

Telegraphs Act

has suddenly swallowed holus bolus the philosophy which some of us in this corner of the house espouse simply because they have introduced this bill.

I do not think I need to say any more. I made some few remarks on second reading when the principle was under discussion and I think it was made clear at that time that we are sympathetic to the purposes of the bill. I think we have made it quite clear that as a result of the detailed and thorough discussions which took place in the committee we are now satisfied that this bill, properly administered, will be in the interests of the Canadian people.

Hon. George C. Marler (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to what has been said, particularly by members of the Progressive Conservative party. I have been interested in knowing their position and to say the least I think it has been somewhat confused and confusing. The principal ground of complaint is that because we are providing for the establishing of a licensing system for external submarine communications we are thereby attempting to turn the C.O.T.C. into a monopoly. Nothing has been said by them here today that has suggested they are in favour of a licensing system of any kind. I do not want to speak at great length, but I think the house should understand just what is the position of the Progressive Conservative party in connection with this matter.

I do not think that any member of the Progressive Conservative party, either in the standing committee or in the committee of the whole house, has failed to raise the question of the monopoly of the C.O.T.C. I want to point out briefly just what is the situation. There are 34 duplex circuits now available in trans-Atlantic cables and those 2 are operated by C.O.T.C. To speak of a monopoly when there are 2 circuits out of 34 certainly goes far beyond my understanding. What is the monopoly position of C.O.T.C. so far as Canadian business is concerned? It has 40 per cent of the business while the two United States companies have the remaining 60 per cent. Does that sound like a monopoly, when you have even less than half of the traffic? It certainly does not. My suggestion is that, whenever the name C.O.T.C. is mentioned, there is immediately from the Conservatives a response "monopoly"; but I say that the facts do not justify any such contention as that.

What have we heard today about establishing a licensing system? Nothing whatever. Yet when we were in the committee the hon. member for York West, who seemed not to be disposed to disagree with the idea of a licensing system, moved that the bill be amended and that, in place of having the

regulations made by the governor in council, they should be made by the board of transport commissioners. So at that particular moment the Progressive Conservative party was in favour of some form of licensing, and the same clauses and conditions were set forth and the same language was used, in effect, for the amendment as will be found in subparagraphs (a) to (e) of clause 42 of the bill. At that particular moment the Progressive Conservatives were in favour of licensing. Today there has not been one word about licensing.

All that has been said has been with the object of making sure that under no circumstances whatever should anything be done that might possibly curtail the activities of Western Union and of Commercial Cable, so far as Canadian business is concerned. Nobody has suggested for a minute that the bill was to be used to interfere with Commercial Cable dealing with the business that properly belongs to it, with the United States business originating in the United States and put on the cables in New York. Nobody has ever suggested that that was going to be interfered with, but throughout the long discussion in committee what have we heard? Nothing but "For goodness' sake, do not do anything which would affect these two United States companies."

Mr. Speaker, that is not all. After having suggested a form of licensing, but under the board of transport commissioners, the Conservative party, the hon. member for York West speaking for it, then moved that a clause 3 be added to the bill. That was, of course, in the standing committee. He moved an amendment to the effect that this part of the act shall not apply in respect to a company which is already operating external submarine cables under the authority of an act of the parliament of Canada; in other words, that nothing whatever must be done to regulate the activities of the two United States companies.

I think that the great difference of opinion arising between the Progressive Conservative party and the government is that the Progressive Conservative party can think only in terms of monopoly. We have seen that there is no monopoly, and I do not think that there is any likelihood of there being one. We find that one day they are in favour of licensing; but that the next day they are not in favour of licensing. Then they conclude by saying that they do not want this to apply to the two United States companies. I leave to hon. members the task of forming their own conclusions as to the attitude of the opposition.