

Adjournment Debate

expropriation aspect, but whether a farmer, having worked in some cases 25, 30 or 40 years to accumulate the property, should be penalized.

He talked about what this brings in to the national revenue, but that is not the question either. It is the aspect of whether the farmer who if he has not any sons or daughters who want to carry on, and he wants to dispose of the property, should be penalized. That is the question to which we should address ourselves. I have some sympathy with it and I shall make sure it is looked into—not to discriminate against any other taxpayer but to make sure that the farmers who contribute to the economic life of this country should not be penalized in our tax system.

I shall make sure that is not the case and that they are treated fairly.

COMMUNICATIONS—PROPOSED USE OF BALANCED
ARMATURE RECEIVER BY BELL TELEPHONE—REQUEST FOR
DELAY

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I think most of the members of this House would agree that once a group of people in this country has established a right to a service it ought not to have that right unilaterally taken away.

I think we all agree that Canadians should not lose the right to health services, education, or any other service they now have. But unfortunately very soon one group of Canadians is going to be losing part of the rights it has to communication services. I am speaking of the hearing impaired in this country and the full rights they presently have to use telephones.

● (2210)

The Bell Telephone Company has decided it is going to save some money by installing a device in its telephones called a balanced armature receiver. The problem is that this balanced armature receiver does not produce a strong enough magnetic field to activate the hearing aids and teletype machines in the homes of the hearing impaired. The present telephones make this possible, but when the new technology is installed, starting this July, these persons with hearing disabilities will no longer be able to use the telephone for communication purposes; at least they will not be able to use the telephones of the Bell Telephone system.

A group of people, concerned about the loss to the hearing impaired of full access to our communications system, has approached both the Bell Telephone Company and the Canadian Radio-Television Commission over the last year to make its concerns known and to push for delays or changes in technology which would ensure equal right to communication by telephone for the hearing impaired. The Bell Telephone Company, however, has refused even to delay installation of these devices. Instead it has merely promised that it will begin to go to work researching hearing aid designs. It also promised that it would make pay telephones and telephones in the homes and work places of the hearing impaired compatible with present hearing aids. For use with other telephones Bell has offered to produce an adaptor, which is the size of a hockey puck and costs \$8.

[Mr. Trudel.]

The steering committee on the telephone receiver and the hearing impaired has taken the position that this does not go far enough, and I agree with them. Why should the hearing impaired be forced to carry adaptors around with them when they do not have to do this now? And who is going to pay for these adaptors and their maintenance? Why should the hearing impaired be forced to have this additional nuisance and expense? For that matter, I am sure all hon. members who have children with hearing difficulties realize how absurd it is to ask active children always to carry an adaptor with them. Beyond that, this also means that in emergencies the hearing impaired will no longer be able to use the telephones of their friends and neighbours or even the phones of strangers, something which all of us take for granted.

If this is going to cause so much inconvenience for the hearing impaired, why is Bell going ahead with it? Does it want to save, relatively speaking, a paltry \$7 million to \$10 million over the next ten years? This might sound like a lot of money, but keep in mind that it comes to less than .04 per cent of Bell's budget. Keep also in mind that if Bell were to put a device called a fluxcoil in its phones the whole problem would be eliminated, because this device would create the necessary magnetic field. But Bell is unwilling to do it, because it would cut its savings by one third.

Many might think that not a lot of people are touched by this issue; but keep in mind that up to 10 per cent of our total population suffers from hearing handicaps. That group includes almost one third of our pensioners. Bell's action will affect all these handicapped people; not to mention their families, friends and fellow workers, all of whom must communicate with the handicapped and whose telephones might be needed by the hearing handicapped.

Let us also keep in mind where this will hit the hearing handicapped hardest. With three quarters of a million people out of work now, the hearing handicapped already have a special disadvantage finding work. Now they will have to go to prospective employers and tell them they must go to the added inconvenience of adding special phones if they want to hire a hard of hearing person. And make no mistake, businesses will be the first to get these new devices.

The telephone company has said that this will not become a problem for some time because it will not have large numbers of the new telephones installed. But beginning next month it will start installing the new receivers; without doubt, the hearing handicapped will begin to feel the effects very quickly.

When I raised this question in the House on June 9 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fleming) said that the CRTC was trying to get the two sides to co-operate and that he would bring the matter of the fluxcoil to the attention of the CRTC. We see how much good that has done. Bell Canada has refused to delay the implementation of the new receiver and next month will begin use of its balanced armature receiver. The CRTC has not shown, a few days before the end of June, any indication that it intends to force Bell Canada to postpone the implementation of this technology.

I call on the Minister of Communications (Mrs. Sauvé), who has ultimate responsibility in this matter, to inform