

Adjournment Debate

development of the capital area as a result of these far-sighted decisions. The hon. member mentioned the need to make a decision before the parliamentary committee makes its report. I would expect that the committee would be some time before it makes a final report, but if it has anything to say in an interim report that, of course, would be exceedingly helpful.

I did use the words "will not be obstructive in any Draconian sense". I have to be perfectly honest and fair; it is necessary to state what my position is. I meant Draconian in the sense of trying to force an issue in a way that is distasteful. That we would not want to do. We are looking for co-operation and for a good, on-going relationship. I have really searched my soul on this one and sought the advice of many for whom I have great regard professionally, whose integrity as far as I am concerned is beyond question.

I strongly believe that if anything is done to delay or inhibit development of the southeast part of the city we will again be in one of these ever-repetitive situations. We will continue to have urban sprawl if we do not get the planning that we want or the housing at the cost we want.

If the hon. member asks me for a specific explanation, I put it in the terms that I am not at all inclined to recommend those things that would inhibit in any way the process of improving the situation and getting the southeast city project moving as quickly as possible.

COMMUNICATIONS—ALLEGED DETERIORATION OF
TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS—SUGGESTED
DENIAL OF RATE INCREASES PENDING IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Jack Marshall (Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe): Mr. Speaker, the question I am debating tonight has to do with one that I placed before the Acting Minister of Communications, and I am glad to see his very capable parliamentary secretary here tonight. Naturally, as is usual, I got the continually evasive answer that the matter would be looked into, which never is the case; so thankfully I have this avenue of approach tonight.

The problem I have presented is, to my mind, basic and reasonable. It is to request the Department of Communications—and also remind them of their responsibilities to Canadians—to provide normal, adequate telephone Communications on the premise that every Canadian, regardless of where he lives in Canada, is deserving of this normal, expected service.

The province of Newfoundland is usually the last to get any type of communications service. I could mention the neglect and utter disregard of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in fulfilling its responsibility to all Canadians who, even at this date, do not have the normal television service. And what is most disgusting to me and to the Canadians I represent is that that corporation, with all its high-priced officials, could not care less about its duty to all Canadians.

The question I am debating tonight shows that nobody cares about Canadians who live in remote and isolated areas, and who are continually being ignored by such organizations as Canadian National Telecommunications and Bell Canada. Why the government cannot see the phonyness that exists with regard to these two agencies is

[Mr. Danson.]

beyond me; but again the Canadian Transport Commission is just as neglectful and anti-Canadian as the agencies it is supposed to direct.

As a result of the persistent postal strike it should be incumbent upon the government opposite to ensure that Canadians can use the only alternate service available, the telephone service, and the companies that have a monopoly on that service should also ensure that Canadians everywhere are able to utilize it, are able to contact not only their members of parliament, some of whom are conscientious enough to try to serve them, but also contact someone in the case of emergency.

Not only are these companies incapable of providing this service in order to cope with the breakdown of the postal service, they cannot even fulfil their normal service responsibilities to all sections of Canada. What is more depressing is that the Canadian Transport Commission continues to grant these companies increases in rates, at the same time ignoring the service that they are supposed to be providing.

These agencies should not only be condemned. It is strange and ridiculous that whatever agency is responsible to provide on Parliament Hill enough lines for members who happen to serve remote areas of Canada and want to serve their constituents cannot do so. Members must go literally through torture to make a normal phone call to those they are trying to serve because there are not enough lines available. I have gone through this cancerous situation now for far too long, and while I have tried to be reasonable in my requests it is obvious that the bureaucratic disease persists to the point of no return. I can only say it is a sorry state for Canada that this disease continues to persist while nobody cares.

● (2210)

I can only condemn those elements I have mentioned, and I can only hope again, that perhaps someone will take some notice of the ridiculous situation that exists with regard to all these communication agencies for which this government and parliament are responsible, and either investigate the neglect, insisting that the agencies prove their capability to cope with their responsibilities, or have the guts to deny them any increases in rates which they request until they do so.

If I had the time I could give you almost verbatim the tales of woe and excuses I will receive in reply, the excuses, and the declarations of planning to improve the service, but nothing will be done because there is no justice and no consideration for those Canadians who need the normal services these organizations are supposed to provide. I know I will be just as disgusted after the answer is given as I now am. I hope the very capable parliamentary secretary will be able to give me some responsible answers and that I will see an improvement in the services to those Canadians who seem to be denied the services they deserve.

Mr. Jim Fleming (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I only wish when the hon. member opposite mentions so many serious situations which deserve thoughtful and lengthy answers I could, within the restricted time available to me, reply to