

I could go on and on down the list. It includes Eaton Common-wealth owning 50,000 shares; Investors Growth owning 320,000 preferred "E" shares.

An hon. Member: What about senators?

Mr. Nystrom: Probably there are many senators who own shares of Bell Telephone. The ones I have named are a few of the shareholders, Mr. Speaker, and as you can see they include very few small ordinary citizens.

Really what the Liberal and Conservative members here are interested in is facilitating the passage of a bill that will make it easier for one of the large, uncaring and insensitive corporations in our country, to go on taking millions of dollars out of the pockets of the ordinary Canadian citizen.

I happen to note a headline in the *Ottawa Citizen* just handed me which states that Toronto is Bell's ringing headache; that is the city of Toronto. Perhaps some of the Ontario members would be interested in commenting on that. I do not know whether the hon. member from Toronto who is sponsoring the bill has seen that clipping or would care to comment on it.

There are many people in the Conservative and Liberal parties who say, and of course the Conservatives are not too interested in this debate today, that socialists, or people who are interested in public ownership, are not efficient because such companies cannot make any profits, and so on. I have already quoted to you the very low rate provided by publicly owned telephone systems in Canada, as I maintain all telephone systems should be owned. The lowest rates in the country and the best service are provided by the publicly owned telephone companies on the prairies.

Not only that, I find that in Saskatchewan, in spite of very low rates over many, many years, and in spite of the fact that our province is very rural and it costs a great deal to put telephone service in because of the hundreds of thousands of miles of prairie and the little villages, towns, and farms strung out mile after mile, all of which means a very expensive network to build and maintain, the company is still providing the service at the lowest rates in the country, and still comes up making a profit.

Let me quote here from the annual report of the Saskatchewan Telecommunication Company which is Sasktel. Liberal members might be interested in knowing that at a recent convention of the Saskatchewan Conservative party one of the delegates moved a resolution which would consider the possibility, as I understand it, of selling Sasktel. The leader of the Conservative party got up to his feet, took the microphone, and demanded that the resolution be withdrawn. That indicates that even an extreme right-winger like the leader of the Saskatchewan Conservative party, who demanded that the resolution be withdrawn, is interested in protecting Sasktel.

We can also refer to the Liberal party and to the late Ross Thatcher who was premier of the province. He did not do anything to sell off Sasktel or the Saskatchewan Power Corporation, both of which are publicly owned corporations in that

Bell Canada

province. Indeed, he made sure they were continued as publicly owned corporations. If he had tried to do so there would have been a revolt on behalf of the people.

I started to quote from the annual report of Sasktel—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. He may continue with unanimous consent. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the previous speakers and I note that Bill C-1001 which has been renumbered now and again deals especially with an application from Bell Canada to be authorized to increase its number of common shares on the market and sell more shares than it is entitled to do under its existing charter to obtain new funds. We note that it is a financial problem.

I am aware that the companies gathered under the name of Bell Canada provide employment to thousands of workers in the operation of the telephone network system. Some subsidiaries manufacture telecommunication appliances while others are specialized in research. On the whole, it is an organization which has made Canada a forerunner in the telecommunication technology throughout the world while providing employment to thousands of Canadians. Quite true. I am a champion of free enterprise and I am pleased to promote it. However, it is proper to control the development of large companies which can become monopolies. This is why I feel that it is normal to check the amendments requested which, in my view, would remove one of the controls which it is possible to have on that monopoly on behalf of Canadians. In the midst of inflation, while governments are trying to control rising prices and we have just seen our telephone bills increased, we wonder if there is any justification for these repeated requests by Bell Canada which complains that it does make enough profits.

● (1732)

The real question that one must ask is: Does not Bell Canada, with all the profits derived from its several subsidiaries, make sizeable profits? Indeed, the telephone company itself, with all the operation costs involved, can hardly make the sizeable profits required, as is the case for Bell Canada, to make its shares more attractive. But its subsidiaries amply compensate, in our opinion at least, for the slack periods of the telephone company. Without accusing Bell Canada and its subsidiaries of resorting to administrative sleight of hand, let me say that we find the company's request premature and excessive, considering the present economic situation. It must be kept in mind that Bell Canada is a monopoly and it is in this perspective that one must determine what margin of profit is acceptable. Moreover, since Bell Canada is a monopoly, we are in a position to require that it provide all users everywhere in Canada with a service comparable to that in large centres.