

Recording Parliamentary Debates: A Brief History with Reference to England and New Zealand

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Introduction

It would seem obvious that one of the foundations of a representative democracy is a publicly available and easily obtainable record not just of the decisions of its legislature but also of the deliberations leading up to those decisions — the debates of members of Parliament. However that has not always been the case. Although sessional *Journals* recording legislative business under consideration, divisions, motions and resolutions, petitions, and other parliamentary business survive from the 16th century (from 1510 for the House of Lords¹ and 1547 for the House of Commons), the official report for the British Parliament, *The Parliamentary Debates*, was not produced in its present, substantially verbatim form by staff employed by Parliament until 1909.

The needs of the colonies were different. New Zealand established a Hansard service in 1867 — 13 years after responsible government began in 1854. This essay examines the development of the reporting of debates in England and then in New Zealand, including the further development of radio and television broadcasting of debates in New Zealand, and how the medium and mechanisms of control have changed over that period.

Recording the Debates at Westminster

Westminster-style Parliaments, since their origins in England, have always reserved the right to hold their proceedings in private. The House of Commons regularly

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¹ Erskine May notes that Journals of the House of Lords are known to have been kept as early as 1461, although the Journal is no longer extant. Erskine May p 252.

closed its doors so members could debate without witnesses. In earlier centuries this may have been a necessary precaution to ensure that only those with the right to be in the House were present, since on more than one occasion strangers were removed from the floor of the Chamber, and at least once, in 1771, a vote had to be retaken as a non-member had been included in a division.² More recently, for example during World War II, Parliament held secret sessions from which all members of the public, including the press gallery, and the Hansard reporters were excluded and no official report was made.³

Even when the public were admitted in the 17th and 18th centuries, note-taking by them was expressly forbidden, and anyone in the gallery taking notes would be searched and ejected. But Parliament was also keen to prevent members taking notes inside the House or conveying information about parliamentary business to outsiders, as specified in the 1641 order of the House of Commons barring members 'delivering out no copy or notes of anything that is brought into the House, propounded or agitated in the House.'⁴ Although most members taking notes were probably doing so for their own private use, Parliament was concerned to prevent individual members publishing its business. That was only to be done by Parliament as a corporate entity.

However opinion was divided on whether parliamentary business should be issued in controlled releases before the *Journal* became available at the end of each session, or whether it should be withheld until that point. In the end Parliament bowed to the increasing public interest in its activities, fuelled by the growth of England's coffee houses and the business carried out in them, and Parliament ordered the *Votes and Proceedings* to be published from 1640, at first irregularly and then daily for each sitting day from 1680. As Sir John Hotham argued in a debate in 1681 on a motion to print the votes, the previous Parliament had ordered the votes printed to prevent 'ill representations of the world by false copies of our Votes,' and when a member objected on the grounds that publication was against the dignity of the House, another member pointed out that since 'copies of the votes are in every coffee-house ... if you print them not half Votes will be dispersed to your prejudice. This printing is like plain English men who are not ashamed of

² One Thomas Hunt, gentleman of fortune. He was counted as one of the Noes. MacDonagh p 172.

³ The New Zealand Parliament held a total of 18 secret sessions from 1939-1945. Martin p 213.

⁴ Commons *Journals* v. 2. MacDonagh p 84. MacDonagh speculates that this particular order was in reaction to the note-taking of Sir Simonds D'Ewes. The number of extant diaries and journals of members from this period, including D'Ewes' unpublished diaries, Aston's diary of the Short Parliament, and Burton's diary from the 1650s, among others, would suggest that such orders were difficult to police and probably futile.

what they do; and the people you represent will have a true account of what you do.⁵

But the increased public access to parliamentary information extended only to things done, not things said. If members wished to make political capital out of their speeches in the House they had to circulate their speeches themselves. When Lord Digby printed for public distribution a speech he had made on the Bill of Attainder proposing to execute Lord Strafford, the Commons resolved, ‘That no Member of the House shall either give a copy, or publish in print, anything that he shall speak here, without leave of the House.’⁶ Despite such attempts at suppression members continued to make their speeches public. As the news media grew, it became increasingly common for members to supply copies of their own speeches and notes of debates to the publishers of magazines such as *The Political State of Great Britain*, the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, and the *London Magazine*. On giving evidence to a committee of the House of Lords in 1747 for reporting the trial and conviction of Lord Lovat, Edward Cave, the publisher of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, said that he had received speeches sent by members, and ‘assistance from some Members who have taken notes of other Members’ speeches.’⁷

