

On section 25—Board may order telephone company to make connection with municipal telephone system—

Mr. EMMERSON. In place of the proviso added by the special committee and in place of the amendment previously moved by me, I wish to propose that the section read as follows:

Whenever any province, municipality or corporation, having authority to construct and operate or to operate a telephone system or line and to charge telephone tolls, is desirous of using any long distance telephone service or long distance line, owned, controlled or operated by any company, upon which service or line the company is authorized to charge telephone tolls, in order to connect such telephone system, service or line with the telephone system, service or line operated by such province, municipality or corporation for the purpose of obtaining direct communication, whenever required, between any telephone or telephone exchange on the one telephone system, service or line, and any telephone exchange on the other telephone system, service or line, and cannot agree with such company with respect to obtaining such connection or communication, or such use, such province, municipality or corporation may apply to the board for relief, and the board may order such company to provide for such connection or communication, or such use, upon such terms as to compensation as the board deems just and expedient, and may order and direct how, when, where, by whom and upon what terms and conditions such connection or communication, or such use, shall be had, constructed, installed, operated and maintained.

It will be observed that the provision for having communication between telephone systems is confined to connection for a long distance service; that is to say, if a rural or small telephone company is operating lines over one section of the country, in which work there is an exchange of some long distance telephone company, the patrons of the smaller or shorter system can obtain connection with the long distance service, and have the benefit of all the service which that long distance line furnishes.

Mr. SPROULE. What about connection with the local service?

Mr. EMMERSON. This limits it to the long distance. Two systems operating in the same town could not for local purposes be connected, but if one of them gave a long distance service the patrons of the other would seek connection with the long distance service.

Mr. SPROULE. That would not be worth a straw.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. The promise was made by the government that they would compel the interchange of telephone service of all kinds between one company and another. It is now proposed to restrict that proposal in the sense of an interchange only on the long distance service. In this

Act the long distance service is defined as follows:

A long distance line of service shall mean any trunk line or service connecting several exchanges or offices in any city, town or village with central exchanges or offices in another or other cities, towns or villages.

Let us take a small village in which there are two local lines from rural parts. Neither of these lines has a central office connecting with the central office in another town. They are both local lines, and the Bell Company will not be compelled to interchange business with them. That interchange applies only to long distance service, and that service is limited to cities, villages and towns. I want this amendment of the minister to go to the country in the morning, and the people who are interested in telephones all over this country will say whether it meets their expectations or not. I say it does not. Any number of instances can be given wherein this provision will not suit the requirements of the people with regard to this interchange of traffic. My contention is this, that a corporation enfranchised in this country to serve the public must serve all the people, even corporations, if they are willing to pay the toll. Any individual can get the use of any telephone system of this country if he will go into the office and pay for it. The Bell Telephone Company has all over this country pay stations into which any citizen, whether he be a subscriber or not, can get the use of its lines on paying. I challenge any friend of the Bell Company to cite any instance when that company ever refused the use of its lines to any non-subscriber who came into any one of its offices and offered to pay for such use. In no instance has the company ever refused on the ground that to give the use of its lines to any non-subscriber would injure its subscribers. The Bell Telephone Company and every other company is open to do business with the public at its pay stations on being paid its charges. If the Bell Telephone Company serve individuals in this way, there is no reason why it should not serve corporations in the same way when these corporations are willing to pay for the accommodation. I am going to rest my case there. If the government have decided not to insist on a free interchange of business, we cannot force them to do so. But in some mysterious way this government is always changing its mind with regard to the Bell Telephone Company. Three years ago it made a solemn pledge to give the public entrance to the railway stations, but did not do so. Now the government, after promising free interchange of business, is limiting that privilege. Only a year ago a former member of this government (Sir William Mulock) led the country to believe that when a special committee was appointed, the country would get relief from