

14 GOVERNMENT TELEPHONES

public, and for developing a substantial business to serve the public.

Moreover, the successful development of the business was not a matter of smooth sailing; the economic seas in those days were extremely turbulent and often treacherous. Although a period of boom and prosperity accompanied the completion of the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway to the Pacific Coast in 1886-87, yet the telephone industry at that time was too young to participate in the general expansion. Somewhat later, the growth of the business was retarded by the local depression which, beginning in 1888-89, continued for several years, — a depression which had as one of its causes a decrease in immigration. Furthermore, when a vigorous immigration movement again set in — in 1895 — the nature of the immigration was such that little impetus was given to telephone development, for during the period 1895-1900 the immigrants were predominantly of the peasant class with slender knowledge of the English language, self-contained habits, and small purchasing power. Thus it is obvious that up to 1900 the telephone business could not grow otherwise than slowly. Nevertheless, it is found that in 1900 the Bell Telephone Company served more subscribers, in proportion to population, in each of the towns of Winnipeg, Brandon and Portage la Prairie ⁴ than are served to-day in the

⁴ Cf. *The Winnipeg Telegram*, January 16, 1908.