

Telesat Canada Act

Canada" will not be under the control of Canadians but rather of Americans.

And yesterday the hon. member for Beauce (Mr. Rodrigue), proved beyond all doubt, thanks to very detailed information, that the interests of companies listed in Schedule A are really foreign interests.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take up more of the time of the house but I feel I must ask again the minister to clear up the situation as to the social and cultural repercussions of the bill, particularly as far as Quebec is concerned, which affects us more, even if we are concerned with the rest of Canada.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I would like him to explain how he can imagine a Canadian control of Telesat Canada, when he knows that the capital comes from outside the country. Tell me who pays you, and I will tell you whom you serve.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the hon. member for Chambly (Mr. Pilon) is no more interested than the others in being controlled by the Americans. Consequently, I would ask him to reflect on that and show real imagination. I endorse the idea of establishing Telesat Canada, but I cannot wholeheartedly approve of the bill, because of the numerous questions that we ask ourselves, not only as French-speaking Canadians, but as unhyphenated Canadians as well.

[*English*]

Mr. Ralph Stewart (Cochrane): Mr. Speaker, everyone in Canada will be very happy if we are able to have a satellite system that will give us all of the wonderful things that a satellite system can bring. Today we are discussing in this house the details of what kind of corporation should run the whole affair. I suggest that we are being a little premature and that this whole question should be examined in much greater detail and with much greater care at the committee level, because there is certainly grave doubt whether or not this project is economically feasible.

We did examine this question briefly in committee and we were not entirely convinced that it is economically feasible. I personally asked that we continue our study of this problem in committee by calling in experts from outside the public service who are not immediately involved in the building up of the organization within the new Department of Communications. Whether or not this is being considered I do not know, but I believe that this is absolutely essential.

• (3:50 p.m.)

Not too many days ago an article appeared in the *Globe and Mail* expressing the opinion of the president of the Bell Telephone Company of Canada. He had grave doubts about the economic feasibility of the satellite system. That was the opinion of a man who is highly respected and has no immediate axe to grind in making such a statement. I know that people inside and outside Canada have expressed very grave doubts about the satellite's economic feasibility. I pursued this line of questioning in committee. While I do not mean to point a finger at anyone in the public service I can demonstrate any number of cases where various governments of this country in the past have been pushed into expensive kinds of programs they could not afford. We have built something or been sold something as a result of the promptings of our public servants and the experts they brought with them. Often we have been sold a bill of goods which was too costly for us.

One example of that is the arts centre. Another is the manpower program, one of the finest ideas this government has come up with. Nevertheless, in the hands of certain mandarins it is being ruined. I suggest we are following exactly the same pattern with this telecommunications system. We get hold of a great idea and hand it over to people who are interested in empire building. Then we find ourselves engaged in a program of expenditures that we cannot control.

I do not deny that there are experts in the minister's department who are very reputable individuals. But when we see that ideas they put forward are at variance with the ideas of informed people in the United States, it seems to me we should take a much more careful look at this matter. Why do we not call other witnesses from Washington or from the Canadian Armed Forces, where there are many experts, in order that we may be properly advised? Certainly the little seance we had in committee did not convince the members of that committee that this program is economically feasible. There are certain points about the satellite program that most people, including members of this house, do not understand. I do not understand many of the things involved and I think it is high time that some of them were explained.

Although we are not all technical experts we have a measure of intelligence and can understand the basic points of the system. We