The public demand for reports of debates continued to grow through the 18th century, which led in turn to the need for more accurate and complete reporting, although Parliament continued to debate the point. An attempt in 1771 to enforce the resolution passed in 1728 stating that any account of the proceedings of the House published in written or printed newspapers was a breach of privilege canvassed the arguments that so long as there was public interest, a way would be found to print the debates, and that trying to shut down the newspapers would merely invigorate sales.⁸ There was indeed money to be made; Cave became a prosperous man, even after losing his job at the Post Office.⁹

Different methods of parliamentary reporting evolved. Samuel Johnson’s contributions to the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in the early 1740s clothed a very spare

⁵ The 1837 Select Committee on the Publication of Printed Papers states that this exchange is to be found in a volume of the *Votes and Proceedings* of the years 1680-81 presented to the library of the House of Commons by C W Williams Wynn, MP. MacDonagh p 100.

⁶ 1641, the same year as the order above. MacDonagh p 83.

⁷ *ibid* p 165. Also, for example, Abel Boyer, the editor of the *Political State* 1711–29, received notes from members (Hoover p 7); William Woodfall of the *Morning Chronicle* ‘had friends on both sides of the House who supplied him with their own notes’ (Aspinall p 242.)

⁸ Lord John Cavendish pointed out that ‘the measure proposed will increase it by promoting the sale of the papers, and making the talk of the town respecting them ten times greater’. MacDonagh p 197. In the same debate members argued that the newspapers should be permitted to print not only the debates but the division lists (which were not printed until 1836) so that the public could see how their elected representatives had voted.

⁹ *ibid* p 124.

skeleton of information acquired from House officials — who spoke on what, and sometimes not even that — with grand rhetoric that bore, we can only assume, no resemblance to the actual words used by members.¹⁰ But by the 1760s it was much more common for reporters to take discreet notes in the gallery and work them into accounts purporting to be more or less verbatim. Some reporters supplemented their notes with formidable powers of memorisation; a skill for which William Woodfall of the *Morning Chronicle* in particular was well known. But even without historians' hindsight, and the ability to compare newspaper reports in the 1770s with Sir Henry Cavendish's diary — he used Gurney's shorthand, which had been recently invented, and took full notes of the 1768–74 Parliament 'except in the case of a few members whose rapid delivery outran my ability to keep up with them'¹¹ — contemporaries were able to point to discrepancies between published versions, and to outright fabrication. John Almon, the publisher of the *London Evening Post*, criticised his rival Woodfall in 1770:

It is proper to inform the reader that the series of speeches which has been published, purporting to be the speeches of this night's debate, are not authentic, that they are in many parts false, and almost everywhere a misrepresentation.¹²

Other forms of parliamentary reporting, including descriptions of debates and political gossip gained from members or by frequenting the Lobby of the House or coffee houses, are more recognisable as the ancestors of today's parliamentary journalism.

The end of the 18th century saw the 'tacit abandonment of the house of its prescriptive but anachronistic right to prohibit parliamentary reporting.'¹³ Newspaper reporters could freely take notes from the gallery, although the resolutions declaring the publication of debates to be a breach of privilege remained on the *Journals* and were sometimes referred to in cases of misrepresentation.¹⁴ That was provided, of course, journalists could get into the gallery, given that they had to compete for space with the general public — and although a separate press

¹⁰ See Hoover, particularly chapters III and IV. However, Johnson's publisher, Cave, gave evidence in 1747 that 'He got into the House and heard the speeches and made use of a black-lead pencil and only took notes of some remarkable passages and from his memory he put them together himself' (MacDonagh p 165). John Hawkins, in his 1787 biography of Samuel Johnson, notes that Cave would make arrangements for admittance 'into the gallery of the house of commons or to some concealed station in the other' for himself and one or two associates for the purpose of taking notes, and that they would then compare notes immediately afterwards in order to 'fix at least the substance of what they had so lately heard and remarked.' (Hoover p 29).

