

Telesat Canada Act

● (8:40 p.m.)

If we opt for public ownership, and I presume the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Schreyer) might be sympathetic to that point of view—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Macquarrie:—well and good. I am not so narrow minded or blinded by historic facts to say that public ownership is always bad. It is not. On the other hand, sometimes it is atrocious. But if we opt for public ownership and public control in this area, why not go in through the front door instead of through these devious regulatory devices which take us in through the back door? Perhaps this mixed economic marriage is a good idea. I confess that I think it is. I think it would be very foolish not to draw, in any joint participation, on the expertise and knowledge as well as concern for advancement which has been shown by the private sector in this field. Yet, I wonder if it would not have been smarter to draw up the terms of the marriage contract more precisely? Too many things in it are not clear and could, in fact, be dangerous. So, I think as this bill is scrutinized it will be in the interests of the country and of our telecommunications advancement, which means a great deal to all of us, to bring in amendments that are a good deal more far reaching than those mentioned by the minister. That, I think, is why we must scrutinize this bill, carefully in committee.

This is a tremendously important piece of legislation, and the minister is quite right in saying that in many ways it is unique. It is too easy to be excited about the glamour of it all, to be carried away by a sort of sophisticated scientific nationalism and to say that we will get something up there, and that is all there is to it. There are too many technological ramifications that we have not examined. Tremendous problems are associated with this kind of economic entity, if I may call it that, and I think the minister will benefit from the views of people in the field. Already he has run afoul of the common carriers, and those problems must be worked out. There are other problems here. I think if he is able to show some degree of flexibility, if we find in committee that there is no heavy-handed partisanship, if people generally recognize that this is a complex area from which we all may benefit immensely and if there is an agreeable attitude toward improvements no matter from what source these suggestions come, then there may emerge a

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

bill which will be worthy of the things this corporation will be charged with directing for years to come.

I share the minister's enthusiasm for our role in the telecommunications field. I agree with him in what he says about the contributions of Canadian men of science. He has some able and most excellent people in his department; they are people who have built up a reputation across this country and beyond this country. There are people in private industry in this field in Canada whose reputation extends far beyond Canada and I think it is wise to have them all working together. No effort ought to be spared to make that working relationship harmonious and meaningful.

At this stage of the bill I will say no more than to express generally my approval of this advance, to wish it well, and to suggest that no effort ought to be spared to bring the greatest improvements possible to this legislation. In this way we may have the very best type of controlling body presiding over our telecommunications satellite, the launching of which will bring a feeling of pride to all of us. We do not want it launched with any spirit of bitterness or any feeling that certain things could have been done better. I hope we will make a concerted effort to transcend partisanship, to transcend bureaucratic empire-building and to make our very best contribution to this most important project.

Mr. Ed Schreyer (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, ever since word went out that the government of Canada was thinking of establishing a space communications satellite, I have supported that notion enthusiastically. I supported it for many of the reasons the minister enunciated this afternoon and this evening when he spoke in support of the legislation. The minister has told us why we must go ahead with all determination and with all the benefits of our research and available expertise in the setting up of this communication satellite corporation. It is hardly necessary for me to repeat or emphasize what he said. Certainly, it is evident that by establishing a satellite system we shall enable industry across this country to communicate more efficiently and with more sophistication. The satellite will be a tremendous boon to the remote areas of the country and particularly to the northern frontier of Canada. It will also be of service in providing channels of communication between different parts of the country in both Canadian official languages. For all these reasons we support the notion