

Bell Canada Act

play the old game of employer against the worker. The ordinary working man or woman must go out every day and put in a work day to get enough money to keep putting bread on the table. Their only defence against a large corporation that can simply shut down the plant, transfer workers around and play games with the workers' jobs in order to weaken their position and cut their wages, is to agree to form a union.

There are free votes in the union. I have been with the paper workers union for 16 years and have been at other meetings of labour movements to watch the voting process. It is a great deal more democratic, with all its faults, than what one can observe at the annual meeting of a large corporation such as Noranda, which I have also attended.

Mr. Malone: Oh?

Mr. Heap: Yes, I have attended a Noranda meeting with a voting share. I observed the almost invisible amount of democracy in the way a large corporation governing its business operates as compared with the much more grass roots democracy that operates within most unions.

The only strength of the union rests with the ability of the workers to join together and present a united front to the company. Now the company will have much greater freedom than before to split the workers into different jurisdictions, different corporations, or different companies, to prevent the workers from joining together to bargain with the company in the only way that gives them any strength. Therefore, this reorganization, as it is called, is a very serious threat to the workers' hope for a decent wage level and decent working conditions.

One working condition that is particularly important to workers at Bell Telephone is to be able to live like a normal adult human being at work without being harassed by supervisors and electronic supervisors. They want to be able to work without having every breath, movement, and sneeze rated against them. That kind of interference with a worker's life, right down to the most basic bodily needs, is the kind of thing that Bell, with its electronic expertise, is trying to develop to an inhuman degree with many of its workers. The only defence available to those workers is not Parliament, not the CRTC, not the legislatures of the provinces, but the union which is directly created by those workers who have day-by-day experience with what happens. On the basis of what those workers are willing to do jointly, the union can defend the right of the workers to have human dignity on the job. That will be threatened by Bell Canada reverting to its old anti-union and anti-worker attitude, once this reorganization gets fully under way.

It is a great shame that this Bill was to be apparently slipped through Parliament quickly. Not only did it come before the House yesterday almost without warning, while certain interested people were engaged in previously scheduled parliamentary business, the schedule changed again today. At nine o'clock this Bill was not going to come before the House until next week. Suddenly, at ten o'clock, it was going to be

discussed today. In other words, it looks as though those who are responsible for this Bill are ashamed of it and know how much public opposition has been expressed at the CRTC and in the media. They know how much consumer organizations and worker organizations are opposed to the Bill and do not want it openly debated any more than necessary.

The Government attempted to slip the Bill through quickly yesterday and is attempting to do so again today. However, it will not work. We will oppose this Bill as strongly as we can, not only here at second reading but in the committee. There is no good reason for Bell Telephone, or Bell Enterprises, whatever it wants to be called, to squeeze the telephone consumers and telephone workers as it is.

The company is rolling in dough by anyone's standards. Let me list just a few of the companies that it has been able to buy up but which have nothing to do with providing telephone service. I have already mentioned TransCanada PipeLines, and Daon Developments. It is also into the British American Bank Note Company and Case-Hoyt. It purchased Comac Communications, Alphatex, and controls Ronalds Federated Ltd. It is operating in several countries besides Canada. It has money to burn and buy up other corporations, which does not create more jobs. In fact, when one corporation buys another, it normally reduces the number of jobs. Perhaps the shareholders will benefit if the rate for the shares goes up by 40 per cent in three months. However, why should they benefit from a company that has drawn its revenue from the money paid mainly by Canadian home subscribers and by the taxes paid mainly by Canadian working people? It is not as though Bell Canada were paying its share of the taxes. On the contrary, it is getting these massive subsidies from the taxpayers in one way or another.

I am very sorry that the Government appears only interested in running this Bill through as fast as it can. I am sorry that the Liberal Opposition shows so little interest in opposing this Bill, although I am not surprised. The Liberals were trying to drive similar legislation through when they were in government and, in this respect, both old Parties are exactly the same. The only difference is that one sits to the left of the Speaker and the other sits to his right. Their politics, their goals and their friends, like Bell Telephone, are the same. The only opposition to this Bill will come from the working people of Canada who are the ones who most need to use the telephone and the ones who are paying the whole shot. We will be hearing a lot more from those working people before this Bill becomes law.

● (1600)

Mr. Gauthier: Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the Hon. Member. The present reorganization of Bell Canada could allow Bell Canada to incorporate what could be called "Bell Canada TV", for example.

Mr. Heap: I didn't hear you.

Mr. Gauthier: "Bell Canada TV" or "TV Bell Canada".