

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 29, 1971

The House met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

BROADCASTING

CABLE TELEVISION—TABLING OF DOCUMENT ON TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 41 (2) I wish to table copies in both official languages of a document concerning technical standards and procedures for cable television—CATV—which will ensure higher standards of quality for cable television subscribers.

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COMMUNICATIONS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN CANADIAN OVERSEAS TELECOMMUNICATION CORPORATION AND BRITISH POST OFFICE ON CONSTRUCTION OF NEW TRANS-ATLANTIC CABLE

Hon. Eric W. Kierans (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to announce to the House the conclusion of an agreement between officials of the Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Corporation and Post Office authorities in the United Kingdom to build a new high capacity transatlantic cable.

The decision to build a new cable, CANTAT-2, is based on projections of a 20 per cent per annum growth in the market for transatlantic circuits during the next 15 years. This is expected to bring the Canadian demand to a level around 4,600 circuits by 1985. A dynamic element in this pattern of growth has been the increase in direct dialing between countries on both sides of the Atlantic.

This bilateral project in which the Canadian investment will be of the order of \$37 million will provide 1,840 new telephone circuits on the North Atlantic route between Canada, Britain and Europe. As an indication of the size of this project it should be noted that CANTAT-2 will have 400 more circuits than all existing transatlantic cables, whether they originate in this country or in the United States. Cost of the project will be shared equally by COTC and the British Post Office.

The new high-capacity cable which will link Canada, through a point in Nova Scotia, to Europe at a point in Cornwall is expected to be ready for service early in 1974. This new facility will be added to existing satellite and cable circuits used by COTC to provide reliable and economical telecommunications between Canada and Europe. This project, which has involved months of negotiations between COTC, officials of the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce and the Department of

Communications, and their British counterparts, involves several significant advantages for Canada.

• (2:10 p.m.)

Among these numerous advantages are the following. This arrangement provides an alternate commercial route to the transatlantic circuits provided by Intelsat, the international consortium in which COTC is also a shareholder. It provides technological diversity which means greater security for our transatlantic communications links. It provides a system that is compatible with the domestic communications system to be operated by Telesat Canada. It assures that Canadian systems will continue to serve as the main route for transpacific Commonwealth traffic. The new cable, therefore, will provide Canadians with more flexibility and reliability in their telecommunications links with Europe.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): Mr. Speaker, I regret the absence of my hon. friend and colleague, the hon. member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Dinsdale), though it gives me satisfaction to comment upon a statement from the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans) which bears some of the imprint and impact of being good news. His statement deals with one of the few areas of his extended domain which generally has been successfully operated, namely, the Canadian Overseas Telecommunication Corporation, and to that extent I am very pleased with this new development.

I was interested in a general way to note that the agreement was not made available to us, and obviously this statement is a very general and superficial, and perhaps generous, appraisal of the agreement. One is impressed by the fact that we need more cables, and one is reminded that we have not so completely moved into the era of the satellite as was sometimes predicted in the excitement of a few years ago.

I look forward to receiving further details of this important project. If it allows us to maintain closer contact with other parts of the world in this advancing age of technology, it is something which we welcome. I should like to say that generally I have confidence in the capacity of the COTC to represent Canadian interests in this regard.

I notice that it is intended to integrate, as it must be, this system of cable with the Telesat operation. This is a very important and very costly project which it seems will be much later getting into operation, and at much greater cost, than the minister used to predict. Nevertheless we do feel some satisfaction from the fact that a definite step has been taken in this way to improve our contact with other parts of the world.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party welcome the minister's