

Telesat Canada Act

Mr. Speaker had some doubt about the form of the amendment. Since then my colleague and I, along with one or two others, have consulted and redrafted the amendment in a form which the hon. member for Selkirk would be prepared to offer as a substitute for the one proposed yesterday. My point of order is in the form of a question. Will it be acceptable to the Chair if the hon. member for Selkirk offers a substitute amendment? If that is not the case, then the hon. member for Broadview could move the amendment. That is why I rose on a point of order before the hon. member sat down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Since the hon. member for Selkirk has already spoken and cannot speak again he might be allowed to move an amendment with the unanimous consent of the house. If that consent is not forthcoming, the hon. member for Broadview might move the amendment. If the first proposal by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre is the one being pursued, I will ask the house now whether it gives unanimous consent to the hon. member for Selkirk to move the substitute amendment.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will recognize the hon. member for Selkirk at the conclusion of the remarks of the hon. member for Broadview.

Mr. Gilbert: I have completed my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schreyer: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact the Chair had some doubt whether the amendment I moved yesterday was declaratory of a substantially different principle from that contained in the bill, I move, seconded by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis):

That Bill No. C-184 be not now read a second time, but that it be resolved that in the opinion of this House the basic principle of the bill should be altered so that there will be full public ownership of the proposed Canada Telesat through a Crown corporation, with provision for participation therein by the governments of the provinces as well as by the government of Canada.

• (3:10 p.m.)

Mr. Ray Perrault (Burnaby-Seymour): Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting aspects of the bill before us is that there seems to be general agreement among spokesmen for all parties that we need improvement in our communications systems in Canada. This is an interesting aspect of the debate. There does not seem

to be violent opposition to the idea of having a domestic communications satellite. There is a difference of opinion—and I am sure these opinions are sincerely held—about the type of ownership of the domestic communications satellite system. Fears were expressed yesterday about the type of corporation anticipated by the measure. These fears have been expressed once again in the amendment just proposed by the spokesman for the New Democratic Party.

Certainly the concept of a three-way partnership is unique. The minister suggested yesterday that this concept may be unique in the history of the world. I refer to the concept of one single entity involving government, the telecommunications industry and the public at large. In my view the proposed structure need be no cause for alarm. Certainly this measure should advance from second reading into committee so that expert witnesses may be called and testimony given by them. If this measure must be improved, we should have the courage to improve, change and strengthen it.

The placing aloft of a communications satellite of this kind will, without doubt, be an historic action by government in Canada. In my view the proposed arrangement achieves a happy melding of three very important segments of our society, the skills, research talents and the technical expertise of one of the world's outstanding telecommunications industries.

Let us make no mistake about it, the people who make up the telecommunications industry in Canada are primarily Canadians trained in Canadian universities, the sons and daughters of Canadians from coast to coast. We are not talking about some sinister force trying to overthrow Canadian sovereignty. The graduates who are going into electronics in Canada come from the University of British Columbia, Memorial University in Newfoundland and the University of Toronto. Some of us know some of these very talented people. This measure would bring together the resources represented by people of this kind as well as the resources of government, which are not inconsiderable. We would at the same time permit the participation of a broad section of the public in what will be a major venture in the history of this nation. I think the minister is to be commended for his determination to assure that this high level of technical competence will be vested in the project. To do less would be to serve less ably as a minister of the Crown.