

lines which have been put in for defence purposes would be used only to the extent that the defence services require them.

I noted that the minister said that the army and the air force were discussing arrangements now by which army personnel might be trained on these telephone communications in the outlying parts of central British Columbia, principally, I presume, along the line between Williams Lake and Bella Coola. There are a number of ranchers, miners and trappers all through that area, which is one of the richest ranching areas in the whole of British Columbia, and I can say that honestly although it is not in my constituency. If the same sort of action is be taken to fail to utilize this system of communications as has been taken with respect to that wireless link between Prince Rupert and the Queen Charlottes, then a large proportion of a very great sum of money which was invested by this country in constructing these lines of communication will be put to very little use. I would ask the minister if in the deliberations that he is now carrying on with the army officials he will take steps to ensure that that telephone communication is made available for the settlers of the Cariboo.

I should like to refer once more to the question of the arrangements which may have been made for the disposal of some of the equipment, particularly that which has been placed on the telephone lines of the British Columbia Telephone company. For defence purposes it was necessary to erect a large number of new poles, to construct new cross-pieces on many of the existing poles, and to run additional lines over the right-of-way of the British Columbia Telephone company. Again, large expenditures of money were made for that purpose and a great deal of labour, both civilian and military, was employed on that work. The minister said that he was not aware of any contract or any agreement which had been made between the government and the British Columbia Telephone company for the disposal of that equipment when it was no longer required by the defence services, but I am well informed of the fact that the British Columbia Telephone company firmly believe that they have an agreement with the government for the disposal of that equipment, and surely it is only reasonable to think that if a communications company is to allow additional lines to be strung on their poles and additional equipment to be placed on their right-of-way, they would demand some agreement before the construction work was started. I am not

suggesting for one moment that there is anything wrong about this. It seems to me to be a reasonable thing, before construction was started, to have made an arrangement with the company whose property the government was going to use. I know the company is under the impression that such equipment as they require which has been run on their own particular lines they will get at fifty per cent of its cost. The company no doubt feel that they have made a pretty good deal, because the main cost for any sort of erection work in a communications system is that of labour where the right-of-way has to be cleared and all the construction work has to be done. The impression which a good many people in British Columbia have is that the British Columbia Telephone company will be able to take over such equipment as they require at the rate I mentioned, fifty per cent of the cost of the equipment to the government.

This brings up a point regarding the equipment which has been laid on parts of the line and which perhaps the British Columbia Telephone company will not desire to operate. They have to look after the interests of their shareholders, and are not likely to purchase equipment which is not on paying portions of their line, and it is quite possible that they might remove some of that equipment from the less revenue-producing portions to other parts of their system. But we have to look after our shareholders, and our shareholders are the settlers in those areas. If the minister is not satisfied with the statement that the company believe they have an agreement I should like him to make further inquiries and find out whether any such arrangement has been made. It may have been contained in one of the directives which he referred to as having been sent to the joint communications committee on the Pacific coast from the air force headquarters or the communications committee of the joint services here. But the impression is very firm in Vancouver that some agreement has been made, and I feel that that should be looked into and the interests of the settlers cared for, so that no equipment which is on lines which are not revenue producing to the company will be removed from those areas by that company, and so that the interests of the farmers in the Cariboo district and Vancouver island may be safeguarded.

Mr. MATTHEWS (Kootenay East): I wish to say a word at this point in endorsement of what the hon. member for Nanaimo has just said with regard to communicating with the Queen Charlotte islands area. Some few years ago I had the privilege of living on the Queen