

they get absolutely no advantage from this amendment; and therefore the people do not get what they expect from the government or what the government promised, as I understand. My hon. friend from Yale-Cariboo (Mr. Ross) says that the long distance lines do not pay. The rate between here and Toronto is \$1.75 for three minutes, and will he say that if they have business to keep the lines busy all day at that rate it will not pay a very heavy interest on the cost of that line?

Mr. DUNCAN ROSS. I said long distance lines built over the mountains without any intervening population for twenty-five to forty miles, connecting towns did not pay.

Mr. SPROULE. What is the difference over the mountains or in any other kind of country so long as the towns are the same distance apart? In the operation of a line such as that to Toronto, as the business increases more wires are added on the same cable, and after the initial expense has been incurred the additional expense for such additional wire is not proportionately large, and therefore if you can get sufficient business to keep twenty wires going instead of one, the earning power of the other nineteen is much larger, proportionately speaking, than the earning power of the first one, considering the cost of the initial installation. What injustice is it to the company to give that service then if they earn money? The company makes the charge and the country has to accept it, and they are not likely to strike a rate so low that it will not pay interest on the investment. Is it the fact that the Bell Telephone Company is not paying interest to-day? The fact that its stock is selling at 160 is the best evidence it is a paying concern.

I say again that this proposal does not meet the case, that the country is not satisfied. I do not care whether the Minister of Agriculture or the Minister of Public Works says it, it makes no difference, the people of the country know what they want, and they know this will not meet the requirements. Giving my honest and candid opinion, I would say that every one of these various amendments has been drawn by the solicitor of the Bell Telephone Company, and they are drawn for their purposes and not for the benefit of the public. The government delayed to draw a new clause, and they have now brought down one no better than the other; I can see no improvement in the one of to-night over that of last night. I say, taking into consideration the provision in this that you shall not allow connection between local lines and the local service of the Bell line, that that practically makes it, in my judgment, almost as bad as though you allowed no connection whatever. It will be no better for the farmers of the country, who, above all others, desire to have the advantage of better connection than they have at

present, and they will not thank the government for giving them what they are giving them to-night, because it is something of very little value.

Mr. PRINGLE. I quite conceive that the subject we are dealing with is one of a great deal of difficulty. I was a member of the special committee which had occasion to look into this matter. The amendment as proposed by the hon. Minister of Public Works is one the principle of which was not supported in the committee. The hon. minister has said, why should you deprive this company of the property which they have built up with their money and their brains? and then he proposes an amendment by which he purposes to deprive them of a large portion of their profit. He is willing to leave with them the right to use their local telephone lines in the different cities towns and villages, but he practically proposes to confiscate their long distance line. Now, a great deal has been said here in regard to the public interest. I feel as much as any one that our great aim in legislation should be to legislate in the interest of the public; but surely the men who have invested their money in this company, the men who took the risk some years ago, when the telephone business was in the experimental stage, and have gone on putting their money into this enterprise from year to year until to-day there is some \$12,000,000 invested in the Bell Telephone Company of Canada, the stock of which is held by investors from one end of this Dominion to the other—surely these men deserve to be considered before we pass any such radical legislation as is proposed here. I know that hon. gentlemen will say: we are going to take their long distance line, but we are going to compensate them. I do not often wish to look to what has happened in the country to the south of us; but I find that the American Telephone Company have expended an enormous amount of money in the United States, and are giving to-day the best telephone service that is given in the world. I had an opportunity this afternoon of reading an article written by a London engineer, comparing the telephone services in London, New York, Paris and Madrid, and he gave the American system the credit of being the best telephone system in the world. To show that it is a good telephone system, we find that the American Telephone Company have one telephone for every 42 inhabitants; and you have to remember that there are in the United States no less than 5,000 independent systems, giving some 7,500 public exchanges, and having some 8,000 switchboards and some 2,000,000 subscribers; and I ask the hon. member for South York if he can point to one instance in the United States where they have compelled physical connection such as is being asked for in this case. I say that he cannot. There is only one state in the United States that has