¹¹ *ibid* p 169.

¹² Thomas p 636.

¹³ Aspinall p 227.

¹⁴ *ibid* p 228.

gallery was established in 1835, access was denied to representatives of the foreign press and women into the 20th century.¹⁵

A number of publications from this period compiled the debates, collated from the newspapers and some including speeches supplied by members to the compilers¹⁶ but the publication that eventually gained official recognition was Thomas Curzon Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*.¹⁷ Hansard was the son of Luke Hansard, the parliamentary printer. It is not clear whether the debates ever turned a profit, but an 1855 guarantee by Treasury to buy 100 sets for public use was not enough to keep *Hansard* in the black, and in 1878 a select committee recommended that the publication receive a direct grant from the Stationery Office on the condition that the quality improve.¹⁸ As a result a reporter was employed to supplement the reports compiled from the newspapers, but *Hansard* was still neither full nor reliable. In 1888 a select committee recommended greater government control and in 1890 the then T C Hansard sold his interest to 'The Hansard Publishing Union', which intended to make a profit from sales and advertising but which became bankrupt within the year.¹⁹ A series of contractors then failed to produce a regular, quality report, until in 1907 the recommendation of the Select Committee on Parliamentary Debates that the Government assume control of the official report was adopted. Publication of the 5th series, the first to be under the complete control of Parliament, began in 1909.²⁰

¹⁵ Female journalists were still not allowed into the press gallery in 1913, when *The Reporters Gallery* was published.

¹⁶ See Bond pp 37-38 for a full list. Some publications (e.g. *The Mirror of Parliament*) are fuller for certain periods than *Hansard*.

¹⁷ *The Parliamentary Debates from the year 1803 to the present time*, 1812-20; *The Parliamentary Debates* title to vol. 18, thereafter *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, New Series, 1820-30; *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series, 1831-91; *The Parliamentary Debates*, Fourth Series, 1892-1908; *The Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series Lords and Commons, 1909-1981; *The Parliamentary Debates*, Sixth Series Lords and Commons, 1981- . *Hansard* was reinstated in the title in 1943. The Parliamentary Papers Act 1840, passed as a result of *Stockdale v Hansard*, meant that after this date, the *Parliamentary Debates* had more legal protections against libel actions. (*Stockdale v Hansard* was a libel action taken against the Hansard firm of parliamentary printers, headed by Luke Graves Hansard, father of T C Hansard, who by this stage had fatally quarrelled with his father. The action concerned a report laid on the Table of the House and ordered to be printed.)

¹⁸ Law p 16.

¹⁹ MacDonagh p 432.

²⁰ The reporting staff were to be 'servants of the House' (Law p 18). Members were to be reported in full and the report was to be 'verbatim', which meant a report 'trimmed of all those excrescences and redundancies with which Members are perhaps in the habit of filling up the matter of their speeches. In fact, a full report putting into something like literary shape the efforts with which we endeavour to express our thoughts.' The official definition adopted by the 1907 select committee is a report 'which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted

The Colonial Experience — the Early Reporting of Debates in New Zealand

Apart from parsimony, one of the reasons the British Parliament delayed so long in setting up its own official report was that its members were generally satisfied by the service provided by newspapers, which could afford to retain reporters specifically for the purpose of parliamentary reporting and at numbers sufficient to maintain a constant presence in the House. Colonial legislatures could only dream of such a service.²¹ In the 1850s New Zealand's small and scattered population was not sufficient to support more than one or two weekly newspapers of any substance in each provincial centre.²² In addition, these were usually loss-making concerns (it was not until the introduction of steam technology to the printing industry in the 1860s that the production of dailies with more content and a higher circulation was made possible²³) and were largely owned and staffed by gentlemen with political ambitions. In fact, Day notes that at the time of the first general election in 1853, only one of the seven newspapers available, the Wellington-based *New Zealand Spectator*, failed to have any of its proprietors or staff elected to Parliament.²⁴ As a result of such open political affiliations, it was common for the proprietors of new, competing newspapers to make some sort of declaration that, unlike their rivals, they were politically independent.²⁵ Political independence by no means meant political neutrality, however, and newspapers continued to be founded and owned

and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument' (Erskine May p 260).

