

*Telesat Canada Act*

Board of Transport Commissioners permitting increased rates for telephone charges. The telephone users will pay, and since most people in Canada use telephones, this means the majority of Canadians.

The C.B.C. would also be using this system. If it does not make money, what difference will it make? The C.B.C. will simply ask for a larger subsidy next year. What kind of fraud are we being handed when we are asked to believe that by going in with the common carriers and private investors we shall save the taxpayers' money? The Canadian National is also involved. What happens if the C.N. loses money? Will it not be made up one way or another by way of higher passenger fares or in the form of a larger subsidy from the government? It seems to me the argument advanced on behalf of the government that this deal is being split three different ways because of a reluctance to dip into the pockets of Canadian taxpayers is a spurious one. Either we are being misled about this, which is something I do not like to contemplate, or we are finding ourselves in the presence of some very foolish economic thinking. In either case, the proposal should be dismissed. It should be rejected, and the amendment put forward should be accepted as a means of correcting the error.

Having dealt with the financial aspect, I want to indicate that I do not object to the Telesat program itself. My hon. friends and I object to the method of financing which is proposed. We have a few other minor objections; for example, we believe the government is keeping us in the dark with regard to some matters, and being less than forthcoming about the situation. I told the minister that I was not sure whether Telesat was really an economic program, or whether it was really necessary at this time—whether it could be justified in economic terms. But I also said I was prepared to go along with the program. I was even prepared to express some admiration for his willingness to think ahead and take the lead in a technological venture of this kind. I was glad to see Canadians prepared to take some risks. But I was not prepared to see him jeopardize his own program by linking it with a foolish financial and organizational structure.

The minister has told us we need Telesat; that it has a social purpose. We need it for the development of the north. Some in this house will argue that there are very few people living in the north of Canada, that this is

an expensive project and that it might not be wise to spend so much money just to please a few trappers, a few hunters, a few workers on the oil rigs, a few mounties. But I think it is important that we show some vision with regard to the possibilities of the north. It will not always be a wasteland with only a few people living there. A good argument based on the social development of the north could be made; the proposals before us could be justified on the basis of the sound future development of this country.

The minister has indicated there are political implications attached to this. There are. We know that one province in particular is negotiating agreements with a foreign country for satellite programs. Perhaps we can head this off. Perhaps we can strike a blow for national unity. Perhaps we can show we are prepared to be the first in some things, not the last. Telesat can do this for us.

Then again, the development of a satellite may have spill-over effects. The minister has not been able to tell us conclusively what these benefits are likely to be, but no one with imagination and a degree of familiarity with what is going on in the scientific world today doubts there will be worthwhile side-effects which will place us in a position to take advantage of further technological development. Moreover, it will give our scientists an opportunity to participate in extending the frontiers of the new sciences, and for this reason, to, we should be very much concerned with Telesat.

To return to the economic question. It would have been far better for us and, I believe, for the minister, had he been willing to take us into his confidence and give us some idea of the costs involved. We have repeatedly asked the minister to issue the cost benefit studies so as to make this information available. These requests have been refused. We have put down three motions for the production of papers in an attempt to obtain some of the facts as to cost and some of the estimates for Telesat. The refusal to provide this information can only lead to a suspicion that the minister wants to hide something. Surely, this is a bad way to begin such a program, particularly when there are people on this side of the house who share some of his concern, some of his vision for the future, and who would have been willing to support him as we have in the past in connection with projects of this kind which are worthwhile and good.

[Mr. Saltsman.]