

Telesat Canada Act

● (12:30 p.m.)

In saying what I have said up to now I suppose I run a substantial risk of being labelled a crier of gloom and doom. Or perhaps I will be classed among those who laughed at Columbus. It is obvious to members of the opposition that our priorities are not always congruent with the priorities of the government. It is my duty, as I see it, to examine very carefully any proposal to spend \$60 million to \$75 million when there are many other needs for money almost daily in Canada that require to be met.

Other spokesmen for my party have outlined their specific views on the corporate structure of Telesat. We believe that if this corporation is to play a significant role in Canadian unity and identity—and I have already expressed major doubts about it being able to accomplish this—two-thirds of the control of the corporation should not, in my opinion, be placed in private hands.

In order to prevent a few individuals grabbing control of the stock, the minister has attempted to spread the ownership by reducing the shares of any one individual or group from 5 per cent to 2½ per cent. As the hon. member for Regina East (Mr. Burton) said, this is hardly an example of people's capitalism, because this provision would still allow 80 individuals to control the public portion of the stock. I think the minister will have to spread it a little thicker, or perhaps I should say thinner, than that to convince anybody that the stock will be available to the average investor. In fact, an aide of the minister said recently, according to the *Montreal Gazette* for April 22, that they would not be able to guarantee that every retired school teacher who wanted shares would be able to get them, but they were going to take steps to make sure the distribution was as general as possible. I do not believe that the distribution is going to be very general, and I do not think anybody else does either.

Another limitation placed on the issuing of shares is the 20 per cent foreign ownership rule in regard to public shares. I do not think any shares should be owned outside Canada. But more important to our cultural development is the thought expressed again by a Bell executive speaking before the broadcasting committee on May 14, as reported in the *Globe and Mail* of that date. I quote:

If companies X, Y and Z, which may represent interests in Germany, France or the United States, are permitted to rent channels on the satellite, he said, part of the benefits of the system will be given to foreign interests.

I suggest that if we are seriously interested in developing a Canadian identity, a Canadian uniqueness, we must look at the provision for renting channels very carefully. I am not certain that Canadian interests will be protected if the people who are going to be in corporate control of a project that is being sponsored by the government have interests and priorities other than those that meet Canadian social, political and cultural objectives.

Our party feels that for social and political reasons this company should be a public or crown corporation. Because of what I said earlier in my remarks, I think hon. members will appreciate that I had a difficult time convincing myself that we should proceed at all at this time. However, since we are proceeding I think that if Telesat is not made either a crown corporation, or at the very least a company the majority ownership of which is vested in Canadian hands, the result will be a sell-out as far as the Canadian people are concerned.

It is anticipated that with the present structure the government will hold a minority of seats on the board of management. Therefore I cannot see how we can be certain of attaining the very laudable social objectives of this sophisticated, space-age experiment if the corporation is in other than public hands, if instead it is allowed to be controlled by a majority of people who do not share our Canadian cultural aspirations or the social objectives of an independent Canadian culture.

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to take part in this debate. It is also a pleasure to support the amendment put forward by my colleague the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman). I believe one should look at the bill before us and determine what we are eliminating from the particular clause. I should like to read the clause that is being amended. As amended it would read:

Such persons not exceeding seven as may be designated by the Governor in Council are hereby incorporated as a crown company to be known as "Telesat Canada" in English—

I will not defame the French language, with all deference to my friends to my left, by trying to pronounce the French version.

I believe it should be understood very clearly that my colleague the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Schreyer), who in my opinion is an expert in this field, has made various representations to the committee and to the