²¹ Members usually referred to the British service by way of comparison. For example, Fox in 1856: 'But they Westminster had the *Times* to report them: how this House was reported the House too well knew.' (NZPD 1856 p 161); Brodie in 1863: 'Such a subsidised *Hansard* would be as perfect as the London one' (NZPD 1863 p 973).

²² For instance, Auckland had the *Southern Cross* and the *New Zealander* and Wellington had the *Spectator* and the *Independent*, these being New Zealand's two largest population centres at the time. In the next decade or two all these papers were put out of commission by the dailies.

²³ 1861, the *Otago Daily Times*; 1862, the *Christchurch Press*; 1863, the *Auckland New Zealand Herald*; 1865, the *Wellington Evening Post*. Except for the *Evening Post*, which was amalgamated with the *Dominion* in 2002 to form the *Dominion Post*, these papers are all still extant.

²⁴ Day, *Making of the New Zealand Press*, p 87. Day also notes in his conclusion that in the 1850s 'Within the various provinces the political linkages of the newspapers were open and accepted as proper.... Newspaper growth in the various provinces followed political lines with a Government and an Opposition paper being the normal situation' Day p 234.

²⁵ For instance, in the first issue of the *New Zealand Herald*, 13 November 1863, the proprietors stated that they were 'so entirely free from political, personal or party bias that they can point to their abstinence upon every occasion of entering into any competition for place or office, whether in the General or Provincial Legislatures, or in any other branch of the public services. This, they believe may be regarded as one material guarantee for political independence' Day p. 134.

by politicians, such as Julius Vogel, who founded the *Otago Daily Times* in 1861, or to advocate for specific issues, such as the *Auckland Free Press*, which was begun in order to agitate for the reinstatement of Auckland as the seat of government.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that members often complained of misrepresentation by the press. They usually refrained from imputing political bias to specific incidents, although sometimes the provocation was too great, as the following passage from 1858 demonstrates:

Mr Merriman called attention to a report which appeared in the *Southern Cross* of Friday last, in which he was made to say what he had not said. In speaking of the feeling in regard to the Auckland Provincial Executive, he had said that the feeling of the majority of the representatives of the province in that House was opposed to the Provincial Executive; whereas he was made in the *Southern Cross* to say that 'the feeling of the majority of the province was against the Executive'. He should not have taken any notice of the matter had not the honourable member for the Bay of Islands said that he had been very particular in taking down the very words used. It was scarcely necessary to say that he had not used the words as reported in the *Cross*; it was not at all probable that he would make so foolish a statement. The variation made by the *Southern Cross* was itself a slight one, but it became of consequence when the fact was taken into consideration that the honourable member for the Bay of Islands was the editor of the journal referred to.²⁶

But members were less careful about claiming bias in retrospect, such as Carleton's 1868 claim that 'there was, in former times before the establishment of an in-house *Hansard*, a system prevailing among a certain class of newspapers in this Colony ... that of deliberately mis-reporting debates for the purpose of deceiving the country.'²⁷

In view of such underlying political currents and the patent inadequacy of newspaper resourcing, the need to establish some sort of reliable reporting system was high on the agenda for members of the new General Assembly. As early as two months into the first session, a motion to establish a select committee 'to inquire into the best mode of procuring reports of the proceedings of the House' was agreed to,²⁸ but members were divided as to how to deal with the problem. Should the debates be fully reported and, if so, would anyone read them? In a debate in 1856 Mr Travers thought not: 'The proposed pecuniary assistance would be to incur much expense for what the public would not be likely to read; for, if they waded through the dreary columns of the reported debates, they would very often have to

²⁶ NZPD 1858 p 417.

²⁷ NZPD vol II 1868 p 312. This is not an isolated comment — see, for example, Sewell's statement from 1865 that 'he believed, judging from the reports already published, they were sadly calculated to mislead.' (NZPD 1865 p 256).

