

*Telesat Canada Act*

house in order to bring to their attention why he considers this corporation should be a crown corporation instead of privately owned. I should like to make reference to the record for a moment. The first item before us when we returned from the recess was this piece of legislation. The hon. member for Selkirk has stated the objections to the bill held by those in this party. He previously moved an amendment which is to be found at page 7505 of *Hansard* for April 14. In his speech the hon. member said:

—if the industry involved is the central nervous system of our society, how can he justify putting this corporation under a form of ownership that is hybrid, that is . . . private, or what strange combination of both it may be? Even the minister is not able to tell us exactly in what ratio the public or the common carriers will be represented in the ownership of this corporation, or to what extent shares will be taken up by subscription.

Then the hon. member went on to say that this central nervous system should be controlled by the public, that any other course was completely unacceptable. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. member for Selkirk. The hon. member said that he found this provision rather strange, and for that reason he moved a similar amendment to that now before us. The amendment was defeated at that time. The Creditistes voted with the New Democrats and the Liberals and Conservatives voted against the amendment. I have said many times in the house that there is absolutely no difference between the Conservative and Liberal parties in this area, and I believe that statement is justified by the defeat of that very sensible amendment by the combined vote of the Conservatives and Liberals.

One might ask why we are rather reluctant to accept some of the amendments and bills put before us in this house. However, when one observes the financial and economic structures of those who are applying for permission to operate a communications satellite, one has good cause for concern. Members of this party have no hesitation at all in passing the insurance company bills that come before the house if those companies indicate that within a short period of time they will become Canadian owned. If they do not do so, we do not pass the bills without debate. We find ourselves in exactly the same position in regard to this bill.

I suggest that within the Department of Communications there are experts quite capable of handling communications in this country. In my opinion they are the ones we should put our entire weight behind instead

[Mr. Skoberg.]

of bringing in outside experts to control something that should be the responsibility of the federal government. I have had the opportunity of associating with some of the senior civil servants in the area of communications, and I can assure the house that Canada should be very proud of having such people available to operate this type of communications system.

• (12:40 p.m.)

It amazes me to hear the Postmaster General and Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) say in the house that we should not establish a crown corporation to control this new communications media. I still hope that the minister and the government will agree to accept the amendment before us and set up a crown corporation. That must be done before we employ experts from the private sector. If the minister agrees to set up a crown corporation I think the people of Canada will be much better served. The set-up proposed in the bill before us is not as desirable in my opinion as a crown corporation would be.

I must tell the minister why I am reluctant to have outside companies participating in this field. Perhaps I might begin by reading part of an article that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* for Tuesday, March 25, 1969. The heading of the article is, "Telesat Canada Ownership Is Likely To Be Split". The article says in part:

Shares in Canada's communications satellite system, Telesat Canada, will be owned by the federal government. Canada's common carrier telecommunications companies and the public in proportions yet to be decided, according to preliminary information on legislation tabled in the Commons.

The common carriers, Trans-Canada Telephone System and the communications arms of Canadian National Railways and Canadian Pacific, had originally proposed they build and operate the satellite and ground network themselves and later urged the government to share ownership with them in a crown corporation set-up.

The article continues a little farther on:

The number of shares that would be available to each of the common carriers specified in the bill likely would be limited.

The latter contention bothers me. Remembering the provisions of the bill, I undertook a little exploratory work. I wanted to see if there were grounds for my fears. The article continues:

—Power Corp. of Canada Ltd., Montreal, and Niagara Television Ltd. of Hamilton, which made an early proposal to build and operate a satellite facility, would be limited to holding 5 per cent of the public shares.