

Charlotte islands, so that I know something of conditions there. The hon. member for Nanaimo spoke of the logging and fishing industries. He could have mentioned two very large whaling stations situate on the islands, one at Langara harbour in the north and one at Rose harbour in the south.

Speaking of the Queen Charlottes, we are dealing with one of the outposts of the dominion; and in the winter season especially, when boat service is very infrequent, a communication such as has already been set up by the government would be well worth maintaining. I hope that something may still be done by the government, and that rather than give up or dispose of the equipment which has already been placed there, it may be kept and maintained for the benefit of those who both work and live on the Queen Charlotte islands.

Mr. IRVINE: I should like to have the minister's reply to the hon. member for Nanaimo, and I want to follow it with some other questions.

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): The hon. member for Nanaimo has said that it would be to the advantage of the people of the Queen Charlotte islands to have this communications system maintained. The Royal Canadian Air Force is of course not in charge of communications in this country; that would come under the Department of Transport; and while we have equipment there which is available for an emergency it is not being used for service purposes at the present time. It was suggested that it might be valuable training for our signals personnel, but I would point out that the Royal Canadian Air Force is taking over the communications system on the northwest staging route and that will provide a considerable amount of training for all the signals personnel we have in the air force undergoing training.

In connection with the other matter, the disposal of equipment on the telephone lines on the west coast, as I stated earlier this afternoon, negotiations are under way at the present time to have the army take that over from the air force, which is operating it at the present time. I shall be very glad to look into the question as to what the contracts are with the British Columbia Telephone company as regards the disposal of equipment after the lines are abandoned, but my understanding is that they are not likely to be abandoned at the present time. I will however, certainly discuss with my colleague the Minister of National Defence the question of having those lines made available to settlers along the line, wherever that is possible. I know that sort of arrangement

[Mr. J. H. Matthews.]

is being made along the northwest staging route, and I would think it would be equally applicable on the west coast.

Mr. IRVINE: I wish to follow up the question put by the hon. member for Nanaimo with respect to these facilities, which were constructed during the war and which, presumably in the near future, will not be used by the military. In the Cariboo riding, particularly, means of communication are bad, and the people there feel strongly that these facilities should not be abandoned or that they should not be passed on to some private corporation, but should be used for domestic purposes.

I might say here that I have a resolution which was passed by the Vanderhoof board of trade and which is, I understand, similar to one passed by the Williams Lake board of trade. I think it will put their case better than I can do it, so that with the permission of the committee I will read the Vanderhoof resolution:

Whereas there is no telephone communication between Vanderhoof and Prince George, and whereas there is an urgent need for the same,

And whereas the Department of Transport maintain a telephone line between the airport at Vanderhoof and Vancouver, which line passes through the city of Prince George.

And whereas during wartime, it was understood that this line could not be made available for civilian use, the need for security is now over,

And whereas it is now suggested that this telephone line could be connected with the government telegraph service at Vanderhoof and at Prince George, thus affording a much needed telephone service, which could be extended to Vancouver as well,

Therefore be it resolved that the Vanderhoof and district board of trade go on record as strongly favouring such a service to be established in the near future, and that copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Department of Transport at Ottawa . . .

That resolution, I think, will put the case for the whole Cariboo district. That is the same view as is held by the board of trade of the town of Williams Lake. I believe they are right in assuming that at the present time the control of this means of communication is in the hands of the Royal Canadian Air Force, and I should like to ask the minister whether any consideration has been given as to the future use of this means of communication, and whether he can give any assurance to the committee that it will subsequently be used for domestic purposes to meet the needs of these communities.

Mr. GIBSON (Hamilton West): Possibly the hon. member was not in the house this afternoon when I spoke on this matter before.