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THE TELEPHONE IN PARLIAMENT.

We are pleased to note that since the last issue of the "Canadian Engineer," the Dominion Government has appointed a select committee to "enquire into and report regarding the various public telephone systems in operation in Canada and elsewhere," also to "consider and report what changes, if any, are advisable in respect of the methods at present in force for furnishing telephone service to the public." This is a move in the right direction, and if the members of the committee will realize the responsibility resting upon their labors and thoroughly investigate the many phases of this important question in an absolutely impartial manner, the final issue can only result in a greatly improved service at rates which will establish the telephone as a convenience to the many, instead of a luxury to the few.

The committee will have no reason to complain of lack of material to work upon, indeed the vastness of the evidence available renders the task the more difficult. We have no doubt that much testimony will be given on both sides which will require very careful analysis. We may be certain that the monopoly and its friends will see that the committee is well supplied with carefully prepared and plausible evidence showing the telephone to be a natural monopoly, and that the public cannot be better served, while on the other hand enthusiasts will claim that a service can be provided at less than cost, and that the maintenance charges should be, nil. Much of the evidence will be so contradictory that it will require the most un-

biased judgment to determine which is worthy of credence.

We venture to hope that the committee will secure information from every available source calculated to throw light upon this important subject and will satisfy themselves as to the actual conditions existing elsewhere. We would point out that the most valuable information, namely, that referring to State and Municipal services, and independent competition, will have to be sought for, whereas that relating to the "Bell" monopoly, both in Canada and the United States will be unremittingly placed at the disposal of the committee with a view of crowding out testimony from other sources.

It should be recognized that in this matter, the public have no representation other than the members of the committee, to study their interests, whereas the monopoly has at its command all the machinery of a vast organization whose ramifications extend all over the United States and Canada. It is therefore very essential that while the Bell Telephone Company is afforded every opportunity of stating its case fairly, every effort should be made to secure reliable evidence from independent sources regarding the different systems in operation in Canada, the United States, and elsewhere. We are satisfied that if this policy is adopted, the information obtained will be a revelation to Canadians, and will more than repay the Government for the labor and expense entailed by the investigation.

We regret to note in Sir William Mulock's resolution the qualifying words, "if any" used in regard to what changes are advisable in the present service. We do not see the necessity of any doubt or hesitation in regard to the existing state of affairs. It must be admitted that the public in all parts of the Dominion are clamouring for some change in the present law regarding telephones. Even the Government recognized this fact when it inserted clauses regarding the interchange of connections, and other matters, in the recent North-West Telephone Company's bill. The Manitoba Legislature also realizes the necessity for a change in the present law, and has given notice of its intention to introduce a bill regulating the telephone service in its own Province. We therefore think that the resolution appointing the Select Committee should have stated in no uncertain terms that a change in the law is expedient, and that the point to be determined is in what respect the law should be changed or amended.

We have already referred to the necessity of compelling the Bell Telephone Company to submit to the control of the municipalities in regard to the use of the streets. Another matter requiring urgent attention is the interchange of long distance communication.

Legislation should be enacted providing for the compulsory interchange of telephone connections over long distance lines in Canada, upon conditions similar