Centre for Democratic Institutions
Australian National University

and

The Office of National Assembly
Vietnam

BROADCASTING PARLIAMENT

An interactive multi-media discussion session
Delivered through the
Global Distance Learning Network

CANBERRA ► ◀ HANOI

14.00 10.00

Thursday 26 February, 2004
Broadcasting Parliament

"If a tree falls in a forest and there's no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?"

One answer given by some philosophers to this old conundrum is “no.” One could well ask; if parliament holds a debate and nobody hears it, did the debate have any effect? Probably not. Parliaments need an audience.

In our electronic age, the mass media is the link between parliament and its audience, the citizens. How to bring parliamentary proceedings to the citizens is not an easy question and there can be many different answers. This discussion session will look at Australian and Vietnamese practice in bringing parliament to the people via television.

At the Canberra end will be Roland Rich and Graeme Dobell.

Roland Rich is the Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI). CDI is funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) to work with countries in the Asia-Pacific to strengthen the institutions that underpin democracy. CDI has undertaken a number of projects over the last five years with the National Assembly and the Supreme People’s Court of Vietnam.

Graeme Dobell is one of the ABC’s most experienced reporters of Asia Pacific affairs and is now the Canberra-based Foreign Affairs & Defence Correspondent for Radio Australia - reporting also for ABC radio news and current affairs programs. He joined the ABC in 1975 and has concentrated mostly on reporting politics and international affairs, serving as a correspondent in Europe, America and throughout Asia and the Pacific. Since 1985 Graeme has focused on reporting the affairs of the Asia Pacific region and has covered all the APEC summits and the security dialogue of the ASEAN Regional Forum. Assignments in his career as a correspondent have included the Falklands War, coups in Fiji, Thailand and the Philippines, Beijing after the crushing of the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square and the return of Hong Kong to China. He is also the presenter of the ABC television program Order in the House reporting on the work of the Australian parliament. Order in the House is a weekly broadcast going to air on Sunday nights and produced the previous Friday to cover the full sitting week of Parliament.

At the Hanoi end there will be representatives from the National Assembly, the Office of National Assembly led by Dr Nguyen Si Dung, Vice Chairman of the
Office of the National Assembly, and several mass media organisations including Vietnam Television Station, Voice of Vietnam Station, Nhan Dan Newspaper (The People), Vietnam News Agency, Vietnam Net, Tien Phong Newspaper, "The Youth of Hochiminh city" newspaper and "The People's Deputies" newspaper. The facilitator in Hanoi will be Mr Andrew Scyner, Manager Vietnam Development Information Center, World Bank.

The discussion will focus on some of the major principle and production issues involved in bringing parliamentary processes to a television audience. These issues will include:

- Recording parliament ‘for the record’
- Presenting the work of parliament to a television audience
- Production values in reporting parliament
- Commenting on parliamentary work
- Rules about televising parliament
- Involving the viewer in the process

The discussion will be illustrated with clips of television footage reporting on parliament from the Australian program Order in the House and the Vietnamese program Thoi Su.

At the Canberra end, Roland Rich will interview Graeme Dobell. Participants at the Hanoi end are encouraged to comment on the issues and pose questions.

The discussion will last for around two hours. Simultaneous interpretation will be available in Hanoi.

[A digital film of this session will appear on the CDI website at http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/ in March]