

# I

## THE ACQUISITION OF THE BELL SYSTEM

### EARLY TELEPHONE DEVELOPMENT UNDER PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

PUBLIC telephone service in the Province of Manitoba was first given in 1880 by a private individual who opened a telephone exchange in Winnipeg and charged an annual flat rate of \$60 per instrument. In 1881, however, this exchange was purchased by the Bell Telephone Company of Canada, which, in 1882, established exchanges in Brandon and Portage la Prairie.<sup>1</sup> The Bell Telephone Company began its service at a time when there were only some 60,000 people in the entire Province, when the population of Winnipeg was only 8,000, and when Brandon and Portage la Prairie were only villages.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1884, there were 340 subscribers in Winnipeg,<sup>3</sup> a large number in proportion to the population at that time. Credit, therefore, is justly due the Bell Company for assuming the burdens and the risks of a pioneer, for anticipating the needs of the

<sup>1</sup> *The Winnipeg Telegram*, January 16, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Fifth Census of Canada, 1911*, vol. i, pp. 522, 554-555.

<sup>3</sup> *The Winnipeg Telegram*, January 16, 1908.