

Private Bills

who have never done anything to develop our own resources.

Mr. Choquette: I rise on a question of privilege—

The Chairman: Order. There is no question of privilege.

Mr. Choquette: Mr. Chairman—

The Chairman: Order. I cannot recognize the hon. member. If he wishes to speak, he must in the first place resume his seat.

Mr. Choquette: May I have the floor?

The Chairman: The hon. member should take his seat. He has expressed the wish to speak on a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Villeneuve. Before he does so, I wish to point out that the Chair is of the opinion that there is no question of privilege. If the hon. member wishes to take part in the debate, he will be recognized in due time.

[Text]

Mr. Peters: I am grateful for the intervention of the hon. member for Villeneuve, for whatever reason, because it gives us an opportunity to say something about the affairs of the Bell Telephone Company, and if the situation continues a good many more members will probably have the opportunity to say something on this subject.

The sponsor of this bill mentioned the fact that I am not a member of the committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines but that I have the right to attend the meetings of that committee and ask questions. I believe this could only be done in exceptional circumstances; it is not the normal practice of committees to allow people who are not members to raise a number of questions at committee meetings.

The sponsor has been very fair in saying that the directors would be willing to answer a number of questions. My objection to this bill would be removed if a suggestion made by my hon. friend from Comox-Alberni last week were taken into serious consideration. Although there has been a change over the years, the New Democratic party still has an interest in seeing that government control is exercised where a public utility is involved. This does not always mean nationalizing particular industries, though it is believed that in the field of communications, as in other fields of public utility, this is desirable. The suggestion put forward by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni was that the five new directors should be appointed by the govern-

[Mr. Caouette.]

ment rather than by the company. This would take account of the fact that the public has not always been well represented on the board of directors of the Bell Telephone Company. I believe this situation would be remedied, provided the government were to appoint the new members. I do not believe it is necessary for us to control this company, even though it is a public utility, but I think it is necessary for the people who use a monopoly utility to have some voice in its operation.

I know the government has often been accused of being a bit socialist—of adopting some of the policies of the N.D.P. To some extent it is tarred with the same brush as the N.D.P. If this is true to some extent, and if members of the Liberal party are willing to accept the accusation, it seems to me this is an excellent occasion upon which to do so, and if the mover of this motion before us would rise and assent to this bill being sent back to the committee, with his blessing, for the purpose of having the government negotiate with the company with regard to these five new directorships, it would I think meet my requirements.

My objection is that these five new directors do not seem to be in a position to guarantee that the reforms I have previously indicated will be achieved. The sponsor, in rising to reply to previous questions, referred to the case I mentioned of a young lady living in Ottawa. I do not think she would object to my using her name, but there is no point in doing so. Suffice it to say her member of parliament is a lawyer who has been interested in this case, as have other lawyers. This claim No. 29159-707, was before the board of transport commissioners in 1962, and no reply has been received to the legal arguments which were put forward. I am of course not a lawyer and cannot tell the committee much about this case, but it is headed:

In the matter of the application and complaint of... concerning the general regulations governing the furnishing of telephone service and equipment by the Bell Telephone Company of Canada and further concerning certain wrongful and unlawful acts and omissions by the company in furnishing telephone service and equipment to her.

Then reference is made to sections 34 and 35 and section 353(1) of the Railway Act and it continues:

An order declaring that rule 31 of order 81007, of the 11th March 1953, as amended, which provides, "31.—If objection in writing is not received by the company within thirty days after a statement