parliamentary" channel, for instance, would depend on individual preference.

A recent study of television viewing habits in Great Britain illustrated that the viewership of the traditional networks ITV and BBC1 was in the same range as usual if they had no satellite. However, in those homes with satellite reception, the majority of time was spent watching satellite channels and the most popular programs were the movie channels, Sky One, Sky News, and two sports channels.⁶⁷

The impact of communications has been studied by cultural anthropologists, sociologists as well as political scientists in an effort to determine the impact of media on public opinion. Politicians have relied on public opinion

⁶⁷ Barrie Gunter and Paul Winstone, Television: The Public's View, (London: Libbey & Co., 1993), pp. 34-35.

for support for their programs, election and re-election. As the process of government extended from the introduction of the income-tax system in the first World War (as a temporary measure, that ultimately became permanent), to the development of broadly-based social programs from the infirm to the elderly, the "selling" of the programs to the people has been transformed from an adjunct to a necessity. In the past, the politicians have successfully sold their programs before they were introduced in the Commons. However, often, because of the constraints of time, and increasingly because of the reality of fiscal constraints, the money is simply no longer there to continue to distribute. The watchwords of "cutting" and "holding the line" are all pervasive not merely in North America, but throughout Western Europe.

France has engaged in programs of privatization of industry although it is a Socialist government just as Britain, a conservative government, engaged in privatization (however, the rate of privatization between the two and the nature of industries privatized has varied between the two countries) despite the fact that they have vastly different ideologies, with Britain a Conservative government. However, economic necessity is blurring party lines as well as ideologies as nations attempt to cope with massive international changes.

Alvin Toffler in his opus, Power Shift: Knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century, has foreseen the massive changes that are being brought about because of the "diffusion of communications capabilities." He argues that:

The rise of a new media system, corresponding in form with the requirements of a wholly new way of creating wealth, challenges those in power, giving rise to new political methods, constituencies, and alliances.

Just as people at, say the beginning of the 18th century, could not imagine the political changes that flowed from the spread of a smokestack economy, so today it is almost impossible, ... to foresee the political uses to which the still emerging media system will be put."

Toffler, who argues the electronic highway and knowledge-based society will take us into the millennium, also argues:

" Alvin Toffler, Power Shift: Knowledge, Wealth and Violence at the Edge of the 21st Century (New York: Bantam, 1970), pp. 364-365.

2 of/de 2

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

... A change in U.S. T-bill rates or the yen-deutsche mark ratio is instantly known around the world, and the morning after the big event in Los Angeles, youngsters in Ho Chi Minh City discuss the latest Grammy winners.

The mental barriers of the state become as permeable as its financial frontiers."⁶⁹

Notwithstanding the massive communications revolution sweeping the globe, the works of legislators in each country permeate many of the pores of the body politic. The number of individuals, organizations, interest groups, political parties, and governments interested in what is transmitted through the airwaves and struggling for a forum for their policy or platform is highly significant.

The onus of 'choice' is being placed largely on the shoulders of the individual who must decide what to watch, when, and will the time be available between work, family and other responsibilities to be informed about legislation affecting pensions and fisheries and the like.

The possibilities are boundless, and Toffler asks if television is moving from passive to interactive, how far does that go?

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 364.

While all of these choices are being made available, who makes use of it, and how, could become all important questions.

Interactive media make possible far more sophisticated opinion polling than ever before, not simply asking yes-no questions, but allowing respondents to make trade-offs among many options.

But the possibilities go beyond polling.... How would the candidate respond to a hostage crisis, a race riot, or a nuclear disaster under differing sets of circumstances? Instead of trying to test the values and judgement of a potential President by listening to thirty-second commercials, the interactive video users of tomorrow could tune into a program, or insert a diskette, that would visually show candidate discussing and making decisions under a variety of conditions programmed by the voter.⁷⁰

If, as the sociologist John Porter wrote in the 1960's the media "reinforce" values, then the potential of the electronic highway placing more decision-making power into the hands of the individual on issues could be highly significant.

