

I hope the Postmaster General will examine into the manner in which these routes were established and will see to it that we have some kind of uniform service in the rural districts. I can well understand that a daily mail service to all the people living in the thickly settled rural portions of our country would saddle the post office with greater expense than it could bear. So I would suggest to the Postmaster General that, for the present at least, in districts where there is only a tri-weekly mail, if they get that mail delivered at their houses instead of at the post office that would be sufficient in most cases without the expense of a daily mail.

Now, a few words with regard to telegraphs. As I said in my previous remarks the present position of the telegraph companies in Canada is that they are receiving the lion's share of the profits that accrue from handling telegraph messages. I gave facts in regard to the charges they are making in different parts of the country. At an early day we should establish government ownership in telegraph lines and have this service made a part of the postal service. And not only should this be done with the telegraphs but with the telephones as well. It would be quite possible to organize a system under which the municipalities would be able to own, control and operate their telephone systems, while the main lines of telegraph, telephone and cable would be carried on as part of the post office service.

At present, go into the small towns and you will see a telegraph office under a separate organization, in a separate building, a telephone office in another building under a different organization, and the post office in still another. These ought all to be combined under government control. All our wire systems, whether spoken or written, should be under control and operation by the government. There will be enormous savings in this regard in the matter of efficiency which can be brought about by co-operation. We must remember that the telegraph is a by-product of the telephone. There is no doubt in my mind that in the near future a great portion of the correspondence from one end of this country to the other will be done by wire instead of by mail. But the greatest improvement we may expect in the near future will be brought about by the extension of our telephone system. To my mind there is no public utility that is proving of greater service in Canada today, not only in the cities but in the rural districts. It is well organized in the cities, and is capable of being wonderfully extended in the rural districts, it is also the duty of this parliament to assist its extension in every possible way. We ought to combine the telephone, telegraph and cable

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systems, that is, if you want to do the work thoroughly and economically. Take the large trunk lines to the cities and towns, and allow the municipalities to own, control, and operate their own municipal systems and you will then be in a position to give to the people the transmission of their messages at cost. There is no question in my mind that in the near future we will be able to satisfactorily telephone from one side of this continent to the other. I have shown in previous remarks how, on the other side, they are sending telephone messages over a distance of 2,000 miles on the same wire with comparative ease.

This matter is one of vital importance to the rural districts. At the present time it is practically impossible to get the Bell Telephone Company to extend its system into the rural districts, consequently the farmers are compelled to organize companies themselves. There are to-day in the province of Ontario 460 different telephone companies provincially organized, which are chiefly operating in the rural districts. I made some investigation, and I find that ninety per cent of these companies are operating in rural districts, and eighty-five per cent of them are organized by the farmers and men living in rural Ontario, so that they may have the telephone system at their doors. The local government of the province of Ontario, under their Railway and Municipal Board, have issued statistics to show that without a doubt it is a saving to every farmer who has a telephone in his house of at least \$50 a year, and with the 50,000 phones that are in operation, it means \$2,500,000. Five years ago there were only 5,000 telephones in the farm houses in the province of Ontario, while to-day we have over 50,000. So you will see that it is a live question in the rural districts. Let me tell you that only twenty per cent of the agricultural lands in our fair province are under cultivation, and the population in the rural Ontario, instead of increasing, is actually decreasing. Only last night we heard some hon. gentlemen on this side of the House saying that in county after county the population in the rural districts is rapidly decreasing. According to statistics, there are only 21 counties in the province of Ontario, which have increased in population during the last ten years, while 27 counties have decreased. It is therefore our duty to put forth every effort to keep the people on the farms by offering them every possible advantage and assistance in the development of their respective districts.

I wish to say that the Hydro-Electric Commission which has been doing such splendid work in our province, is a proposition very much along the line of the one I am trying to put before this House