²⁸ NZPD 1854 p 187. The division numbers are not recorded.

wade through a great amount of rubbish.²⁹ Mr Dillon Bell, on the other hand, believed exactly the opposite: 'It was generally observed that the public did not read the debates The great cause of this was that there were not fuller reports published as a rule. If the whole debates were published, the public would find a stepping-point to draw their attention onward — a regular connected train, without any hiatus, that would progressively attract their interest, and finally engross their attention correspondingly with concurrent events.'³⁰ Other members were in favour of abridged or condensed reports — 'they cared not how brief or compressed — an honest report was all they sought.'³¹

Members argued the practicalities of providing assistance to the newspapers, either in the form of a subsidy or by employing one or more reporters to work in conjunction with the newspapers. Reporters with the skills required commanded high salaries, as one member testified in 1856: 'as one having long intimacy with an Auckland journal, he could assure honourable members that the proprietors of that journal had used every practicable means for securing efficiency of reporting. Twelve months ago they endeavoured, without success, to get reporters from England, and also from Australia. In Sydney the best reporters were all engaged on the leading journals, and receiving salaries too high to be afforded by New Zealand journalists ...'³², although others optimistically argued that journalists from Europe would be clamouring for passage if such an opportunity was offered: 'Such a scheme ... would tend to attract good reporters from Europe, when they saw a field thus opened for the employment of their talents.'³³ The suggestion was made that New Zealand follow the example of Victoria, which paid the *Argus* £600 a year to produce reports of its parliamentary debates.³⁴ The same member also suggested that, if a Government press were established, the debates since 1854 should be compiled and published, a suggestion which was not taken up until 1884.

By the mid-1860s the focus had shifted from subsidising the newspapers to provide reports to having 'a special staff of reporters for the House, paid by the House, and independent of the Press altogether.'³⁵, especially after an 1861 inquiry 'highlighted factual errors, misreporting of speeches and inaccurate recording of divisions.' and a contract negotiated with the local newspapers proved inadequate.³⁶ Members opposed were mostly concerned with the cost — the economy had been slowing

²⁹ NZPD 1856 p 161.

³⁰ Loc cit..

³¹ *ibid* p 162. The member speaking was Fox.

³² NZPD 1856 p 160. The member speaking was Williamson.

³³ *ibid* p 163. The member speaking was Fitzherbert.

³⁴ NZPD 1862 p 606. The member speaking was O'Rorke. The Victorian Parliament established its own Hansard service in 1865, the second Westminster parliament to do so, after Queensland in 1864. New Zealand, in 1867, was the third.

³⁵ NZPD 1866 p 783. The member speaking was Fitzgerald.

³⁶ Martin p 53.

through the 1860s and the country was about to enter a depression — sometimes combining this with other political issues, such as provincialism; for instance, in 1866 O'Neill argued that 'the £1,500 now asked for that purpose of reporting and printing the debates was certainly the money of the provinces, and ought not to be diverted from provincial purposes if honourable members chose to meet in a town where the Press could not report their speeches, they had only themselves to blame.'³⁷

An in-house reporting service was finally established in time for the beginning of the 1867 session. It was under the control of a committee answerable to the House, as members were quick to point out in reply to a question about the circulation of *Hansard*: 'Mr Hall said that the Government was not able to furnish any information on the subject, because it had endeavoured from the first to wash its hands of the matter, and had left it to be dealt with the General Assembly, and particularly the Reporting Committee.'³⁸ The reporting of debates was full and substantially verbatim, although in the third person.³⁹

A move was made in the following year to disestablish the new service. In moving the motion, Major Heaphy argued that the money expended on *Hansard* should instead be applied to 'objects of greater emergency'⁴⁰. These included, for instance, immigration and provincial road-making, but it is probable he was also referring to the cost of the wars, which had flared up again.⁴¹ He agreed that 'there was no doubt of the system being indispensable to the correct carrying out of the principle of responsible representative government' but that it was an 'expensive luxury' which the country could not afford. But members disagreed, and the motion was defeated 45 to 11. A *Hansard* controlled and administered by Parliament would be part of the record of the nation from now on.⁴²

³⁷ NZPD 1866 p 781. Parliament had moved from Auckland to Wellington the previous year. Martin also notes that the Wellington papers were refusing to print the reports in depth, as the result of a quarrel with the Government. (Martin p 53.) Suggestions that subscription would pay the cost, such as that by Fitzgerald in 1862 (NZPD 1862 p 606) had been quietly dropped as it became clear this would not be the case.

