

Bell Canada

[English]

Mr. Alexander: Give us some examples.

Mr. Pelletier (Hochelaga): I gave some today during the question period. I will repeat them for the hon. member, as it seems they need repeating.

Mr. Alexander: Thank you.

Mr. Benjamin: The minister is chicken.

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Hochelaga): First I gave the example of a decision which would mainly be based on an obviously false principle and, second that of a decision which would obviously be based on inaccurate facts or serious falsehoods.

Those are but two examples among many others. There might be other reasons as I said this afternoon during the oral questions period. I do not reject a government intervention, but I want to stress the point that it would not be made without very serious reasons. According to a practice in the Communications Department that has been going on ever since the department itself has been established, as soon as a decision is published, it is submitted to the high officials and advisors of the department so that it can be considered at length. They report to the minister who, although he may accept or reject their advice, must hear from them before rendering his decision: he must be aware of the pros and cons which could make the executive power, the governor in council act directly, use its reserved powers. This is a matter of routine.

Such a practice, I repeat, was resorted to as soon as the department was established and this is the first thing I did myself as soon as the ruling being considered tonight was published.

It would be irregular, I think, to expect such a study to be completed within a day and a half, within two, three or maybe five days, in view of the long process which enabled the Commission itself to reach the ruling that is the subject-matter of this resolution.

Such interference, as I said, constitutes an exceptional measure and there should be serious reasons for invoking powers reserved to the cabinet.

The hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) said in his statement that the CTC "was not equipped" to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to it. Mr. Speaker, the truth is—and the government probably knew it before being told by the opposition—that the circumstances have changed faster than the Commission could transform itself. And I should like to refer the hon. members who did not read it, to page 26 of the Green Book I had the honour of tabling recently in the House. The hon. members will realize that the government is quite aware of the problem to which the hon. member for York South referred, and that it is now clearly considering in that Green Book a reorganization of the Telecommunications Section of the CTC.

Incidentally, I should also like to tell the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald) who, during the question period today, proposed that consumers should get help from the government, under some form or other, to

submit their claims and make their case before the CTC, that if he refers to page 14 of the Green Book, he will see that this possibility is actually being considered. In fact, we are saying, and I quote:

The Government is accordingly considering a number of suggestions with regard to the representation of consumer interests when licensing and regulatory matters are being dealt with by the Minister of Communications and the federal regulatory bodies.

Therefore, in the government, we are quite aware of the fact that some changes are urgently needed in that respect, and Mr. Speaker, I should like to give the House the assurance that after having conducting the consultations called for by the Green Book, we intend to act and to act with determination and haste, in order to take the corrective measures required in a situation that we have fully looked into.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, here is the last point that I want to deal with. A short while ago when I talked of cancelling or changing a decision I heard someone: It is only a matter of suspension. So I think that the suspension—again I do not exclude the possibility of the government eventually taking this decision or of being myself compelled, once an analysis has been made by my department, to recommend to the government such a measure—of a decision by the Canadian Transport Commission already constitutes a kind of judgment made on the validity of the decision itself. And I was concerned, for instance, when I heard the hon. member for York South state positively that "the Board has been intimidated". He was certainly not making it easy for us to accept a suggestion that is his own, because after this charge has been made in such a positive manner, if we were going to suspend the decision we would now seem to admit that the Commission has been intimidated.

[English]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. This completes the round of 15-minute speakers. There are 14 members on the list who are to speak for the next 120 minutes, each of whom shall not speak for more than 10 minutes.

Hon. Alvin Hamilton (Qu'Appelle-Moose Mountain): Mr. Speaker, as I suggested in my supplementary question to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) earlier today, the motion before the House raises the ghosts of the past. This evening's debate has been held before. What is being said in the present debate is almost a repetition of what was said in the debates of 1966 and 1967 on the setting up of the Canadian Transport Commission. At that time, members of all parties worked together in this House as members of all parties have never before worked to produce the national transportation bill and to remove from the control of Parliament over 40 per cent of the economy of this nation. The House put that power into the hands of a commission, known as the Canadian Transport Commission, in the interests of efficiency in the running of this country.

In that debate those of us who were concerned about this tremendous transfer of power to the board issued warning after warning, as can be found in the speech of the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) of December 12, 1966, and again in the speech of the hon. member for Peace River as well as in my own speech delivered on