

*Telesat Canada Act*

I remember attending a meeting of a committee a few days ago—I think this was before Trans-Canada wrote their love letter to the minister—when the minister said to me that I sounded more like Bell every day. I do not hold Bell stock. I would be very ill at ease in their boardroom. Indeed, I would not know how in the world to get into their boardroom. My only fond feeling for the Bell Telephone Company is that since the minister has taken office I have had much better telephone service than mail service.

I have no prejudice against the N.D.P. point of view. I have found that during my 12 years in this house I have more often been in accord with that point of view than with the point of view of the Liberal party. While the N.D.P. may be wrong, I think they are usually compassionately wrong, whereas the Liberals are inclined to be patently wrong.

Having watched the operations of government over a good many years I have grown a little fearful of the extension of governmental operation and administration. I look at the department that the Minister of Communications heads in his role as Postmaster General. I see the labour problems that seem to increase both in emotional content and geographically. I look at the retardation in the transmission of messages from one Canadian to another through the Post Office Department. I try to appraise the efficiency of operation of his department. All of this leads me to conclude that total governmental operation is not all that efficient and not terribly successful.

Therefore, I would be inclined to disagree with my hon. friend from Waterloo that turning over the whole of the Telesat operation to the Minister of Communications would enhance any expedition of messages either from 22,500 miles above us or on the terrestrial plane. I am a little fearful of too much penetration by the government in an area in which others have developed an outstanding degree of expertise.

I have read the minister's speeches. In fact I have had very little time for the classics since the minister came into office because he makes so many speeches, and I read each one of them. But I am just wondering whether he has some burning desire to get into the telephone business. I am just wondering how widely he interprets his communications mandate. I am just wondering, if he has his way, and if in a few years I endeavour to make a phone call on a Saturday or a Sunday, whether I would discover that it would not go

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

through until the following Monday. If that were the case I wonder how my hon. friend for Waterloo would feel, having suggested to the Canadian people in the parliament of Canada that we want more of the Minister of Communications and less of those who have proven their expertise in the field of telecommunications. I wonder too, if the minister really has some deep-seated, psychological yearning to hold the chart when sky writing is in vogue. I wonder what in the name of heaven, not heavens, will be the message to be inscribed in the sky. I am not prepared, despite my great appreciation for what the hon. member for Selkirk has done in this field and the contribution he made in the committee, to say nothing of what the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltzman) has done in the same milieu in following the hon. member for Selkirk, to go along with the suggestion that we should have more in the sector of communications of that which has seemed to produce so many roadblocks as the people of Canada have tried to transmit written messages one to another. So, I cannot support this amendment.

● (9:50 p.m.)

I do not want to be unkind or critical. That is the last faculty I am prepared to develop, because it has atrophied through disuse. But when I reflect with all kindness on what has happened to the mail I hate to trust my telegrams or telephone calls to the Minister of Communications. I say that because when I pick up the telephone and give the operator a zone number, she knows what that means. If I write to someone in Toronto or Vancouver and give a zone number, the post office does not know what it means. And I have the word of members of the Post Office Department to that effect.

The three digit zone numbers in Toronto were to remain in effect, not in perpetuity, but for thirty years. And thirty years is a whole generation. Now, we find that these are most ephemeral. I would hate to pick up my telephone when we have satellite communication and trust its digital purity to the Minister of Communications. I would wonder if the number dialed would prove to be the correct one. We have hazard and confusion in the mail and I should hate to uplift and translate that confusion to the stratosphere, thereby confusing the people of Canada to the same degree which has been achieved with the mails.