

Telesat Canada Act

market for its funds without giving equity to private investors, and with that equity giving them a voice that may be in conflict with that of the crown. In the same way, the common carriers of Canada can have that interest represented in various ways without actually having share ownership in the corporation.

One of the arguments frequently made for public ownership, aside from conflicts of the type I have mentioned, is that sometimes an operation is so complicated that if you have to administer, supervise it and resolve the conflicts that arise, the cost of the supervision and administration exceeds whatever benefits will accrue from private involvement, we have seen this happen in the past; we have seen it with the Bank of Canada and other corporations in Canada where ultimately they had to be turned into completely public corporations because of the conflicts and difficulties of administration.

The minister is not unaware of the possibilities of a crown corporation, because in his testimony before the committee he indicated that he had considered public ownership; this was one of the things he had taken into consideration before making his recommendations. But what was disturbing about the minister's indication that he had considered public ownership was the rather cavalier way in which he dismissed it. I would like to quote from the minister's statement to the committee so that the house may know what he said about public ownership and some of the arguments he made on behalf of public ownership before dismissing those arguments. At one stage of the committee hearings he said:

Let me say frankly that such a proposal—

That is, a crown corporation.

—has some superficial attractions to me: it would rid me of a lot of headaches. Drafting legislation for a crown corporation would be relatively simple; I could probably make some easy political mileage by running against the telephone companies and finally I would have no more worries about cost and efficiency.

I emphasize these words in the minister's statement, "I would have no more worries about cost and efficiency". This is the Postmaster General of Canada (Mr. Kierans) speaking, the man who operates the Post Office. Is the minister telling us that because the Post Office is run by the government of Canada he is not concerned about cost and efficiency? Is he telling us that the only people concerned about these things are private

entrepreneurs, and not the government? If this is his attitude toward the Post Office, I think some of the credit that has been coming his way regarding the management of the Post Office has been misplaced. I hope that the Postmaster General of this country is as much concerned about cost and efficiency in his department as any private entrepreneur. The minister continued in his statement to the committee:

If the satellite system, under a crown corporation, proved to be more expensive than forecast, this could readily be explained away as inevitable in a first-of-its-kind project of this type, and the extra cost unloaded on to the taxpayer.

What a remarkable statement from a minister of the crown! What an indication of his attitude toward the operation of government departments—"the extra cost unloaded on to the taxpayer". Is this his reason for rejecting a crown corporation, namely, that he has so little confidence in himself and the people associated with him in his party that they are afraid to trust themselves with a government enterprise? Surely, no more spurious argument than that could be made against a crown corporation.

In effect, the minister is telling us that as long as the Liberals are in office, with the kind of mentality and attitude expressed by the Liberal party, any hope of getting efficiency in government departments can be forgotten. We have suspected that this situation existed. One has only to consider the chaos in the passport office today to see one example of the sort of thing the Postmaster General is worried about.

However, I like to think back to the days when the Postmaster General was not in the cabinet, perhaps even to those days before he was running for the leadership of the Liberal party. In those days I think he made some of the finest statements ever made in this country with regard to possibilities for the future of Canada. He had great idealism and courage then. What has happened to that idealism and courage in the intervening period?

An hon. Member: He has been clobbered by Benson.

Mr. Saltsman: My colleague has just suggested the answer, he has been clobbered by Benson.

Mr. Kierans: Battered by Benson.

Mr. Saltsman: I thank the minister, Mr. Speaker; he has just said, "battered by Benson". This is a very clear indication of how