

*Telesat Canada Act*

My time is drawing short, Mr. Speaker. I wish once more to address this question to the minister: why is he so firmly opposed to the establishment of a Crown corporation? I have carefully reviewed the minister's statements; I have considered his arguments, and I find them unconvincing. Is the minister afraid to accept responsibility for his actions in this field? If you establish a Crown corporation you stand or fall according to its failure or success. Does the minister feel he has to bring in three parties so that later on he can say: it did not work very well because of the shortcomings of this party, or of that party, but we intend to fix it up. I would hate to think this is the case. If it is technical information the minister needs, this can be made available without the carriers' direct participation.

• (9:40 p.m.)

**Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough):** Mr. Speaker, I find myself in a somewhat unusual and painful position. I agree profoundly with the *obiter dicta* of my colleague from the New Democratic party, but I cannot go along with him when he comes to making a judgment. I should like to say too that in the broadcasting committee, which had umpteen meetings on this important legislation, his predecessor, the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Schreyer), was, in my opinion, one of the most astute and able appraisers of this legislation. As a one time resident of Manitoba, I am prepared to make the prediction that the hon. member for Selkirk will become the leader of a certain party in a short time. He will also go on to become leader of the opposition and will offer, I think, constructive opposition to a re-elected Weir government which will take over the affairs of the province with a greater mandate than ever before.

I should like to say that the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman), who came here after I became a member, has always seemed to me a man with extremely good economic judgment and a lot of business knowledge. However, when he comes to the real brink of making a judgment, he becomes somewhat more partisan than perceptive and just misses the bus in the matter of making an astute judgment. I must say that there was not too much of what he said tonight with which I found myself in accord.

I was a bit fearful when my hon. friend suggested that there be a little more control by the government in this important matter.

It seems to me, having looked at the legislation over these past many weeks, as I heard the minister and as I looked upon the minister's pronouncements, that the thing of which the Canadian people might be most fearful was an extension of the ministerial jurisdiction in this important realm of communications. Bill C-184 time after time after time contains these ringing expressions: "except by permission of the Governor in Council"; "with the approval of the minister", and so on. It is not by any means a piece of legislation that indicates there is no such animal as a minister presiding over the destiny of these things.

I am often troubled by people who are fearful of the machinations and operations of the so-called detached corporations, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. People worry about what these corporations are doing. The only thing that makes me comfortable when I look at the C.B.C.'s operations is that I would far sooner have Dr. Davidson running its operations than I would the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier).

Therefore, I am not sure that I would want to have the larger imprint of the emanation of government in this very important field of telecommunications. Perhaps it is a good thing to have some utterance and comment from those who are not of the government sector in this tremendously important field. We know that not all corporations are bad, though God knows not all are good. We in this house have checked the estimates and expenditure of money, in regard to which no one would award a gold star for excellence of administration. We have only to recall what previous Liberal governments did with, for and to the railways of this country to know about the plethora of crown corporations and the liberalization of their operations. I think perhaps the governmental sector might benefit from the expertise which the common carriers have developed.

I am no apologist for big business. No one is more ill at ease with big business than a poor, impoverished professor like myself. But I do know that over the years the people in the telecommunications field have been able to provide better service at lower cost, whereas the Postmaster General (Mr. Kierans) is providing in his mail operations poorer service at higher cost. Therefore, perhaps a little relationship between him and the telecommunications people would not be all that bad for the people and government of Canada.