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville expressed the view that: "Newspapers increase in numbers, not according to their cheapness, but according to the more or less frequent want which a great number of men may feel

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 365.

for intercommunication and combination."⁷¹ And his theory has not been lost in modern-day politics as the world speeds beyond the print medium.

The principles of communication that de Tocqueville announced when he said "A newspaper can survive only on the condition of publishing sentiments or principles common to a large number of men", were elaborated on by V.O. Key, the noted political scientist who changed modern-day political thought with his book Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups. Key devotes much time to the question of consultation and the consent of the governed in a democracy, and discussed the relation between the representatives and the people and the means of consultation between the two.

When V.O. Key challenged much of the traditional thinking on the role of the individual as part of an association, be it interest group, political party, corporation and the like, he said the "dispersion" of points of authority in a democracy among government, private individuals and groups in society indicates there is not a 'constant' as such that is the locus of power. He argues that on some issues and sometimes even on the same issue, the locus of power can shift depending on a number of

⁷¹ Phillips Bradley, ed., Volume II. Alexis de Tocqueville. Democracy in America. (New York: Vintage, 1945), pp. 120-122.

different factors, so the President's demands govern on some of the activity, on others the corporations, and on still others, the agricultural or labour interests will win the day. In fact, he argues, "Even the journalists may cast the deciding vote on some issues."⁷²

That may have had more of an impact when the big three networks in the United States dominated the airwaves: CBC, NBC, and ABC. However, as the multiplicity of channels increases, in the U.S., as in Canada, in Europe and throughout the world, the sheer number of competing interests and groups, associations, political parties, and 'special interest' groups vying for attention along with business and corporations, is enormous.

There are hundreds of associations that have developed to help steer legislation through the 'three' readings of a bill in Canada before it becomes legislation. The myriad of consultants, specialists and "lobbyists" (who have recently been required to 'register' as such in Canada, many years after they had to 'register' in the United States) have an impact on a number of points in the political system, before the legislator even stands up in the Commons. As those in government attempt to promote their

⁷² V. O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups, 5th ed., (New York: Crowell, 1964), p. 7.

legislative proposals whether they be to change immigration laws, make alterations to the unemployment insurance scheme, or tax-back seniors' pensions, they are being approached by many of the individuals and groups cited above.

The televising of the House of Commons debates can be said to have an impact on the political model developed by David Easton which focuses on inputs and outputs in the political system in which he links the political system to the environment. Demands are made on the polity, but they also originate within the polity itself.⁷³ The televising of the House of Commons, with direct access to debates by the public, influences the inputs, the conversion, the outputs and the feedback as the public receives a first-hand view of the Parliamentary proceedings.

One recent example that merits citation at this point is the struggle to limit handguns in Canada. As the government attempts to revamp the gun control legislation for instance, organizations such as the Canadian Rifle Association make strong representations against it, while those charged with the responsibility of keeping law and order, such as the Canadian Association of Police Chiefs

⁷³ Robert J. Jackson and Michael M. Atkinson, The Canadian Legislative System. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 13 and 14.

make strong arguments for gun control on the street but for exclusions to allow them to carry out their jobs expeditiously.

The most recent changes to gun control emerged following much lobbying after the Montreal massacre of engineering students at L'école Polytechnique in December of 1989. Groups representing parents and fellow students of the victims presented a powerful campaign, supported by a number of petitions signed by thousands of Canadians demanding tougher firearms legislation.

