

Government Organization

series of suggestions with regard to the direction the minister should take in this respect?

Even if it costs more, it is worth it. I believe it is important for another reason in addition to the factors having to do with national unity and servicing our north country and frontier areas. The third reason is this. We must do whatever is practically possible, whatever is feasible, to build up a larger pool of scientific knowledge and technological capability in our country. Too often in the past we have seen instances where, because we did not go ahead with a particular project that required scientific expertise, Canada suffered the loss of some of its best scientific minds. Why should we allow this to happen if we have before us a concrete prospect of being able to employ and take advantage of the brains that exist in our country? The benefit and advantages gained would be shared by the country if these people were given an opportunity to work on projects which would use their talents.

I do not want to leave this subject without making some further extensive reference to the matter of a communications space satellite system and the relationship between government and private sectors in developing and owning such a system. I should like to quote to the minister an excerpt from an American business journal. This excerpt bears on the very point with which I am dealing:

A number of decisions are now coming up—some of them to be made by the F.C.C., some by Congress, some by the White House, and some, in all probability, by the courts—that will largely determine the shape and direction of communication in the U.S. and the world for several decades to come. Hence a titanic struggle is under way, involving an impressive array of private, government, and quasi-public contestants in a bewildering variety of contests. Some of the contests are between governments—e.g., Great Britain and France against the U.S. Within the U.S. itself, some of the conflicts are between different agencies of the federal government—e.g., the F.C.C. versus the Defence Department. Some are within industry—e.g., Comsat versus A.T. & T. Some are between industry and government—e.g., Comsat versus the F.C.C.; and some involve quite new and unexpected lineups—e.g., the Ford Foundation versus Comsat and A.T. & T. The stakes are huge—

I repeat that, for emphasis:

The stakes are huge—for the governments, corporations, and foundations involved, and for everyone who uses the telephone or watches television.

Although this kind of jockeying for position or advantage does not exist to the same degree in Canada, and I have not pretended that it does, one must assume that it exists to

[Mr. Schreyer.]

some degree. That is what led me to ask just what pressure the minister was under, what pressure he was being subjected to from the private sector and those who were jockeying for advantage in this undertaking. The way in which these questions are decided will determine the shape, not only of the communications industry but of economic developments generally. The decision may set precedents that could determine how technologies as yet undeveloped are to be introduced in the future. I submit that we in Canada should try to avoid the mistakes that were made in the United States in 1962 relative to the communications policy and legislation. In the United States, although the research and development that went into the communications satellite field was and still is largely a product of government financing, and although the promotion of satellite communications is said to be an object of national U.S. policy, the corporation that was eventually established to operate in this area was a private body.

• (3:30 p.m.)

The Chairman: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has expired, unless it is the wish of the committee that he should continue.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Schreyer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will conclude in five minutes. In my opinion the fundamental question is: Who should have the right to put up and operate a domestic satellite system? That question has not been answered in Canada and it has not even been answered yet in the United States. Congress has passed legislation in this general area of communications by satellite, but the question as to who shall own and operate a domestic system in the United States, for example, has been left deliberately shrouded in ambiguity. Almost by general consensus the word is out that it was left deliberately shrouded in ambiguity so that there would be no dog fight in Congress when the bill to establish the concept was brought before it. I hope we can avoid this in Canada. I hope that members of all parties will not go back to the old clichés of yesteryear about private enterprise and socialistic state ownership, etc. The important thing is that if we are to accept the minister's own definition that communication is the central nervous system of our society, what member here can argue with logic and