

this telephone monopoly, but that minister, for all we know, was forced out of the cabinet, and a gentleman who was counsel for the Bell Telephone Company has taken his place as Postmaster General. Only the other night, the present Minister of Railways (Mr. Emmerson) introduced a proposal for a wide open interchange of traffic, but he has been forced to abandon that position, and the interchange is to be limited in this direction. We even find the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Fisher), that close friend of the farmer, so influenced by a very close friend of his, who is deeply interested in telephones, that he actually tells us it is absurd for the telephone lines of the farmers to ask for an interchange of business with the Bell people. All I can say is that if it is the determination of the government to limit this interchange to long distance business, of course it will have its way, but let that proposal go out to the country to-morrow and see what the public think of it. It certainly does not meet the views of the public. It does not give us what the Minister of Railways promised, and does not compel the interchange of business to any great extent whatever. True, it gives the interchange over long distance lines, which is a step in advance, but why is it so hard to get a simple concession to the public? The company we have enfranchised is making big dividends, declaring 8 per cent and 10 per cent dividends, and its stock is at a premium to-day. That company says we shall select the people whom we will serve, we are not going to serve everybody on the terms parliament may determine, and they are in a position to strengthen their monopoly and control the business of the country, instead of having that business regulated in the public interest.

Mr. HYMAN. This matter was very fully discussed last evening, both with regard to the full connection as originally carried out in clause 25 of the Bill and the proposed long distance connection. I shall not attempt to deal with the insinuations of my hon. friend, who always seems ready to make insinuations and see reasons which nobody else can perceive. My hon. friend says that some three years ago the government promised to give entrance to railway stations and failed to redeem that promise. But I understand that in the Bill under consideration the Minister of Railways has inserted a clause which does compel railway companies to give entrance to telephone companies to their stations under terms and conditions provided in the Bill. There were two propositions practically before the committee. The one was to give free and entire interchange of telephone service. The other is to confine the interchange of telephone service to long distance lines.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. Is the report of that committee printed?

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN.

Mr. HYMAN. I do not think it is printed, but these provisions appear in as type-written amendments to the Bill.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. I would point out to the Minister of Railways and Canals that, as I understand it, he has not yet dealt with a number of amendments that he has prepared. For instance, the one defining long distance lines.

Mr. HYMAN. Yes, that has all been passed. Now, the argument advanced in the House last evening that the amendment which the committee made in the Bill should be extended seemed to me to be very strong. These same arguments, however, would not apply to what may be termed a local connection. One instance given by the hon. member for North Toronto (Mr. Foster) was that of a small company operating within a limited area, and having capital enough and being otherwise capable of serving the public efficiently within that limited area, but unable to maintain long connecting lines. The case of such a company is covered by the amendment proposed by the minister (Mr. Emmerson) which provides that long distance telephone connections can be ordered by the board, no matter whether the companies seeking the connection are local rivals of those owning the long distance lines or not. The hon. member for South York (Mr. W. F. Maclean) says that that is nothing.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. I admit that it is something, but I say that it does not give what the government promised to give.

Mr. HYMAN. It seems to me it gives a great deal. It settles for all time to come the question of long distance connection in telephones. The only thing it does not do is this: Where there are two or more companies operating within the same city, town or village, it does not compel them to interchange telephone communication. I think there is very strong argument for the view that to compel such an interchange would be going too far. Where a company has exploited a field, possibly has expended a considerable amount of money and brains to create a business, it would seem unfair to give another company, coming into the field and having only a few telephones, the right to compel the larger company to place its connections at the service of the new company. I think the House should be satisfied, and those who desire free telephone communication should be satisfied, with this amendment, at least as a step in the right direction. Let us try how this works. This is not the last time this Act can be amended; we shall have another session very soon. In the meantime I think the government have done well. They provide what the hon. member (Mr. W. F.