The group appeared before the Commons Justice Committee, and, later when it appeared the bill might be in trouble, they appeared in the hallway of Parliament Hill with box upon box of petitions. They held a news conference moments before the petitions were to be tabled in the Commons. They had secured all-party support for the news conference, and the visual impact of the news conference in the lobby reinforced the tabling of the petitions in the House of Commons. When the Montreal Liberal MP Warren Allmand stood up to present the petition in the Commons, only a small stack of the signatures was visible to the Commons camera because of the restricted camera angle. However, the combination of the two 'events' indicated clearly a democratization of the process, whereby

the 'group' with an interest that affected not merely an MP's area but the population at large amalgamated with a contentious subject matter to effect a major impact on legislative change. The politician, observed by the population listening not only to constituents but to a wider spectrum of the populace, and acting as their 'voice' in presenting the petition to Parliament, gives modern-day credence to the traditional theory that not only the status of the group, but the range of the impact of the subject matter, can effect change in the political system, with the media not driving the change, but acting as a catalyst in the process in which the media is a player.

In this case, the emotional response was also effective in prodding the government to change legislation with the general backing of public opinion. MPs stand up in the Commons on every anniversary date of the massacre, and their statements in the Commons, all televised, democratize the process and serve as a given reminder of a tragedy, but also as a reminder that the public exercised its influence as a result thereof. The outcome was, politicians responded with legislation demanding references and waiting periods before issuing licenses for firearms.

The "impact" on Parliamentarians in this case is that they do respond, and they respond directly in the Commons,

on television, on the contentious issues in a way that touches the people in a manner hitherto rarely seen in a democracy. As an illustration, even on March 18 of 1991 Justice Minister at the time Kim Campbell discussed the legislation directly to the people of Canada, from the floor of the Commons, with opposition MPs Marcel Prud'homme, and Phil Edmonston of the NDP making the arguments for the issue, for the public security and for the legislation itself, which might otherwise have been mired in a different, perhaps less "humane" situation.

The compromise reached led to the tightening up of requirements and licensing of handgun purchases, followed by outlawing importation of certain automatics and semi-automatics.

One can speculate that in earlier times, the call for stringent firearms legislation might have fallen on deaf ears in the Commons (it was enough of a battle when the first legislation was introduced in the 1970's), if the deals had been cut in the back rooms.

But all of that has changed many perceptions and raised many issues, expanded by television in the Commons, with the immediate statements by all sides of the House on the tragic event at L'Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal; the issues of the event itself:

- misogyny (in this case, the perpetrator of the crime lined women on one side of the room, men on the other, and killed the women, then himself);
- the debate on sexism in our society that emerged from that;
- the question of firearms legislation to attempt to prevent a recurrence of such a horrible act;
- the question of security at the University itself; and the fact that it occurred in the Engineering faculty in which many more women were enrolled than in the past,

all had a wide-ranging impact on the mainstream of society, largely because of the media representation at all levels, within and outside the Commons.

It can be said that the Commons broadcasting has been integrated into the political process, and not merely at the level of "access" by the public to its legislators, but also with a new 'response' mechanism driving and being driven by day-to-day events that perhaps even the legislators are not yet fully aware of.

We have seen that the general public has access to a new dimension of democratization of the political system, but for a variety of reasons does not utilize the availability of broadcasts from coast to coast to coast as much as one might have expected at the outset.

There are two major areas of impact that can be observed; on the media, and on the politicians.

One is in the changing of the traditional news gathering operation with the use of actual live television statements, and which has had a concomitant impact on the content of news. The actual questions asked, and responses given in Question Period have become a larger player in daily newscasts than before. It has, to a great extent, civilized the process, in the sense that reporters no longer have to chase reluctant politicians down corridors to attempt to have them restate outside the Commons what was said inside. And, even outside the Commons, reporters now routinely carry around tape recorders to record every word even for newspaper reports, where the old image of the scribbling "scribe" is almost a thing of the past.

Radio and Television news reporters retain the competition, - until a recent ruling, reporters for written media and radio could go into the government and opposition lobbies to elaborate on some information, television crews had been refused such entry which created quite an issue for a long time - but this year that practice was outlawed for all media. However, they also cooperate when equipment breaks down... not when a 'scoop' is involved.

