

Telesat Canada Act

There are some who say that this project is ahead of its time. In light of some of the preliminary testimony given before the committee I must admit that I harboured some doubts whether the existing microwave capacity in Canada had been fully and effectively utilized, but I was reassured by the data provided yesterday by the minister. It seemed to lend convincing support to the view that there will be adequate demand for the service to be offered by this new corporation.

Certainly when this satellite achieves orbit in 1971 or 1972—I hope the launch is successful whether it is from Vandenberg Base, Cape Kennedy, or whether the Soviet Union submits the lowest tender for launching—Canada will look to no other nation in the world for leadership in the provision of an effective communications network for a vast land mass. We will be pioneers in the bringing of television, telephone and message communication to all parts of a very large country by this domestic satellite.

It is reassuring to note in the report given to the house yesterday by the minister that the satellite project has sound research support. It is not a pie in the sky or even a satellite in the sky proposal. The 1966 report of the Power Corporation, a respected corporation in this nation, supporting a domestic communications satellite system, and the subsequent task force report made available in April of last year, provide convincing proof that the satellite system is economically feasible and desirable.

Those who are concerned about the ownership aspect of the proposed system—they have a right to question ownership, although the technical aspects of the project have not been disputed—neglect, I think, the assurance provided by the minister that there will be no board representation for any party without shares, nor will there be shares without votes nor votes without shares. There will be no power without financial responsibility and no responsibility without power.

Some have proposed a wholly government-owned enterprise, which is the substance of the amendment to which hon. members are now addressing themselves. Admittedly, there are arguments pro and con in this regard. It can be said that any or all activity in Canada could be operated at the taxpayers' expense, could be fully government owned. Some people subscribe to this economic philosophy. But in this case it seems to me and many other hon. members that a wise course is being followed. The resources of a first-rate

[Mr. Perrault.]

telecommunications industry will be involved in the project as well as government resources on behalf of all the Canadian people.

As the minister stated yesterday in his speech, public equity in a corporation initiated by the government fulfils the idea of public participation in ventures undertaken in the name of the public; it fulfils also the urgent need for a broader selection of Canadian-owned companies available to Canadian investors and, finally, it will ensure accountability to the public at large rather than merely to those parties directly interested in the venture.

I express the hope that share ownership in the corporation will be based as broadly as possible. We in this house should take action to make certain that it will be possible for even small investors to put money into what could be a growth proposition for Canadians from coast to coast, so they will be given an opportunity to invest their money on a fair and equitable basis. In this regard the house should feel reassured by the limitations on the distribution of share ownership as set forth in appendix B. When people cry alarm in this house about the ownership, let them remember that non-residents may not hold more than 20 per cent of the shares allotted to the public sector, or approximately 7 per cent of the total shares issued by the corporation. No single shareholder in the public sector may hold more than 2½ per cent of the total shares issued by the corporation. I think this removes some of the sinister aspects of the corporate structure which have been suggested by our friends to my left. They suggest there are dark motives behind this proposal to bring a measure of private enterprise into this great project.

Mr. Schreyer: Only 2 per cent of the population will benefit.

Mr. Perrault: I rather dispute the mathematics of my hon. friend to my left, but perhaps in committee he will explain his economic theories more clearly so we will all understand.

● (3:20 p.m.)

Again, it seems unfortunate that some members of the house appear to be obsessed by the fear that some of the participating companies may include a degree of foreign ownership and control and that presumably Canadian sovereignty will be endangered. This is an example of unfortunate tunnel vision. We would still be in an economic