

Government Organization

feeling that it could possibly, therefore, be left outside of public ownership? It seems logical to me that if something is the central nervous system of a society, the society must own its own nervous system. We await with interest the response that the minister and his colleagues will want to give to this question in the next few weeks and months.

I would like to conclude as quickly as I can by posing a number of questions to the minister on the record so that the minister will have something on which to ponder and to which to reply. In addition to the question about the ownership of new communications media such as satellites there are the following questions I would like to put on the record. Is the new department we are creating definitely committed to a domestic communications space satellite system of a more expensive synchronized orbit kind or is the department still weighing the alternative of cheaper types of domestic communications space satellites? There are cheaper kinds in terms of development and launching, but one presumes that in the long run they would not really be cheaper.

Another question I would like to pose is as follows: Is the government committed to a policy whereby television signals, for example, emitted from a domestic space satellite could be received directly by individual television sets, or is the government still considering a system whereby signals from the satellite would first have to be picked up by powerful ground receiving stations or by community antenna systems of one kind or another? I have no doubt that the latter would be much cheaper, but it would also be putting the owners of TV sets in many communities of the country, especially in the northland and in our frontier areas, at the mercy of any private operator of a community antenna system. Of course if the government intends to put up a number of ground receiving stations across the country, that is one thing; but if it is going to send up a satellite whose signal will have to be picked up by a ground receiving station or a community antenna system, either the government must own the latter or else the people who own the television sets will become captive customers of private operators and price regulation will become very important.

There would have to be more government regulation. Quite frankly, if there were a choice between a growing bureaucracy to

regulate on behalf of the public and government ownership I would prefer government ownership in this particular domain because it is logical. Since it would be a utility it could well be publicly owned. We have some experience to go by already. If the government pauses to look at the present state of public policy relative to cablevision and if this government is fair, it will have to admit that our present policy is chaotic. I presume the minister will be involved, if not directly at least indirectly, with cablevision and community antenna systems because there is more involved than just television. The broader aspects of communications are also involved in these systems.

I have here a long article that the minister can read at his own convenience. It appeared in a local Ottawa paper a few days ago and states that the growth of community antenna systems in Canada in recent years has Ottawa in a dither. Ottawa is in a dither because there is a lack of a clearly articulated and designed policy. The result has been that over the past few years there has been a proliferation of community antenna and cablevision systems without adequate regulation and public control. When that occurs there can be no surprise that chaos results, which has been the case. All I am saying to the minister is that I hope whatever policy he adopts relative to the television aspect of satellite communication he will not opt for a policy that will leave the owners of television sets in the more remote communities dependant on private cablevision or community antenna operators. For \$50,000 these operators can put up a community antenna system and draw the signal from the satellite. They are the only ones then in a position to relay the signals to the set owners. In effect, they have a monopoly, so the public will be at a tremendous disadvantage. Needless to say there is much more that can and should be said with respect to the establishment of the Department of Communications.

I will conclude now by making reference to one other item to which the minister referred, that is that his new department will have a research and development function. This is fine. I am sure the department will be capable of co-operating closely with the privately-owned communications industry and that much good will come of it. However, I want to know whether included in this research and development function of the department