

*Railway Act*

basic right of normal communication services, it is pretty hard to accept. So, Mr. Speaker, I say if the passage of this bill will help provide the telephone service and the extension of these facilities to people who need them and must have them, by all means let us pass it. Let us do our duty to the Canadians we represent by providing this necessary service.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I must advise the House that when the minister speaks he closes debate.

**Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General and Minister of Communications):** Mr. Speaker, I have warm sympathy for the remarks made by the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall). Recently, I had a discussion with the telephone companies and while it was not directly related to his riding, great emphasis was laid on the fact that services had to be improved and maintained, particularly in Labrador. We see all the common carriers from time to time and this is the position we take with all of them. Inevitably, this matter comes up and I might say that it is one of the strongest selling points for the satellite.

The satellite will make possible the extension of communication services to scattered areas, and throughout the north. It will make service available in both languages in accordance with national policy and will strengthen communications from one end of this country to the other. If common carriers are not willing to comply with requirements, having all the facilities at their disposal through satellite communication, my department will take very firm measures.

I should like to reply to the three members at one time, the hon. members for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Marshall), Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) and Wellington-Grey (Mr. Howe) and to thank them for their participation in this debate. I agree with some of the subsequent speakers in that I did not find the remarks of the hon. member for Winnipeg North entirely relevant. We are not here to fight again the battle of increasing telephone rates or curtailing railway services before the CTC. It is not relevant. We are getting into a somewhat analogous situation. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North said, it is a very difficult issue and the Board itself is faced with some very complex questions. We cannot decide them now. So, I say to the hon. member that the position we presently find ourselves in is this: we want to introduce this amendment as a holding operation, pending a full

scale review that will be placed before the House on what should be a telecommunications policy for Canada. With the gracious permission of hon. members I tabled today the document showing the scope and extent of the studies of that commission. Some 50 studies are going on, and involve participants both inside and outside the government.

• (4:50 p.m.)

I ask for the co-operation of all hon. members. If they think that this outline is not complete, and that the 50 studies do not encompass all the ramifications of the problem—and I am not certain that they do—I should appreciate hearing suggestions about areas we have overlooked.

At present we have in Canada a computer industry that is overwhelmingly United States owned. Do we want the services side of the industry also to be United States owned? If so, then it follows also that the location of all computer banks may inevitably have to be on a north-south orientation instead of an east-west orientation. We have not made up our minds yet as to whether we want to permit Canadian-owned common carriers to enter the computer services industry. If we do, under what conditions do we want them to enter? To what extent are we going to permit the structure of that particular telecommunications industry to be organized in the competitive, free enterprise area? To what extent are we going to demand that it be under monopoly control and how much of that monopoly will we attempt to regulate; also, how is it to be regulated? This industry is advancing so rapidly, as I was at great pains to point out, that instead of letting another 18 months go by before we have all these answers, we have simply said that for the time being we will conduct a holding operation. We will, during this period, attempt to develop a logical, coherent and rational policy we can lay before hon. members. We are giving priority to this particular aspect of the study and I think that some very serious questions will be posed in this House.

All I can say at present is that instead of waiting that 18 months and letting the industry become entrenched in new directions that we may find impossible to roll back, we think it is better to take advantage of the Canadian Transport Commission which we presently have at our disposal and bring this matter under the aegis and authority of the commission. It can regulate either for better or worse, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North suggests. But it will regulate the industry to some extent, and that is better than