

In this Bill as well we have the Conservative "baby", I suppose, of deregulation which we face in almost every industry across the country. The regulation which has served us well for many years is now being tossed out and what we are receiving instead is the kind of approach taken by corporations like Bell Canada which is that of take the money and run. Bell Canada is almost entirely free in this situation to do as it pleases in the market-place with assets which were acquired from the people of Canada when that corporation had a monopoly. Existing Bell telephone service still remains under the CRTC regulations but without the important financial support which provided the kind of cross-subsidization which made it possible to hold down telephone rates all across Canada. What we will have is increased costs now and increasing costs looming in the future, so that some time down the road the idea of a telephone being available to every household in Canada will cease to exist because the costs will become too great for that 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the population which is already at the poverty line or below.

What we have in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, can best be described, I suppose, as a genuine failure on the part of Government to develop a public policy for the good of the people of Canada. We in this Party fully expect that the analogy which we have presented of the Canadian Pacific Railway is going to happen. In fact, it has already happened to a certain extent as far as Bell Canada is concerned. Bell Canada Enterprise will become rich in just the way that Canadian Pacific Investments has prospered at the expense of the users of CP Rail. This need not have happened as far as the CPR is concerned, and it need not happen here.

● (1140)

When this Bill goes to committee, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that we separate the two ideas of service and profit. Like the railways used to be operated, communications in Canada is operated as a service to the people of Canada. But the railways are now being operated for profit and that is what is going to happen to communications; it will be operated for profit in the future.

Mr. Lewis: What is the matter with profits?

Mr. Hovdebo: Profits are okay if you put them in the right spot. Profits are not okay when you make them the be-all and end-all for areas of service such as medicare or telecommunications. These services should not be carried on for profit but as a service to the people of Canada. When we allow services to be carried on so as to make excess profits, we as Members of Parliament are failing in our duty to provide the best kind of service possible for the people of Canada.

I have one more point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker, and that is that we feel that this Bill is simply a good example of how much the previous Liberal Government and the present Conservative Government defer to corporate power. This Government says it has a mandate for change. It has had every opportunity to examine and change this Bill. Bell Canada has given us reason to take a look at its operations with the

Bell Canada Act

provocative action of Bell Canada International in acquiring as a subsidiary the Cable and Wireless Company of Great Britain. But this Government did not take the opportunity. So we believe that major changes should be made in this Bill and we should wait for a national telecommunications policy before we pass this Bill into law.

Mr. Speaker: May I interrupt to advise Hon. Members of the decision I have reached pursuant to the request of the Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre (Mr. Althouse).

On Tuesday, April 2, the Minister of Communications (Mr. Masse) moved the second reading of Bill C-19, an Act respecting the reorganization of Bell Canada, and the question was proposed to the House. The Minister gave a very detailed explanation of the history and purposes of the Bill. This was added to by the Hon. Members for Saint-Jacques (Mr. Guilbault) and Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow). Later in the debate the Hon. Member for Humboldt-Lake Centre asked the Chair to examine the Bill to see if it was proceeding properly through the House and specifically he requested the Chair to examine the Bill to see if it should not be classed as a private Bill.

Private Bills are defined on page 891 of Erskine May's Twentieth Edition in the following terms:

Private bills are bills for the particular interest or benefit of any person or persons. Whether they be for the interest of an individual, of a public company or corporation, or of a county, district or other locality, they are equally distinguished from measures of public policy; and this distinction is marked in the very manner of their introduction.

This definition is confirmed in Citation 700 from Beauchesne's Fifth Edition which states:

A public bill relates to matters of public policy while a private bill relates to matters of a particular interest or benefit to a person or persons.

The same citation indicates that the British hybrid Bill—that is, a public Bill affecting private interests—is not recognized in Canadian practice. It also indicates that a Bill containing provisions which are essentially a feature of a private Bill cannot be introduced as a public Bill.

Citation 836 of Beauchesne's Fifth Edition states:

Private legislation is legislation of a special kind for conferring particular powers or benefits on any person or body of persons, including individuals and private corporations, in excess of or in conflict with the general law.

Citation 838 sets out four principles which have been followed in determining whether a private Bill should not be allowed to proceed as such, but should be introduced as a public Bill. The first of these principles is the essential one, namely that public policy is affected.

Given these definitions and principles the determination as to whether a Bill is a private Bill or a public Bill should be fairly straightforward. However, the Canadian practice, both in the federal Parliament and the provincial Legislatures, has not always been consistent. I do not propose to go into any detail with regard to these inconsistencies, because the immediate duty of the Chair is to make a determination in respect of Bill C-19, an Act respecting the reorganization of Bell Canada.