

Bell Canada

Therefore, considering its peculiar and privileged situation, we are demanding that Bell Canada release with the balance sheet of the telephone company those of its subsidiaries so that we might have a fair idea of the justification for its request. Otherwise its claims will not come to an end since obviously the operational costs of a telephone system will always go up. However, from an administrative point of view, it is important that all members of parliament have the opportunity to obtain appropriate information. They should not be deprived, because of legislation, of the right to look into the company's administrative mechanism from time to time.

It must be recognized that we are not dealing with a poor company since its revenues amounted to more than \$200 million in 1976. It would be interesting to know how much it cost to provide free telephone service to over 20,000 employees of this company. What are the salaries of its senior managers? According to my information, there are average salaries of over \$100,000. How did the company manage to reduce wage settlements with its regular employees by several million dollars? Doubtless, it was inspired by the fight against inflation. I have here an article published in the newspaper *La Presse* dated December 4, 1976, on the hearing held to take into consideration the request of the company. Let me quote one paragraph:

The contingent of company officials and its troop of lawyers and accountants yesterday evacuated the third floor of the Chateau Laurier where they had been staying for five weeks. A similar hearing lasted 45 days in 1968 and cost the company \$760,000.

One must admit those are extravagant expenses. It is high time the company worry about the administrative aspect of its business. When we realize what extravagant expenses are incurred in the various sectors of its administration, I feel we have reason to hesitate in giving our support to a bill that would help reduce the possibilities of obtaining relevant information in due course.

Where telephone line installation is concerned, we know full well there are difficulties and that the service could be improved. Out in the country, we can still find party lines being used by five to eight households. It seems to me the company could improve that situation. I have here a clipping from the newspaper *La Presse* giving a summary of the difficulties encountered.

This situation is not affecting only individuals. In the city of Laval, a number of businessmen are complaining that they cannot get telephone services even in industrial developments which were planned a long time ago. I am quoting from this article: In Fabreville, the delay in telephone installation is due to a pole problem. It is Quebec Hydro which is responsible for putting up telephone poles for Bell Canada—explained Mr. Albert Gagnon, a Laval contractor. The dealings between the two corporations are sometimes slow, but a great many people think that it is difficult to obtain a telephone line, which is quite embarrassing for us and greatly untrue.

The clients of suburban contractors want absolutely to break the feeling of isolation by having the telephone installed in a number of subdivisions. If they cannot get the telephone,

[Mr. Dionne (Kamouraska).]

buyers will become rare. People do not stop complaining: this is a ridiculous situation, Mr. Roger Brousseau, Deputy Industrial Commissioner for the City of Laval, is reported as saying. We work hard to attract industries, everything is planned, carefully prepared, but people complain constantly about the telephone service. There is no problem with Quebec Hydro, why are there problems with Bell Canada? The poles are there, but some industrialists have to wait months when only 500 feet from their plant their neighbour has had the service for a long time. I have seen it in my area. They were waiting for Quebec Hydro to install a pole in order to connect someone who had asked for the service a long time ago.

Some people claim that Bell Canada had them wait several months before installing a private line. But when they asked for a business line, they were told they could have got it in two days. The only difference is in the price: a residential line costs \$6.50 in Chomedey and a business line \$19.00 a month. In Montreal, it's \$7.10 and \$20.75 a month.

I think the company representatives should use part of their surplus to improve the telephone service in all the areas where it is necessary. I admit that since a 27 year-old genial inventor discovered the principle of voice transmission over telephone lines on July 26, 1874, cities have grown larger, regionalization has been made necessary by modern life and contacts with telephone operators have become less personal. This modernization offers a number of advantages but there are also disadvantages. The number of telephone calls has considerably increased. Bell Canada personnel is generally tactful, courteous and poised. The organization of such a communication system obviously requires skilled staff; to this we can add repair work which is not always an easy task, especially in winter. When there is a storm, they have to set to work on Sunday, in the evening, at any time; the repairs must be made as quickly as possible.

There are delays especially in telephone installation and I think that the company, which surely wants to keep a rather well-established reputation, should direct its planning efforts in this area. I have here an article from the newspaper *La Presse*, dealing with the present situation in the province of Quebec. I quote:

There are 31 telephone companies in Quebec but Bell Canada alone accounts for 90 per cent of the Quebec telephone industry.

Actually, Bell Canada holds the most interesting operation areas, namely the main urban centres where rates are higher because of the larger population which can be served and where operations are less costly because of the proximity of services.

For example, one telephone installation in Montreal costs over \$800.00 whereas one installation on the North Shore by Quebec Telephone costs \$4000.00.

Bell has nearly three million telephones installed whereas the other thirty companies put together have hardly 300,000 sets.

The biggest company operating exclusively in Quebec, the Quebec Telephone, a branch of an American company, has only 190,000 sets installed, even if they cover 40 per cent of the province of Quebec. Needless to say, the other companies are rather small businesses.

I shall conclude by quoting an editorial published quite some time ago, on December 28, 1971, two days before the New Year, but since it summarized a serious situation and also