

Corporations and Labour Unions

changes in rates, upon receipt of a complaint from either an organization or an individual the board of transport commissioners merely orders a stenographer to type out a copy of the letter of complaint and to mail it to the head office of the B.C. Telephone Company with the accompanying memorandum, "Your comments would be appreciated". Naturally the company is able to defend itself. Then the moment the defence of the company arrives in the office of the board of transport commissioners a stenographer is again asked to type out a copy of the reply of the B.C. Telephone Company, and this is then forwarded to the complainant as the explanation of the board of transport commissioners in reply to the particular complaint.

This is a racket that ought to be ended. I see in this bill at least one means whereby the public of Canada, if the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Hull is accepted, might for once be able to explore the matter and find out exactly what is happening in the field of telephone companies who, through very devious and clever schemes, have escaped provincial jurisdiction and have managed to end up with the board of transport commissioners becoming their only supervision.

Mr. Caron: Following all this discussion, Mr. Chairman, I move:

That item 15 of the schedule be amended by striking out the word "telephone".

Mr. Fulton: I do not wish to discuss this matter all around again. With respect I think all I should say is that in our judgment it would not be sensible to impose upon these companies a duplicate burden of reporting. We think that information sufficient for the purposes is available or can be obtained. As a matter of fact, we believe there is already available information with respect to them upon which to assess the extent and effect of foreign ownership which is the purpose of this bill. If we find that this information is not available or if, when we come to ask the bureau to collate and compare the information with respect to telephone companies or any other companies with that available from the companies reporting under this bill, they find that there is a gap in their knowledge, then at that time we can amend the schedule in order to remove the exemptions in whole or in part and we would be quite prepared to do that. As I say, I wish to be co-operative. However, I must say as a fact that to date I have not been convinced by the arguments put forward.

Mr. Pickersgill: I am going to try to convince the minister in two ways. I should like the minister—who said he would have the information available at this stage, if I remember correctly—to tell us how much of

the B.C. Telephone Company, not according to their balance sheet which has no validity in this House of Commons but according to the records of the board of transport commissioners, is owned outside of Canada. If the minister can give us that information and can satisfy us that the board of transport commissioners already has it in exactly the same form as it is asked for in this bill, then I think his argument would have a good deal of validity. If he cannot do so, then I say that this argument completely falls to the ground.

However, I think it falls to the ground for another and more substantial reason. We have been told that the great majority of the telephone companies of Canada will be obliged to report under this act. All of the little ones will be obliged to do so. There are a great number of these small telephone companies in Ontario and Quebec. There are only five companies that are exempt. One of them is the B.C. Telephone Company. Another is the Bell Telephone Company. Those are two of the biggest concerns in the country. It seems to me that it is a very strange argument for the Minister of Justice to be using when he suggests that the law should compel small companies to do something but that the government should retain it in its discretion to decide whether or not the large companies will be asked to do so. That is the whole gravamen of the minister's argument. He says that they are reporting now. However, he does not say they are giving the same information. In fact, we know very well that they are not giving the same information. We also know very well that there will be no legal obligation upon them to give the same information. All there will be is this. If the government of the day sees fit to cause them to be asked for it, no doubt under the Railway Act the board of transport commissioners—although I am not sure that the government could instruct them in this matter under their own statute—could ask for it. That is, however, a much different matter from the imposing of a legal obligation.

Why should Maritime Telephone Company be obliged to report under this act the precise information the government thinks it wants and it be left completely optional whether the Bell Telephone Company or the British Columbia Telephone Company reports? We know that all these five companies report. One of them, of course, is C.N.T. which would not be obliged to report anyway because it is publicly owned. Hence there are in fact only four. There are four companies, two of them great octopuses, that are being exempted, whereas all the other privately-owned telephone companies in the