

*Railway Act*

called—was used to transfer the Canadian Transport Commission authority over telecommunications to the CRTC.

In the case of telecommunication carriers, the CRTC receives to a great extent its regulatory powers from subsections 321(1) and 321(2) of the Railway Act. This is why we are now asking for an amendment to this Act.

Under the Act, the CRTC must ensure that the rates imposed by telecommunication carriers are just and reasonable and that there is no unjust discrimination. The prohibition against unjust discrimination therefore applies equally to customers and competitors.

The major part of the work of the CRTC consists in examining the rates charged. The purpose of this examination is to ensure that the rates charged to customers remain just and reasonable and that the profits of the industry are not excessive.

Just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, the CRTC ordered Bell Canada to reduce its rates for all its customers.

The CRTC has also undertaken important proceedings on complex economic and social matters such as the interconnection request from CNCP to provide long distance telephone services and phase III of the investigation on the cost of existing services.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the CRTC is engaged in very important activities to protect the consumer, to relieve the taxpayer if we are allowed to recover these costs, and also to promote economic development of this country.

The purpose of the investigation on the cost of existing services was to determine the cost of the types of services provided by the telecommunication carriers under the jurisdiction of the federal Government, and this was an important step in developing a more effective and less costly regulatory process.

● (1130)

*[English]*

This Bill is introduced consistent with the procedures of this House. It was announced in an economic statement. It was set in the Budget of 1985 and today it was introduced for second reading. We are hopeful that the House will allow the CRTC to recover these fees.

There are a number of Bills which are either already before the House or will come before the House that also have to do with the communications sector of our government policy. I am hoping that Members on all sides of the House will help us by improving this legislation if they find that there is something which does not answer the needs or the potential of these industries, or by passing these Bills swiftly if they meet their requirements.

Within these Bills is enabling legislation that will allow the CRTC to look into the operations of very large companies, such as Bell Canada, to ensure that they are administered in a way which takes into consideration the consumer as well as the

future of our telecommunications industry in Canada. As we know, there is a great deal of competition from the United States and Europe in the various industries that are part of the communications field. We must have modern legislation and modern methods to ensure that we can continue to compete and become leaders in the world in some of the areas of these high tech industries.

*[Translation]*

In summary, Bill C-4 reflects the intention announced by this Government of implementing new cost recovery measures to reduce the federal deficit. Approval of this Bill will enable the CRTC to recover the costs incurred in regulating telecommunication carriers. The CRTC will transfer these costs to the carriers themselves rather than to the taxpayers. The CRTC will therefore be relieving taxpayers to the limit of its modest resources.

Moreover, the telecommunications sector will thus be treated just like the broadcasting industry, which now pays licensing fees. The CRTC will therefore be able to play its role by providing a just and equitable service, Mr. Speaker.

*[English]*

**Mrs. Sheila Finestone (Mount Royal):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to have congratulated the Minister on her first piece of legislation in this House. I take this opportunity to welcome my colleague as the new Parliamentary Secretary. I wish her a lot of pleasure as we face some very complicated and exciting legislation in the field of communications and culture.

That being said, I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill C-4, an Act to amend the Railway Act. This Bill pertains to the telecommunications industry and the Parliamentary Secretary has linked it rather closely to the broadcasting industry with respect to its application for supervision and regulation by the CRTC. The Bill was introduced originally by the Minister of Communications (Miss MacDonald) and received first reading in this House on October 3, 1986. It is noteworthy, however, that this is not the first time that this particular amendment to the Railway Act has been introduced. During the last session of Parliament, that is the First Session of the Thirty-third Parliament, the previous Minister of Communications introduced for first reading into this House an identical Bill to amend Section 321 of the Railway Act. That Bill received first reading as Bill C-125 on June 26, 1986.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that June 26, 1986, was virtually the final day of the session prior to the summer recess and that Bill C-25 died on the Order Paper when the Government decided to prorogue the session. Why would the Government choose to introduce a Bill and prorogue the House the next day? The only logical answer to this seemingly illogical action on the part of the Government is that the Government lacks a sense of timing and direction in its legislative agenda.

What is the purpose of this Bill to amend the Railway Act and why has the Government introduced it a second time as Bill C-4? I would like to take this opportunity to examine the