

*Telesat Canada Act*

In the North, communications are very important for the population, because this telecommunications system will provide the people living in these isolated areas with a better education system. This new communications system will achieve a bringing together of the various communities of the North by giving them the necessary information on what is happening in the Eastern as well as in the Western Arctic regions.

For example, in the Northwest Territories, between the land of Baffin and the northernmost tip of the Yukon, the distance is greater than that between the city of Halifax and the European continent. I think that the creation of a telecommunications system will thus be of the utmost importance for the transmission of information to the people of the North.

Another important factor so far as those isolated people are concerned must be taken into consideration: it will give them a new means of recreation. In the South, we have enjoyed the advantage of television for a number of years, but unfortunately this communications system does not exist or is still in its infancy in the North at the present time. The main cities, such as Yellowknife, Whitehorse, and a few others, are close enough to the Alberta or British Columbia borders and can enjoy television occasionally. We are very happy to see that with the putting into orbit of this satellite, this means of recreation will reach not only the white people of the North, but also the Eskimos, the Indians, and the Métis.

There remains an element, Mr. Speaker, which is of great importance for the development of the North: I am thinking of industrial development.

During the last few months, and especially since I have been holding this portfolio, I made eight trips in the North and I realized the difficulties faced by financiers because of communications problems.

For instance, an industry pointed out to me that communications between its mining establishment and Whitehorse were completely inadequate and that it had to spend large sums of money to make up for deficient communications. Moreover, it hoped that a telecommunications system could be established to serve the whole population more adequately.

In some cases, such communications would greatly promote what will be, we think, the most important oil development in Canada.

Hon. members know that a few months ago, an oil-field called Prudhoe Bay was discovered on the northern slope of Alaska, and

we have every reason to believe that it is the most important discovery of oil made in America during the last 25 years. The reserves of this geological formation is estimated at about 40 billion barrels of oil, which would be equal to all the known reserves in America at the present time.

As we know that this geological deposit extends to the Northwest Territories, and that there are also very important geological deposits in the Arctic islands, such a communications system will greatly promote the planning of development in the North, because exchanges, discoveries or problems will be known at the same time in the various communities and thus a great deal of money could be saved because telecommunications will make exchanges easy.

• (9:40 p.m.)

Presently, in the Canadian North, the demand is certainly too high in the field of telecommunications to be met by the present system, and I am convinced that the inhabitants of the Northwest Territories will greet with a great deal of satisfaction the establishment of this Corporation, which will contribute to the improvement of living conditions in this area.

The problem of communications in the North has always been a very important one. Over the last few years we have taken a particular interest in technological communications. We have made a great deal of progress in the field of transportation with the use of aircraft and the building of new roads; and for the last few months, there have been indications that great progress will be made in the field of sea transportation with the projects we have launched. I refer specifically to the Alexbow project, which will develop a new technique to break ice in the North, and to the SS Manhattan project, launched by private industry but to which the Canadian government is closely associated.

It will in fact only be possible to make use of those technological communications if there is also a system of electronic communications. As a matter of fact, one of the great advantages, as I said earlier, of this electronic communication system the Minister of Communications is proposing is that it will contribute to a great extent to the development of television and telephone.

This development will also be useful in that it will bind the North together. Over the last few years, we have succeeded in bringing the North together thanks to aviation. However, this is a rather costly method and we have