³⁸ NZPD vol II 1868 p 314.

³⁹ Martin p 54. Speeches relating to the first readings of bills other than the formal introduction, and from 1871, Committee debates were not reported, except for a record of amendments and divisions, as per the *Journals*. Full reporting of Committee recommenced in 1996. McGee p 62.

⁴⁰ NZPD vol II 1868 p 311.

⁴¹ Titokowaru in Taranaki and Te Kooti on the East Coast were both separately and successfully employing military force against the Government in 1868. Three months after this debate took place in the House, Te Kooti carried out his raid on Poverty Bay. Belich comments that the 'victories of Titokowaru and Te Kooti threw the colony into its worst military crisis before the threat of Japanese invasion in 1942.' Belich p 240.

⁴² The *Parliamentary Debates* were protected as a privileged publication by legislation enacted in 1854 which essentially replicated the UK Parliamentary Papers Act 1840. The

Broadcasting the Proceedings

With the advent of nationwide radio broadcasting, new technology became available to take the words of Parliament to the people, if so desired — and the new Labour Government, which had won by a landslide in 1935, did so desire. It is widely accepted that the motivation was not the principle of greater transparency for the democratic process but the new Labour Government's antipathy to the newspapers⁴³; as Savage, the new Prime Minister, said, 'By means of broadcasting the people are getting the truth right from Parliament; the pure, unadulterated truth.'⁴⁴ The content of a radio broadcast could be edited only in the most minimal sense⁴⁵ and a somewhat startled public was introduced to the 'characteristic commotion' of the Chamber.⁴⁶

However if the content of a live broadcast could not be controlled, the technical and political circumstances surrounding that broadcast certainly could. The Government, not Parliament, took the initial decision to broadcast and had the necessary broadcasting equipment installed in the House for the start of the 1936 session, and thereafter controlled not just which debates were to be broadcast but the list of members to be permitted to speak during the transmission period.⁴⁷ In addition, the debates were broadcast on the State-controlled network. To begin with, select debates (such as the Budget) were broadcast, but by 1938 two thirds of the total sitting time was transmitted, although the Government still controlled the time the transmission stopped and thus could ensure that the final speaker was a Government member.

At first, despite predictions that listeners would switch off, the debates proved popular.⁴⁸ But by the 1950s radio was having to compete with television, especially during the evening hours that had traditionally been the prime speaking time.⁴⁹ The opening of Parliament was televised for the first time in 1962, but the House

first volume contains on the title page 'By Authority: G. Didsbury, Government Printer.' *Hansard* is specifically mentioned in legislation as the official report 'of such portions of the proceedings of the House of Representatives and its committees as may be determined by the House of Representatives or by the Speaker of the House of Representatives' in s 253A, 'Hansard', of the Legislature Act 1908, and first appears in the Standing Orders by name, rather than by inclusion under the general heading of parliamentary papers and records, in 1996.

⁴³ Day, *Radio Years*, p 213; Martin p 205.

⁴⁴ Day, *Radio Years*, p 213; an idea restated by Helen Clark when she used the term 'direct democracy' in the 2005 media debate over televising (Chisholm p 67).

⁴⁵ There was some attempt by the radio technicians at contextualising and concealing unwanted or embarrassing behaviour. Martin p 206.

⁴⁶ Martin p 207.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Day, *Radio Years*, p 215. The popularity of the debates is attested in a number of sources.

⁴⁹ Martin p 268.

resisted filming of itself until 1990 (apart from a short trial in 1986). Commercial demand was lukewarm and in practice only question time and Budgets have been filmed by the television companies. Although television and still camera operators were bound by a code of practice, some opportunities proved too tempting, as in 1993 when Winston Peters left the National party and was filmed walking to his new seat at the back of the Chamber, or in 2006 when Ron Mark was filmed making a rude gesture at another MP.⁵⁰