Radio and television networks also receive regular direct feeds from the Commons lobby "scrums" into their news rooms and Parliamentary bureaux, which make it less dangerous and hassling for both the journalist and the politician as the questioning is done at what is called a "uni-mike", a single microphone. Initially, there was only one on the government side, but an additional opposition microphone was subsequently installed. The main jostling now is between politicians for priority at the microphone.

That is not to say that the televising of the Commons, and the new broadcasting service that provides direct "feeds" places journalists in any compromising position. It will not eliminate either, the kind of drama of reporting contentious debates in Committees, or the famous chasing of then Industry Minister Sinclair Stevens down the hallway following a committee meeting when then rookie MP, now Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps, jumped over a chair in full view of television cameras at the end of the meeting, to continue her line of questioning when the Minister had refused to answer any more questions in the Committee. But it has had a mutually beneficial effect on both the media and politicians whose words and actions are 'live,' and fed directly with land-line feeds into the national news centres in the National Press Building from

Parliament Hill following question period. The result is a reduction in the possibility of error in selection of material by the journalist, and a catalyst toward ensuring information is in context. As editors and producers also see the material as it is recorded live from Question Period, followed by the live scrums outside of Question Period which provides an additional 'check' on the system. The questions of accuracy and context benefit the public, and the politicians, as the media transmit less 'filtered' information than in the past.

From the politician's point of view, we have already discussed the impact on legislation, on the presentation of petitions, and on the Question Period itself. Politicians perhaps even more than some journalists, have retained the sense of their positions as "politicians", not as "stars" necessarily. They have been more diligent in researching legislation, asking questions germane to the "public good", and ensuring the rights of the individuals and groups in society are protected. The fact that they are on television, whether it is viewed or not, whether they make the national or local newscast or not, has had an impact not unlike that of the police-cruiser sitting by the side of the highway as you are creeping up on the speed, you check the speedometer and slow down. Perhaps that is one of the

strongest impacts of T.V. in the Commons, a subconscious self-policing mechanism for the politician to be continually cognizant that a meteoric rise, in popularity can plummet just as easily and instantaneously 'live' on camera.

Politicians are also aware that they are dealing with one of the most educated generations of Canadians, with some of the most advanced technological, political and economic changes gripping the world since the industrial revolution.

Dealing with all of that requires diligence, and they also know that the back rooms are accessible to the technological advances as well.

One other area televising the commons has democratized the process as it plays an integral part in the process, is the visual component itself. Politicians, including Prime Ministers from Pierre Trudeau to Jean Chretien have ensured they are sensitive to political interest groups in society as they plan the seating in Parliament. Various ethnic groups; gender balance, and visible minorities are often considered, and their representatives placed within the visual range surrounding the Prime Minister Opposition Leader and other leaders in the seating plan. Hence the visual has forced a response by political leaders in the ongoing Commons activity which has resulted in a democratization of the process, which did not

exist before broadcasting the televising of Commons debates. The Party Whips and leaders have since the 1977 introduction of television into the Commons acknowledged these considerations.

Party officials concede television plays a role in the seating-plan. Liberal government whip Alfonso Gagliano says "because of T.V. in the Commons the party's leader, or Prime Minister if is in government, attempts to portray what the party represents in terms of gender, ethnicity, colour and regionalism"⁷⁴. There are certain protocols concerning placement of Cabinet Ministers, and the seniority of MPs that must be adhered to first. After those considerations, Mr. Gagliano says, "seating is determined with television in mind to illustrate the diversity including visible and non-visible minorities being placed within camera-range."

Broadcasting of Commons debates has refined, but not redefined the governing process in Canada. It has perhaps led to the opportunity of truer democracy, with individual and group input possessing a potential hitherto unknown. The main questions to be answered are: will these changes make

⁷⁴ Alfonso Gagliano, Chief Government Whip.
Interview. September 1, 1994.

for a more responsive politics, media and electorate? Or will the technological changes prompt people to try to simplify their lives, as well as their choices? The danger is that they might give up if there is information overload.

