

Telesat Canada Act

perhaps get us in trouble with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. On second thoughts, my fears are quelled, because I understand the satellites are not to be launched until 1972 a year in which an important electoral event will take place, and I suspect my hon. friend from Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie) will be pushing the button to send those satellites aloft. And, as we all know, the hon. member for Hillsborough is a straight shooter.

Mr. Basford: Dreamer.

Mr. McCleave: We have a unique type of bill before us, one which my hon. friend from Hillsborough referred to as a hybrid bill, that is, a measure somewhere between what we call a public bill and a private bill. It sets up a unique partnership, a partnership between government, the communications industry and the people on a one-third one-third one-third basis, as the minister has said.

I find nothing abhorrent about that proposition. It is fitting that a new approach be taken when dealing with a flexible and fast developing industry such as communications. I should like to point out that the Canadian communications industry is probably the first in the world; at least it is not surpassed by that of any other country, though it may be equalled by that of our neighbour to the south. I hope that no measure we pass in this parliament will hurt an industry which is well established, which has never had to call upon any government for subsidy or subvention as far as I know, which has managed to pay its way and keep well in the forefront of technological change, and which has managed to give good service to the people of Canada while at the same time keeping down charges to its customers. As I say, I hope nothing we do will inhibit the progress of the communications industry in Canada. As a partner that industry should be welcomed into any venture. I hope we can, through government, bring the same abilities to that partnership as they will bring to us.

● (9:50 p.m.)

A few days ago the president of Bell Canada, Robert C. Scrivener, spoke to the Canadian Industrial Management Association, Manitoba division, in Winnipeg, and I should like to put on the record one of the points he made which is well worth noting:

I would particularly wish to refer to two cases where telecommunications are part of the government postal system—Great Britain and France—as examples of high cost and poor service. I will

say that Great Britain has recognized this, and is in the throes of getting its telecommunications completely separated from its post offices. Postal service can't be made better by making telecommunications service worse.

As for comparative costs, using the average wage paid in manufacturing as the unit of measurement, it takes fewer hours of work to pay for one month's telephone service in Canada than anywhere else. The figure for Canada is two hours, for Great Britain four and one half hours and for France 16 hours. In Canada, telephone users pay long distance tolls on a smaller proportion of the calls they make than is the case in any other major country in the world.

I mention these points because I think it is a matter of welcoming, as a partner, a very successful industry indeed. It is a question of welcoming people who do not need policing in what they set out to do, people who have spent enormous sums of money on the technology that is so much a part of the communications scene. I hope our attitude toward them will not be one of regulation but one of co-operation and helpfulness.

This unique partnership does carry with it some elements that I would particularly like to study in committee. I think some provinces and some communications companies are concerned that entry into this new venture may be the thin end of the wedge as far as some form of federal control over their operations is concerned. I hope this will not be the case and that the evidence we will hear will prove it not to be the case.

Secondly, I am concerned and would like more information from the minister on the proposed method of selling shares in the Telesat Corporation to the public at large. I hope this will be done in such a way that everybody will find it possible to participate in the ownership of this new corporation; that it will not be restricted simply to those people who can plunk down large sums of money. If the experience of the Canadian Overseas Telecommunications Corporation is borne out in this field—and I think it will be—this should be a money maker for the government, for the communications companies and for the public who are shareholders. I also hope that in committee the minister will tell us how their one third of the shares will be divided amongst the communications companies.

The hon. member for Hillsborough (Mr. Macquarrie), in a very thoughtful speech, made some points that I should like to echo and re-emphasize. The question of the dealings among the three partners, the question of the fine print, statutory regulations and the