

UNITED ACTION ON TELEPHONE APPLICATION.

The Union of Canadian Municipalities, founded twenty years ago on the initiative of Mr. W. D. Lighthall, K.C., then Mayor of Westmount, Quebec, and still honorary secretary-treasurer of the organization, has demonstrated that it is still a vital institution by summoning its executive to meet at Montreal on September 10th, to formulate a plan for joint action with regard to the Bell Telephone Company's application for the right to increase its tolls. It must be obvious to everyone that defensive measures by the municipalities will be more effective if jointly undertaken, than if an unlimited number of deputations, each playing off its own bat, proceeds to Ottawa to bombard the Dominion Railway Board when the application is taken up. The public, as has been shown in these columns, has an almost unanswerable case against the measured 'phone system which the Bell Company wishes to introduce; but that case may easily be frittered away unless those charged with the protection of the public interest, show some spirit of co-ordination in the arguments they present.

It goes without saying that if municipal politicians from here, there and everywhere are permitted to use the telephone controversy merely as an opportunity to display their detestation of corporations and undying zeal for the public interest, they will be playing into the hands of the astute and plausible men who will present the case for the Telephone Company. The telephone user's case must be as sanely and judiciously put as that of the applicants, if everyone is to get fair play. The Union of Canadian Municipalities offers the requisite machinery to attain this end.

While on this subject, it is worth while pointing out that the case of the telephone user is not being bettered by the conduct of certain anti-corporation champions who have been denouncing beforehand the tribunal which must decide the issue. Abuse of Hon. Frank Carvell, Chairman of the Dominion Railway Board, merely because he happens to be a stockholder in a minor telephone company which is making no application for increased tolls, is stupid and unfair. This habit of crying "Stop thief" at the heels of every public man clothed with powers affecting public interest, is becoming nauseating. What right has anyone to assume off-hand that because Mr. Carvell has invested in a small New Brunswick telephone corporation, he is devoid of honor? If he is anything like the average lawyer who attains judicial place, the very fact that he is in an assailable position will tend to make him more sensitive and scrupulous in his desire for fair dealing. Many will remember that when one of his predecessors as chairman, Mr. Justice Mabee, was appointed, there were whisperings and hints that it was a "job." It was assumed that because he had been a railway lawyer during his career at the bar, he could not be trusted. The cruelty and folly of this suspicion was, of course, speedily demonstrated. And there is no reason to assume that Mr. Carvell will be less honest in the performance of his duties as adjudicator on telephone tolls than any other man.—Saturday Night.

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