

SELECT COMMITTEE ON TELEPHONE SYSTEMS

INQUIRY INTO THE VARIOUS TELEPHONE SYSTEMS IN OPERATION IN CANADA AND ELSEWHERE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, COMMITTEE ROOM,
MONDAY, March 20, 1905.

The committee met at 11 o'clock a.m. for the purpose of organization, Sir William Mulock being unanimously elected chairman, and, having taken the chair and thanked the members for the honour done him, said: The question which we have been appointed to investigate is a most important one, and personally I approach it with an unbiased mind. There are several points which require the attention of the committee. First of all, there is considerable legislation under which telephones are operated, and I think it should be our object to acquire information regarding this legislation, whether passed by the Dominion parliament, the Provincial legislatures, or possibly by municipal bodies. This is a phase of the question which will require special investigation and study. I have, therefore, invited Mr. Pownall, of the Department of Justice, to prepare a report on the condition of the law regarding telephones in Canada, the mother country, the United States and elsewhere. I have also had a report furnished me by Mr. F. Dagger, of Toronto, on the working of some municipal systems in the western states. I think the members of the committee will agree with me that it would be advisable to know the exact position of the federal and the provincial laws in Canada, the laws of the United Kingdom, Australia and other countries.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN.—It might be advisable for us to employ some man to investigate thoroughly the telephone situation in Great Britain.

Sir WILLIAM MULOCK.—Yes, we should certainly have complete information upon the condition of affairs in the motherland. The committee will recall, perhaps, that there was a parliamentary investigation in the United Kingdom not long ago. The report is a very bulky document. Then we will require information as to the workings of different systems.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN.—We ought to have summary of that committee's conclusions.

Sir WILLIAM MULOCK.—Then we will require information as to the workings of different systems.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN.—Has there been an investigation at Washington?

Sir WILLIAM MULOCK.—I do not know. One of the officers of my department is going to Washington this week on another matter, and I will cause him to make inquiries. I think it will be necessary for the committee to summon the officers of the various telephone companies, to examine these officers, to ascertain the extent of their systems, the capital invested, and the details of operation. The point, to my mind, and it is a very important one, is that while there are many telephone systems in very thickly settled districts, and some grievances in connection with their working, there is a grievance also from which that class of persons who have no telephones at all suffer. I do not think any analysis of the telephone systems will be completely