

Mr. CARVELL: I might shorten this discussion by making a general statement. The telephone system has been a matter of evolution. A great many years ago it became necessary—and, I think, quite properly so that the Federal Government should construct telegraph lines to out-

lying districts which were entirely out of touch with the rest of the world unless some means of communicating were provided for them. That went on for many years, and, like many other matters, I presume it was to some extent abused. What may have been a necessity forty or fifty years ago ceased to be a necessity five years ago, but those telegraph lines were Government institutions, and it was pretty hard to get rid of them. Of late years they have all been converted into telephone lines, and a telephone line, if properly operated, is very much more useful to the average person living in an out-of-the-way district than is a telegraph line. I have never had the experience of living alongside of a Government-owned telephone line, and I do not believe they are necessary in many portions of Canada. Last year I listened to a great deal of discussion about the condition of affairs in Cape Breton Island. I have listened to the discussion here to-night. I know something about the condition of affairs in a small line in the province of New Brunswick. I am told that there are in the province of Alberta and Saskatchewan lines that are absolutely useless because they are practically paralleling telephone lines owned and operated by the governments of those two provinces. There is no doubt that these telegraph lines were necessary when they were originally built, and it is a pity that as settlements became more numerous some arrangement was not made by which this Government could have sold out or handed over the system to the provinces and thus get rid of this annual expenditure. In the northern part of British Columbia an entirely different condition of affairs prevails. The Government telephone system there brings people in touch with the outside world who otherwise would be completely isolated. This question is so big that I would not profess to express an opinion on it. I do believe, however, that there are other portions of British Columbia where there is no necessity for a Government-owned telephone system. I may as well state to the House frankly that I intend during the coming summer to have one of the best telephone experts in Canada

go over the whole Government telephone system in this country and give me a business report, upon which I shall try to act in a businesslike way. I personally believe that all the Government telephone systems in the Maritime Provinces should be disposed of; either sold to the existing companies or given away to them if necessary; let us get some one to take them off our hands. I would certainly sell out the system in New Brunswick were it not for the fact that I am largely interested in the company that would probably have to do the buying. Therefore, I suppose I would not be justified in doing that. What I have said of New Brunswick is true of Nova Scotia. I do not know exactly what the telephone system is in Cape Breton Island, but it seems absolutely ridiculous that the Government of Canada should operate a telephone system in that island. The system should be operated by a local company, or by the Maritime Provinces Telegraph and Telephone Company, or by somebody else who would do it on business principles. In Quebec, I think an even worse condition of affairs prevails. We have telephones there in two counties, the county of Dorchester and the county of Quebec, and I think Quebec is a great deal worse than Dorchester. There are miles and miles of Government-owned lines in Quebec; I do not know what in the world they do with them all. There is one fellow down there who goes on building and takes his chances of getting his pay; you cannot stop him from building telephone lines. But we are going to try and make an impression on him in two or three weeks in order to get him to call a halt. In Ontario there is the Pelee Island cable. I do not know that there are any Government lines in Manitoba, but in Saskatchewan and Alberta there are important lines. Just think of the Government operating a telegraph or telephone line from Qu'Appelle to Edmonton through one of the most thickly-settled and richest portions of our great Northwest. Three other telegraph lines parallel that wire which may have been needed at first but it certainly cannot be a necessity now. To sum up, I can only say that I intend to have a business report made, and I am going to try and act on it from a business standpoint. I hope the House will pass the items which I am proposing. I am not going to promise to expend this money, but I can assure the House that if expended it will be expended under proper conditions, and with the firm belief that the expenditure is necessary.