

*Inquiries of the Ministry***COMMUNICATIONS****SATELLITE DESIGN STUDIES COMMISSIONED  
BY GOVERNMENT**

On the orders of the day:

**Mr. David Lewis (York South):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to address a question to the Postmaster General. In light of press reports of designs of and plans for a communications satellite, publicized by Northern Electric, can the minister inform the house whether the government commissioned any firm to make a feasibility study, for a fee, on this subject; and if so, has he received any report?

**Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Postmaster General):** Mr. Speaker, I regret to have to inform this house that the first I learned of the results of two studies that were commissioned by the government on May 1, was last night after one of the firms had held a press conference.

In answer to the hon. member's question I may say that in May through the Department of Industry the government had commissioned two studies respecting the design, development and supply of a domestic satellite communications system. The contracts were let at a cost of approximately \$550,000. The part that bothers me is that neither I nor my colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce has yet received such reports.

I see that one of the companies, and the other company this morning, are prepared to launch satellites of a certain size and design. This has not been decided by the cabinet, nor has my department made any recommendations to my colleagues in the cabinet. At the present time my office is in touch with the two companies concerned. I expect to see them. I expect to receive copies of the reports, at which time I think I will make the point that such studies, when commissioned by the government, are the property of the government—

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Kierans:**—and are not to be used as springboards for public relations circuses or in an attempt to sell their other wares.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question arises out of the commendable indignation of the Postmaster General, which I share. I ask the Postmaster General whether when he receives those reports he will study them to see how much of the publicity derives from them and from the information in them, and assure the house that he will take the necessary action against the companies for using information and reports which

[Mr. Trudeau.]

are the property of the government and for which the government has paid.

**Mr. Kierans:** One thing I intend to make sure of, Mr. Speaker, is that the cost of the two press conferences will not be chargeable to the government.

**Mr. Lewis:** That is not very much consolation.

**Mr. Kierans:** Certainly my officers are very anxious also to see and evaluate the two reports, and to make such recommendations as may then seem to them to be appropriate.

**Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask the minister responsible for communications if it is his intention to improve communications between the departments.

**Mr. Lewis:** I have a further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I do not know whether the Postmaster General did not hear my question or deliberately thought it unwise to answer it, but I would like to ask whether he would assure the house that he will take action against these companies if they have used any information in any parts of the report for which the government has paid.

**Mr. Kierans:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think they have used any information. If they have, of course we will take steps to safeguard the interests of the government and the people of Canada. Of that I can assure the hon. member. I think they were probably very proud of their work and wanted to boast about it before they informed the people who had commissioned the work.

**Mr. Ed Schreyer (Selkirk):** I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Can the Postmaster General assure the house that the firms which were commissioned to do this research study will not necessarily be called upon to involve themselves in the development of the satellite?

**Mr. Kierans:** I can give no such assurance because obviously we have a tremendous capability within the department itself, that is within the defence research telecommunications establishment. They are the ones who will direct the work leading to the placing in orbit of the first operational satellite of any western country. I will be guided by their advice, Mr. Speaker.