The House had been broadcast in its entirety by radio since the 1980s as part of Labour's 1985 reforms intended to provide greater public access to Parliament.⁵¹ By 2003 the Standing Orders Committee was recommending that all debates in the House be televised and broadcast, with the intention of extending coverage to select committee public hearings at a later date. By now everyone agreed that a complete visual record of Parliament was a worthwhile object even if the amount of public interest was unknown and the commercial interest was slight — operators choosing instead to cherry-pick images for television and the print media. But the select committee also recommended that, since Parliament would be providing a free audiovisual feed from which the news media would be able to take images, the networks' cameras would be excluded. When Cabinet approved the funding for the new service in 2005, thus clearing the way for the implementation of the service, the media objected so violently that Cabinet reversed its decision, deciding to shelve the issue for a less politically fraught future occasion (this was early in an election year, an election which Labour later only barely won). The Standing Orders Committee reconsidered the matter in 2007 and re-recommended that an in-house system be established, this time without the exclusion of network cameras. The complete proceedings of the House have been available as a web feed since 17 July 2007 and on free digital television since October 2007.

Conclusion

Over time members of Parliament have completely reversed their position on the reporting of debates, from consistent attempts at complete suppression to thrusting them in written and audiovisual form on a world that might seem largely indifferent. It was once thought as important that Parliament should be able to operate in privacy as it is now that records of debates in the House should be available for all.

Politicians are now more concerned with being able to control the context of the debates. The written record is edited so as to be substantially verbatim, which in practice tends to correct errors, both of fact and of sense; this recognises *Hansard's* function as a historical record, which must be comprehensible to future generations

⁵⁰ The shot breached the rules because Mark was not the member with the call. TV3 was banned from filming in the Chamber for three days.

⁵¹ Martin pp 305, 321.

as well as to the current one. Broadcasting is not subject to editing in the same way, but politicians can control what is photographed.⁵² The sessional order on television coverage, debated by the House on 28 June 2007, lays out the rules of coverage and the conditions of its use. Generally speaking, viewers see a head-and-shoulders shot of either the presiding officer or the member speaking. Wide-angle shots of the Chamber may be used as occasional continuity shots and ambient noise may be added to this, but shots unrelated to the proceedings (e.g. an interruption from the gallery) are not permitted, and in cases of general disorder on the floor of the Chamber coverage reverts to the presiding officer.⁵³ Of course, because network cameras are still permitted in the press gallery under the new regime, networks may still film and make public illicit images if they are willing to risk exclusion from the Chamber for breaking the rules.

Politicians are also focusing on how the parliamentary feed may be used, rather than who may want to use it. Under ‘Conditions of use of coverage’, the sessional order states:

coverage of proceedings must not be used in any medium for political advertising or election campaigning (except with the permission of all members shown); satire, ridicule or denigration; commercial sponsorship or commercial advertising.

The second of these bans attracted the loud ire of the press, as might have been expected. The press largely presumed that Parliament was attempting to ban satire of itself while the rule’s defendants pointed out that it is all too easy to take footage out of context.⁵⁴ Politicians were once jealous guardians of their words, to the extent of prosecuting those who published reports of debates, but they are now concerned to protect their images — which seems appropriate in our media-conscious, media-driven environment.

The public is now able to view Parliament’s activities in the House in a number of different formats, edited to a greater or lesser degree and largely controlled by Parliament, but whether such exposure will make a material difference to members’ behaviour, or what use the public will make of their access to the debates, are unknown quantities.⁵⁵ Still, the record is available. Members had acknowledged

⁵² The Speaker also has the ability to remove the call from the member speaking, at which point the sound technician mutes the member’s microphone, even if the member continues to speak.

⁵³ NZPD vol 640 pp 10350-1. They are actually more generous than the previous code of practice; for instance, the reactor of an interjector may be filmed if the member speaking engages with the interjector, which was not allowable in the past.

⁵⁴ A frequently quoted example is a story in 2003 on MPs voting themselves a pay-rise, featuring footage of laughing MPs accompanied by ‘We’re in the Money’.

⁵⁵ In the period from the 19th century to the 21st, bad behaviour (such as the Minister known for throwing pickle jars) has relocated itself to outside the Chamber — although sometimes only just outside, as the recent punch-up between a senior Minister and an Opposition member in the lobby demonstrates.

back in the debates of the 1850s and 1860s that a report of debates would be an invaluable resource for the historians of the future; full audiovisual coverage of the House is now part of that record for the future, too.⁵⁶ ▲

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⁵⁶ The televising of public hearings of select committees is in the planning stages as of October 2007.

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