

*Private Bills*

us shared in his bounty by having a little bit of caribou meat. Further, I am always happy when he is gathering up bits and pieces of information to present to the house in his very unique style; but in all fairness to the Bell Telephone Company I do not think these are the type of things that should be discussed on this bill.

The bill simply asks that the board of directors be increased from 15 to 20. I agree with many of the things said during the debate by members of the Social Credit party and other hon. members. I think we are entitled to a fair explanation of why things are so paradoxical in the pricing of the Bell Telephone Company commodity, and why an increase in subscribership should mean an increase in price rather than the reverse. But I do suggest this is not the time for such explanation.

Many things have been said about Northern Electric. I do not think that normally I have to spring to its defence, but I feel very close to it since so many thousands of its employees reside in my constituency. But whether the relationship between Bell and Northern Electric is legitimate or logical is again something for the board of transport to determine, and not for hon. members during private members' hour.

There is, however, a fundamental issue at stake, namely the degree to which members of the house desire to go in interfering with the actual administration of companies, whether they be semi-monopolistic or private corporations. I feel it would be a dangerous precedent to place on the board of directors a number of persons not named by the shareholders of the company, but by the governor in council.

The fundamental thing which has been overlooked throughout this debate is that the Bell Telephone Company is a perfect example of what we like to think should be a large corporation, one that spends its money in this country, one that is owned by the people of Canada, one that operates as fairly and squarely as it can under the rules specified by the board of transport, one whose financial balance sheet can stand the close scrutiny not only of members of the house but of those watchdogs who at all times are looking for abuses of the rules and regulations which permit the company to operate.

Recently the Bell company pleaded that it cannot operate on its present ceiling of rates. Perhaps it is wrong. We cannot determine that now, but at least we know that the relationship last year between its profit

and operating capital was just slightly over 6 per cent. There are other facts we cannot refute, such as the fact 97 per cent of the shareholders are Canadian citizens and that 93 per cent of the shares are held by Canadian citizens. What other criteria do we want for any company that operates in Canada?

The Minister of Finance has a desire, as he expresses it, to Canadianize corporations operating in this country. Whether it is possible to do this through legislation, raising Canadian ownership 25 per cent, is a question which is debated in all financial circles. Many think it is impossible and others think it is imperative. But here we have a company, admittedly operating in a field that is semi-monopolistic, which is 97 per cent Canadian owned numerically, with 93 per cent of the total value of its shares owned by Canadians.

So far as I am concerned it is simply a matter of philosophy as to whether this type of operation is best administered through crown corporations or is best left in the hands of private industry. I respect people whose views differ from mine in this regard, except that I cannot see, if the Bell Telephone Company were made a crown corporation, that it would be any smaller, any more efficient or any more Canadian than the 93 per cent content it has at the moment. Further I have to say I would shudder to see the Bell Telephone Company made a crown corporation and subjected to the criticisms levelled at such organizations as the C.B.C. and the C.N.R. by people who, at times, are more interested in headlines than in facts.

The Social Credit party has moved an amendment which is simply an expansion of the original amendment proposed by the New Democratic party. The N.D.P. amendment asked that one of the new directors be appointed by the governor in council, and the Social Credit, with their usual generosity, have suggested that three be named by the governor in council.

As an admirer of the N.D.P. I am rather amazed that its philosophy in this particular instance and that of the Social Credit party could be so similar. Charles Lynch's column today advances a different theory. He comments on a speech made out west by one of the Tory members which suggested that the head of Social Credit out west become, what he knows he is, a good Conservative.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, I suggest we treat the Bell Telephone Company during private members' hour in the same way as we treat all other corporations, namely