

Private Bills

Mr. John L. Skoberg (Moose Jaw): Mr. Speaker, in reviewing Bill S-12 I went back to *Hansard* for December 3 to see what the sponsor of the bill had to say when he introduced it. I should like to refer to part of what the sponsor of the bill said at that time. He pointed out that the purpose of the bill is to resolve doubts as to whether the company may dispose of its undertaking to a company incorporated under, or subject to the laws of any province of Canada.

The sponsor, in his explanation of the bill, went on to say that the disposal of the undertaking is allowed, subject to the approval of the shareholders and the Canadian Transport Commission. Then, I respectfully suggest that the real crux of the matter, the issue to which I take strong objection, appears in this paragraph, which is reported at page 3404 of *Hansard*:

We feel that the act passed in 1955 does not clearly grant the company the power to sell or dispose of its assets to a company which does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Canadian parliament.

I suggest that those words make this bill itself suspect, no matter which way you look at it. Those words in *Hansard* for December 3 certainly indicate a desire to remove this particular company from the jurisdiction of the Canadian parliament. Therefore, I take issue with those words.

The sponsor of the bill goes on to say:

—doubts concerning the power to sell or dispose of its assets to a company which does not fall within the jurisdiction of the Canadian parliament would be resolved if the following sentence were added to section 11 of the constitution:

The hon. member then spelled out exactly what he had in mind with regard to this proposed addition to section 11 of the constitution of the Company. It is as follows:

Such sale or disposal, whether of the whole or any part of the said undertaking, rights and properties, may be so made by the company to any company or person, whether within the legislative authority of the parliament of Canada or not, authorized to carry on a business included within the objects or powers of the company.

Once again, it is my belief that this clearly spells out the purpose and intent of the bill, and indeed of the sponsor who is attempting to put it through parliament at this particular time. The sponsor of the bill suggests that this alteration is being sought to allow the company, which holds a provincial charter, to dispose of its assets to Quebec Telephone Company. Nevertheless, I suggest it is time that hon. members of this house examined

bills like this to see exactly what is the ownership structure of companies coming before this house.

● (4:40 p.m.)

To learn something about this company I went to the library. I learned very little there and had to resort to the reports of hearings in the other place. *Hansard* for December 3 also contains some relevant information. What I learned gave me cause for concern, and I do not think this bill ought to obtain too easy passage through this house. From my research I learned that the Bonaventure and Gaspé Telephone Company is actually a wholly owned subsidiary of Quebec Telephone Company and is not the small company serving the relatively small community its name might suggest. To demonstrate the intricacies involved in unravelling the ownership structure behind the company may I read the remarks of an hon. member of the other place as reported on page 3441 of *Hansard* for December 3, 1968:

It is a matter of establishing clearly the power of The Bonaventure and Gaspé Telephone Company Limited, incorporated by a special act of the Parliament of Canada, to sell its telephone network to Quebec Telephone, a company incorporated in accordance with and subject to the laws of the province of Quebec.

Investigation revealed the further fact that, in the final analysis, the company in question is wholly owned by a United States parent company. Although I do not object to some ownership by our friends to the south of some of our companies, generally speaking I am not in favour of it. As the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) said recently, we must remain masters in our own house and keep enterprises in Canada under Canadian control. We must make sure that the ownership of our utilities remains in Canadian hands and that directors of such companies are Canadians. I am afraid that a number of hon. members here do not care whether control of our companies passes to our friends to the south. We must heed the recommendations of the Watkins report in order to deal intelligently with a number of bills similar to this one that will come before the house.

From my research I learned that Quebec Telephone Company obtained the stock of Bonaventure and Gaspé Telephone Company. Then, in 1955, Bonaventure and Gaspé Telephone Company sought authority from this house to sell its assets, having already sold them two years previously. That action was