

Telesat Canada Act

one suggests for a moment that the government should turn its back on expertise wherever it exists in this country. The government has a pool of expertise as well in organizations such as the Defence Research Board and the National Research Council.

Let us not forget this very important point. All the common carriers and some of the other companies in this country such as R.C.A., Northern Electric and Bell Telephone which have developed expertise in this field of communication by satellite have done so oftentimes with the help of public moneys issued by way of grants through the Department of Industry for the purpose of science research. No one is complaining about that. There is a problem, however, in respect of a company which is a subsidiary of a United States parent. When that company obtains grants from the government of Canada to engage in research and then develops expertise or a new technique, a situation may arise. I am sure the minister will not deny that in the past there have been instances where the fruits of the research which has been financed by public money have been siphoned out of Canada through the process of the parent company deciding it would export a particular product or technique to some foreign market. In such a situation the subsidiary operating here, and which has been doing so with Canadian public money, has been frozen out by a policy decided at the central parent headquarters.

What guarantee do we have that a similar situation might not arise in respect of this corporation? Some of the companies which the minister has invited into partnerships in this corporation are either directly or indirectly in liaison with United States corporations in the communications industry. I would be surprised if the Canadian public is not taken for a bit of a ride in so far as research and development with public funds is concerned. Therefore, it would seem to me that the public interest would be better protected if we were to spend money developing the expertise through the medium of a corporation that is financed, owned and controlled by the people of this country, that is a Crown corporation. I do believe, although I have no way of proving it, that if the minister were able to act on his own judgment he would not have proposed legislation such as is contained in Bill C-184.

● (9:10 p.m.)

There is no point in becoming vindictive about this. The minister is a member of the

governing team, the cabinet, and as part of the normal process of political compromise I suppose it must be said that the minister is trying to make the best possible arrangement. Let me say that if this were only a small and unimportant matter one need not become indignant about the fact that it is proposed here to offer to private ownership something that should really, in the public interest, be kept under public ownership. This is not something small or unimportant.

In conclusion, I should like to say that what is at stake here is, in the minister's own words, something vital to present and prospective Canadian unity; something vital to the solution to problems which plague confederation today; something vital to the Canadian north; something vital to the frontiers of our country, and certainly something important and of interest to remote settlements from coast to coast whose industries today, as we all know, are dependent on rapid communication.

I cannot disagree for one second with the minister in his statement that this is indeed our central nervous system and that his department is responsible for administering to the needs of this system. Therefore, it is completely unacceptable that this central nervous system should somehow not be controlled by us. I find that rather strange. For that reason I wish to 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 consideration should be given to establishing the proposed Telesat Canada as a Crown corporation, with provision for participation therein by the governments of the provinces as well as by the government of Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): The Chair would like to take this amendment under advisement and will render its decision later.

[Translation]

Mr. Romuald Rodrigue (Beauce): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I should like first to congratulate the minister. In his statement he provided us with many interesting details. I should like to commend him also for introducing this measure in the house so that we may somewhat appraise the policy of the government in this field of such significance for all Canadian people and which provides us with some indications as to what is in the best interests of Canada and the Canadian people in the field of satellite telecommunications.