

COMSAT Urged to Operate Distance Communications

WASHINGTON—Senator E. L. (Bob) Bartlett announced that the Communications Satellite Corporation has launched a study of the Alaska Communication System.

In a letter dated December 8, Senator Bartlett urged COMSAT to undertake an in-depth study to determine if it would be possible for COMSAT to operate long distance communication facilities in Alaska.

The request was made in connection with enactment of Bartlett's bill authorizing the sale of the government-owned long-lines communication facilities in the state.

James McCormack, chairman of the COMSAT board of directors, wrote the Senator on January 11 that a team of specialists was already reviewing inter—and intrastate commercial communications traffic and the facilities to be offered for sale.

The team is headed by Edwin J. Istvan, assistant to McCormack for special activities.

McCormack reported that the COMSAT team anticipated a visit to Alaska at an early date.

In making his suggestion that COMSAT study the Alaska communication problems, Senator Bartlett noted that satellites offered one way of providing badly-needed communication services at greatly reduced rates.

He said that it "would be extremely shortsighted if COMSAT were to help bring improved communications to an emerging nation without first having attempted to do the same for Alaska."

Senator Bartlett suggested that if the study demonstrated that it would be feasible for COMSAT to become involved in the Alaska communications industry, the corporation should become one of the firms bidding for the system.

Bartlett stressed that the public interest must be served in any sale of ACS and that interest could best be served by seeking bids and advice from as wide a segment of the communications industry as possible.

"What we need is the advice of the experts in the field on how best to bring the most modern communications technology to Alaska as soon as possible," he said.