Even if the interactive part of television broadcasting does ever become a reality in parliament (the technology exists to make it so) will the public be sufficiently prepared to feel empowered enough to use it?

It is now 1994, and the Commons broadcasts have been on the air since 1977. The major changes seem to have been between the politician and media who have attained a symbiotic relationship that has proven to be a step forward for informing and communicating in a democratic society. The 'public' has not become as involved as one might have expected, and indeed there have been opinions expressed that the public has been so disenchanted with the political process that it may be difficult to attract and retain strong enough candidates to bring Canada into the millennium. Perhaps the role the Commons broadcasts and the media plays between now and then will be crucial to how we, as a nation, cope with the multitude, and the rapidity of change facing our society.

In a recently published work entitled, Mediated Political Realities, two U.S. authors argue that most people

learn about politics from the mass media, and to illustrate their case they use a number of examples of national and international incidents from the shocking explosion of the Challenger spacecraft, to the 444-day hostage taking in Iran in November of 1979 that crippled Jimmy Carter's Presidency, to Ronald Reagan's use of the mythical Gipper 'hero' to bolster his support.

The powerful real, and mythical visual images conjured up in today's politics, the book argues, lead people to believe in TV news. But authors Dan Nimmo and James Combs argue: "The medium most Americans rely on, the one they find believable, does not inform them."⁶⁶

They argue that TV news is largely fantasy, and although people rely on the mass media as sources of information, they are not really being informed, and while they have an acquaintance with being informed, they are not in reality gaining 'knowledge.'

They also describe the role of tele-conventions, as "national prime time spectacles" aimed more at promoting not merely the two major U.S. political parties, the Republicans and Democrats, but also aimed at self-aggrandizement of the individual stations and networks who are attempting to

⁶⁶ Dan Nimmo and James Combs, Mediated Political Realities. (New York: Longman, 1990), p. 25.

showcase their latest in 'minicams', satellite technologies, and on-air news teams.

One area they omit in their analysis is the significance of interest groups, special interests, party affiliation, family ties and history, as well as cultural and economic factors, which, taken together with information from the media combine to have an impact on the individual and his or her political thought and consequent action, whether it is on voting only, or further involvement.

In his book, Political Life, Why and How People Get Involved in Politics, Robert Lane wrote individuals primarily want to get along with other people and engage in group activities that can reinforce or validate their feelings in a number of spheres. He maintains there are so many influences on the individual that the media is just one. As it relates to political activity, he says the media tends to confer a "status" on politicians. While the media constitute an influence, they provide one, not the prime influence on voting behavior."

When Lane was writing in the late 1960's, that "status" conferred upon the politicians by the media did not result in a stampede of individual political involvement.

" Robert Lane, Political Life, Why and How People Get Involved in Politics. (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 305.

However, the Mediated Political Realities work of the 1990's indicates the media, primarily television, has now conferred 'status' on both the media and the politicians.

The Trilateral Commission Report of 1975 entitled, The Crisis of Democracy Report on the governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission, said the media was becoming an "autonomous power" and warned that the media was becoming a powerful sounding-board for societal and political changes but:

could deprive governments and to some extent other responsible authorities of the time lag, tolerance and trust that make it possible to innovate and to experiment responsibly⁷⁰

To a great extent, there is a fear of the media and its potential influence that is expressed by many recent political authors. But the power ascribed has been varied, from what we have seen above, to the work entitled: "The Future of American Political Parties" at Columbia University which states flatly: "television has supplanted political parties as the principal conduit between candidates and voters."⁷¹

⁷⁰ Michel Crozier et al, The Crisis of Democracy. Report of the Governability of Democracies to the Trilateral Commission. (New York: University Press, 1975), p. 35.

⁷¹ Joel Fleishman, ed., The Future of American Political Parties. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1982), p. 86.

