

*Telesat Canada Act*

public at large. I do not know of any parallel anywhere, but for lack of knowledge of what has been done in countries other than on this continent do not claim this tripartite concept is unique. I do, however, believe that the concept contained within this bill, though not the specific details of the satellite corporation, may serve as a pathfinder for future government-public-private industry partnerships.

As I shall describe in greater detail later, such a three cornered partnership, which must balance the self-interest of each partner against the interest of the operation as a whole, and which must also strike a balance between financial involvement and management responsibility, is a delicate and difficult exercise. But it is, I am certain, an exercise worth undertaking.

The bill is also complex because of the nature of the undertaking itself. It breaks new technical and scientific ground in a field that is undergoing continuous and rapid change. This field, communications, is one with profound political and sociological implications, and these implications have been reflected in the keen interest taken by hon. members in all aspects of communications, whether in those of the message or, as in this case, in those of the medium. I might at this point mention that I am glad that members of the Broadcasting Committee, which at a later stage will be examining this legislation clause by clause, were able to witness the launching of the ISIS-1 satellite and to visit the satellite ground station at Mill Village.

If some members, aside from acquiring background information, found themselves perplexed by the technological complexities of telecommunications projects I can only frankly admit that there are times when I find myself similarly perplexed.

*[Translation]*

To return to the bill now under study. Before commenting on it in general, I would like to sketch its background, that is, its justification.

Essentially it is a case of supply and demand combining into a project for the national benefit. The supply exists because Canada has acquired a considerable expertise in space matters and in telecommunications. As all hon. members know, Canadians are per capita the greatest telephone users in the world. As all hon. members may not know we have the second-most extensive telecommunications system in the world, with a microwave network of 50,000 miles. In the

[Mr. Kierans.]

conquest of space, while our contribution is modest by comparison to those of the United States and the USSR, we nevertheless rank among the pioneers.

Alouette 1, launched in September 1962, made Canada the third nation in the world to have an orbiting satellite, and it has been followed by two other Canadian-designed and built satellites. At the Communications Research Center, at Shirley Bay, we have built up a substantial bank of information on space communications. A good number of Canadian companies, most notably Northern Electric and RCA-Victor, have demonstrated their ability by securing important export contracts in this highly competitive field. In sum we possess the know-how and competence to ensure that in any future projects, in that of a domestic communications satellite system, there will be a substantial Canadian component with an overflow of benefits both industrial and scientific.

Far more important than supply is demand. The abundance of skills and knowledge does not necessarily create a demand for them.

When the need exists, the nation as a whole benefits; when it does not, we are faced with the discouraging problem of brains and talent migrating elsewhere. The need for a domestic satellite system, and hence for the use of our skills, becomes self-evident simply by considering the size of the country. As has been noted many times, Canada is an expression of geography: since we can find in it highly-urbanized concentrations of population, together with a vast, and largely undeveloped hinterland. A domestic communications satellite system alone will provide the necessary means to narrow the gap in the standards as well as in the services inherent to those two Canadian characteristics.

As I said in an earlier speech, it amounts to a northern vision for the 1970s. A domestic communications satellite system can fulfill the following needs:

First, provide television coverage in the north and in underdeveloped regions. There is no other economic way this can be done.

Second, provide telephone and message communication service to the north and to underdeveloped regions to bring these areas into the mainstream of Canadian life by high-quality telecommunications.

Third, provide an extension of television service in both languages to all Canadians. This satellite, Mr. Speaker, will broadcast both in French and in English, in short it will speak the languages of Canada.