

a great deal has been lost since the practice of examining estimates directly in the Chamber was abandoned. Members of the House of Commons could say, as we have been saying during this private member's hour, that they would not allow certain items to go through or certain estimates to pass until they had been given satisfaction. The government complains, of course, that the opposition is being irresponsible, that it is holding things up. But how else in a society like ours, where the government exercises a virtual dictatorship, particularly in the years just following an election, can members air regional grievances? How do you force the government to back off its high horse without the opposition performing its function of saying it is not prepared to let legislation go through unless these grievances are satisfied?

● (1742)

The same can be said of Bell. How do you get Bell to back off its very lofty, estimable, but nevertheless very real high horse? We cannot, unless they come to parliament and get approval. When they come to parliament for approval we will raise issues which we have raised with them privately over the years, and regarding which we have not yet received satisfaction. Either we get that satisfaction or Bell will not get what it wants. That is the situation. Surely Bell should understand its role and should meet the members of the House who have grievances such as I have outlined. Members from northern Ontario in particular have longstanding grievances with Bell. It is not a matter of losing face or hurting pride but of recognizing the social responsibility of a company with a charter like Bell Canada.

Bell would be well advised to understand its role. It is not like other companies. If a person is not satisfied with the service of a particular company he can go somewhere else. It is not like going to the government. Of course, if you are not satisfied with the government you can take care of it at the next election, but how can you take care of Bell? Without a vigilant opposition to scrutinize the operations of Bell when it comes to the House of Commons, Bell is relatively unfettered. I realize there are controls, regulatory agencies and so on, which do a reasonably good job, but they cannot deal with the special problems of different regions caused by grievances against Bell Canada.

I see you are getting somewhat restless, Mr. Speaker, so I will sum up. Bell creates problems for itself by not accepting with pride the fact that it is an effective corporation. It does a good job, but it also has a special public responsibility. It must admit it is not a company like others and that it must accept its social responsibility. It must admit that it understands the sort of grievances which are raised by members of the opposition and that it must work harder to persuade members of the opposition of the correctness of its position. If this sort of change in attitude were to take place in the boardrooms of Bell, I think everyone would be happier and Bell might have more friends in this country, among whom I hope I am numbered.

### *Bell Canada*

**Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant):** Mr. Speaker, I enter this debate because I represent the riding of Brant where the telephone was first conceived, I believe in 1874. In my riding there is a very fine Bell homestead, the upkeep of which costs Bell Canada very little, though it nonetheless likes to take pride in the fact that Alexander Graham Bell spent a summer there, during the course of which he conceived the idea of the telephone. I only wish Bell were a little more charitable to some of its customers than it has been to the Bell Homestead Foundation in Brantford.

I realize that the state of Massachusetts and the mayor of Boston, when we were celebrating a couple of years ago the 100th anniversary of Alexander Graham Bell's concept, took some exception to the claim that the telephone was actually invented in Brantford, Ontario, rather than Boston, but I think that all those very mute Liberals who have not spoken on this bill will agree that it is nice to know that the telephone was at least conceived in Canada, not another country.

We are discussing here a very significant and important bill. Bell Canada has a monopoly in its field. It is a privately owned company which is sustained as a monopoly through legislation in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and to some degree in New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and perhaps in other parts of Canada as well. Not only is its presence in those provinces guaranteed; it must also accept the guarantee of service.

I should like to relate to the House for a few moments a rather tragic situation—I do not mean emotionally tragic—which exists in my constituency. It has to do with the Six Nations Indian reserve and is really a legal problem. In 1959 the Band Council passed a certain resolution, and passed another one in 1960. According to Bell Canada's lawyers, Bell cannot upgrade service until these two resolutions are withdrawn. I was on the reserve a few weeks ago for the opening of a beautiful new school on the Six Nations reserve called the Jamieson Memorial School. The Jamieson family on the Six Nations reserve has made an outstanding contribution to the field of education, medicine, and other endeavours, particularly agriculture. I do not know how much the school cost to build but I would say it was in the neighbourhood of \$300,000 or \$400,000. Yet this school had no telephone, and the reason for this was some legal hang-up with Bell going back to 1959.

Since Bell cannot instal a telephone in this brand new school, Mr. Speaker, what would happen, as has happened in schools in other jurisdictions, if a child gets ill or injures himself at sports, or suffers some mental or physical affliction? How can the school call an ambulance if this brand new elementary school, the teachers in which are doing a fine job, cannot use the telephone? It cannot even telephone the parents of children in need of assistance.

I think Bell Canada pays its top executives a salary of around \$200,000 a year gross, yet because of some legal hang-up going back to 1959 Bell cannot put one damned telephone into this new elementary school on the Six Nations Reserve. Obviously something is wrong with Bell Canada.