While democracy predated political parties, political parties quickly learned to utilize the media, initially print, followed by radio and television. Initially, the adversarial relationship between the media and politicians dominated as the mistrust between the two escalated. The crescendo was reached in the U.S. when the famous Watergate burglary ultimately led to the political demise of President Richard Nixon in 1974. After the famous Washington Post reporters Robert Woodward and Carl Bernstein initially stumbled upon the information about the burglary at the Democratic offices in Washington at the famous Watergate hotel, their tenacity and research, coupled with a series of informants, many of whom remain unnamed to this day, contributed to bringing down the President. However, if there had not been an attempt at a cover-up, and if the burglary had not taken place originally, the reporters would not have had a story. The whole question was a watershed in relations between the media and politicians.

Investigative journalists are not merely conduits of information, but can seek out pertinent data. By the same token the politicians who had hitherto been practicing a different kind of politics, with the traditional to the 'victor belongs the spoils' approach, with patronage and secrecy the order of the day, came to realize that the

adversarial approach would no longer suffice. Pre-Watergate, the "President versus the Press" as the term used by Theodore H. White in: "The Making of the President 1972" was the watchword in the U.S. After Watergate, the relationship between the media and politicians underwent a realignment of views that significantly altered relations between the politicians and the media not only in the United States, but the concomitant spillover of their national catharsis into Canada.

It was during this period that Canada was engaged in a minority Parliament, and the day-to-day debate over questions such as inflation and food prices, while high on the media agenda, often took a back-seat in Canadian newscasts to the Watergate scandal.

The discussion of broadcasting the House of Commons debates had been shelved for awhile, and the Canadian government had not been able to resurrect the idea until after the Liberals secured another majority government, in 1974. Canada was also undergoing its own consciousness-raising as Quebec nationalists clashed with federalists. Questions of more francophone rights, and struggling with contentious linguistic issues concerning the language of teaching in Quebec schools, the language on road signs, and other provincial demands for linguistic protection, all

contributed to an atmosphere of demanding more information from the federal government, as well as the federal government wanting to promote and protect its bilingualism policy.

It is more than coincidental that the broadcasting of the House of Commons debates in Canada came in 1977, one year after the election of the Parti-Quebecois in Quebec 1976 which had campaigned on the slogan: Parti-Quebecois, le Parti des Quebecois, but which had sovereignty through "etapism" (step-by-step) as its strong theme.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has concentrated on analyzing how the international situation arising out of the depression of the 1930's and the Second World War altered the method in which some Parliamentary and non-parliamentary governments responded in order to disseminate information to their populations. The invention of radio led to a relatively speedy response by some governments to open-up their democratic legislatures to the public.

It has also examined the method in which Canada responded by first broadcasting debates on radio, then on television, in the provincial legislatures before implementing legislation at the federal level in the House of Commons. We have reviewed the political struggle, the changing nature of technology, and the questions of the politicians serving their constituents in the most open possible manner through televising their legislative deliberations at the federal level on matters of national policy.

We have assessed, through a Case Study of a Question Period and its representation on a selected national, private television network, the merging of content and image in such a way that they are not as mutually exclusive as

many politicians and media have thought in the past. The questions of accountability and accessibility of legislators through the national televising of debates have emerged as dominant themes.

The televising of the Commons debates has had a profound impact upon the manner in which Parliamentarians conduct their business, as they are being viewed and heard as they go about the business of state in the most open possible forum. The televising of debates in the Canadian Parliament has, since 1977, resulted in an accountability on the part of the politician that did not exist before, and an awareness on the part of the public of the "person" they have elected to provide government and make the laws, an awareness that the legislator is not a 'faceless' untouchable, but a person accountable to the public at all times. The individual can see the representative at work, has all of the advantages of democratic access to the legislative chamber, but, by and large, the voters still prefer to acquire their information on a daily basis, from traditional news reports of what went on in the proceedings which have integrated the debates into their televised and radio newscasts.

