

*Telesat Canada Act*

does establish an operation on sound principles then the problems of operations and management can be dealt with in due course, and there are a variety of ways for dealing with them.

In considering this matter we have to take account of the fact that we are dealing with new technological developments, and we have to consider public policy in that respect. Throughout Canadian history there have been a number of occasions when new technological developments have had a profound influence on the economic, social and political development of the country. One of the earliest examples of this type after 1867 was the development of railways across Canada. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company, a private operation, played a key role. Most hon. members are familiar, of course with the sordid picture that developed as a result of government decisions of that day to entrust this development to private concerns, to allow those concerns to rob the treasury and to take advantage of all sorts of public concessions, and with the weakness of the government of that time. All this resulted in penalties and liabilities for which we are still paying in Canada. This is an example of the type of thing that must be avoided in taking advantage of new technological developments and in developing public policy with respect to them.

There are other examples of new technological development where a sounder approach was taken. Here I refer to one to which I have already made brief reference, the establishment of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which in my view was established on the basis of very sound principles. Of course all members of the house and the public generally have individual points of criticism with respect to the operations of the C.B.C. Some of our views differ in that respect but I think we can generally agree, and I think it is generally felt throughout the country, that the C.B.C. is ours. It belongs to the people of Canada. Whatever else may be said for it, it does operate in the public interest. This is the principle upon which it provides service to the people of Canada. I wish it had been possible for the government to take the same approach in dealing with this bill. By doing so it would have maintained a good precedent that would stand us in good stead in the years ahead.

When we consider this matter it seems to me we have to take account of the implications and the consequences of development

[Mr. Burton.]

now taking place. The fact is that communications are one of the newest and more important aspects of Canadian society. They are an important aspect of new developments in our society today. Communications play a key social and political role within the country as a whole. Thus it is very important that we carefully consider public policy in this regard.

It is for that reason I feel the public interest can be best safeguarded if this new company is established as a crown operation or crown corporation. It can in this way conduct its affairs in the best interests of the nation. It seems to me there is a conflict of interest between the government, private carriers and private investors. The fact is that government goals and objectives differ from those of private investors.

Government goals and objectives are basically social and political. They are related to the provision of communications to rural areas and to the northern territories where there is a very real problem. The fact is, as has been stated by some people, that it is only through this new technological development that adequate communications will ever be provided to all regions of Canada with its widespread territories and thinly settled areas. It will also provide more adequate distribution of French and English language programs.

On the other hand, the objectives and the goals of private investors and private carriers are not so much concerned with public service. They do provide a public service in the course of carrying out their work, but the fact is that their basic and primary motivation is the making of profits. That aspect, of course, is in conflict with public goals and objectives, and one has to consider the serving of social and political objectives in contrast with economic and financial objectives, which may be the primary concern of private investors.

It seems to me that the arguments for the satellite system, as they have been stated by many people, are not basically economic. They involve economic considerations, but primarily the goals and objectives should be social and political. It seems to me it is also a matter of concern that the government has refused to divulge information on cost-benefit studies and analyses which have been carried out.

As has been pointed out already, there have been three motions presented in the house in respect of this venture which were