Nonetheless, televising parliament has democratized the process because the legislative body, and its deliberations on a number of issues that touch the daily lives of individuals has brought government and the process of governing generally, closer to the people than ever before. People begin to feel they 'know' their legislator, they feel an 'acquaintance' through the television medium with a number of politicians not just the leaders and cabinet, but backbenchers from all parties who have the opportunity to make their statements. The seeing, and hearing of the individual legislator by the individual in society who may have previously not even heard about given individuals, minimizes the traditional oligarchical nature of government and governing. Selected photographs of the news-making legislator of the day, have been replaced with the 'real' activity of governing, and by the discussion of matters of the "public good" on a number of issues that touch people in their day-to-day lives whether it be mortgages, jobs, immigration, or some other matter of import. Print and radio media also utilize the broadcasts as the basis of their news reports.

The democratic access has been broadened by Parliamentary broadcasts for the population in general as the 'electorate'; for the politician who is more

accountable, and for the media in 'context and accuracy'. Perhaps we are now seeing a more responsible and responsive political forum, electorate, and media as a result of the new process. Televising debates has enabled the elector to 'feel' closer to the elected, has made it incumbent on the elected to be more responsive to needs and demands of the electorate, and has democratized the process by bringing Parliament to the people in their homes. The new process is a government to paraphrase, Abraham Lincoln, not only of the people, for the people and by the people, but we should now add the concept of a government 'in front of the people' through the scientific and technological advances of the last several decades. The implications are still being examined. The onus now is on the individual to determine whether or not to avail himself or herself of the opportunity of taking advantage of the democratization and accessibility by watching the legislators in action.

With the multiplicity of channels the availability of satellite, and the consequent fragmentation of the market with the Information highway coming on stream, there is a strong potential of also reducing and fragmenting the number of people viewing legislators at the federal level at work. And, as we have seen in the viewing habits of the British populace reported in a recent study the channel itself is

not being massively viewed. However, there remains a strong desire for information and news, (which incorporates the Commons proceedings in Canada.) The potential of interactive television for the full participation of individuals in democratic decisions could dramatically alter the traditional top-down theory of governing, and could ultimately succeed in a participatory democracy of the kind envisaged by former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in the late 1960's.

One can extrapolate from that the significantly important role of television broadcasting of Commons debates as the "source" of information that it utilized by other "conductors" or its conduits' of information to the public whether it be through specialty channels, regular news programming, or the incorporation of information from public hearings, special committees and the like. In this sense, the broadcasting of Commons debates has resolved a large part of the question of democratic access by the populace to our legislators, so they can respond directly to the actions, statements and policies of legislators as they see them being expounded. The population is beginning to take advantage of this new openness as viewership is slowly on the ascendancy, and from the living room people can feel they are assisting the debates or public hearings.

personally. If, eventually the system of 'interactive' television allows people to communicate directly with the elected official face-to-face in the federal arena, the democratization of the access by the population will have been as complete as one could hope for. And there could be greater input by individuals at all levels from committees studying legislation, to the final passage of the legislation from wherever an individual sits in the country. This new access could be very empowering for the people, if the population takes advantage of the opportunity.

One indisputable fact remains: the service is existent and available. The House of Commons debates are broadcast from beginning to end. It is now being broadened to Committees, and it may not be long before the Senate begins to agitate to be broadcast as well. The access is there and available. The individuals groups, and organizations in our society, political, social, economic, and cultural groups have the choice - to use the service, or not - the access is as comprehensive as the broadcasting system can provide at the time, and more dispersed to more regions of the country than ever in history.

Broadcasting the House of Commons debates therefore has given rise to a new political model in modern-day

democracy. If we view the question of democracy in the traditional definition of majority rule with competitive elections in which a mass number of people participate in selection of elected representatives through free votes, it is also axiomatic that the populace should have the widest possible access to Parliamentary debates and development of legislation between elections as a fundamental right and opportunity. This is where, I submit, the broadcasting of Parliamentary debates in Canada has introduced a 'third dimension' to the democratic process, with the process of 'inclusion' thereby empowering the mass population to access the debates, and to act on the process if they so desire in the immediate or long term.

As illustrated in the diagram on the next page, the third dimension concept emphasizes that the Parliamentarian is the 'speaker' or emitter of information, as the medium of television transmits the information (with its component parts CPAC, broadcasting organizations and journalists attendant), and the viewer is watching, observing and assessing the information with the processing of that information coming later. As we have seen earlier, there is a simultaneous emitting and receiving process happening between the Parliamentarian, the media, and the public. As far as the content is concerned, the influence can be mutual

with the public action being a catalyst to the MP's words that result from a policy developed that might have emerged following public demands. The nature of journalistic reporting of those words has also had an impact on, and been influenced by the new live broadcasting of the debates in that news organizations have adapted their newscast requirements, and incurred many changes in Ottawa bureaus by installing not only land-lines for their direct feeds from the hill broadcasts but news structures adapted to the new live coverage. The politicians have also adapted their message and behaviour to the new live broadcasts. (See diagram next page.)

THE THIRD DIMENSION

Interdependence and integration of functions: Broadcasting the Commons live, instantaneously in a non-sequential, unfiltered manner. The flow of information in which the Parliamentarian, the media, (broadcasting organizations and journalists), and the public (constituents and voters) interact simultaneously, emitting and absorbing the information in a simultaneous manner.

The 'third dimension' is not merely the ability of the individual to access legislators in the formulation of legislation, but also the politician and the media actions on a daily basis have responded with the 'public interest' component governing their words and actions to a degree that is unique in the history of democracy. The politicians' new emphasis is on accountability as their daily words and actions are exposed for all to see, which has resulted in more research on legislation and more concentration on mass appeal and impact at the front end of legislation. The media's initial interest in immediacy has resulted in a direct concentration on accuracy and context with the public consumption in mind. The public has responded, perhaps not in the numbers one might have hoped, to the full participation as a result of the new access to the live debates. However, in context, if close to 20 per cent of the population is now viewing the Parliamentary channel with the broad range of Parliamentary and public hearings, that is a significant percentage of the populace exhibiting an interest in public policy between elections, and has had a salutary effect on democracy, broadening the range of democratic access as never before seen in Canadian history.

In broadcasting, even for major U.S. popular

programs, a 20 per cent viewership is considered a massive share of the potential audience in broadcasting ratings, particularly in this day of the fragmentation of audience with so many specialty channels competing for viewers. Hence, one can conclude that if the potential viewership is over seven million for the Canadian Parliamentary Channel, and, in the early stages over a million are watching, that is a significant percentage of viewers and potential voters in the democratic context.

Perhaps one can draw a comparison that although the right to vote is granted to people over the age of 18 in Canada, not everyone who has the right to vote exercises that right with turnouts in federal elections ranging from 65 per cent to over 80 per cent of eligible voters. Nevertheless, the right to vote is the mainstay of modern-day democracy. Similarly, access by the individual to the live democratic process of Parliamentary deliberations has become as fundamental a right in our new technological society as the right to vote is, or the right to a free press became following the industrial revolution. The evolution of technology and democracy go hand-in-hand. Democracy is evolving with the technology, and the new access by the populace has, one could argue, also conferred

a new 'right' to that access upon the individual in our democratic society that would not easily been withdrawn.

Access by itself is not a mensurable quantity, in the same way that freedom of the press is not a mensurable quantity, or the right to vote is not a mensurable quantity. The democratic access is a question of the individual's ability to participate fully in the democratic process by making as much information as possible available to the broadest range of people, and as such, the broadcasting of the House of Commons proceedings has been a form of watershed in the evolution of the Canadian democratic process.

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