

Canadian Independent Telephone Association

OFFICERS 1908-9.

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AUDITORS

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Southern Counties Telephone Association

A meeting of the Independent Telephone Companies held in St. Thomas, Ont., has been responsible for the formation of the Southern Counties Telephone Association, as briefly noted in the last issue.

On the nomination of Dr. Brown, Aylmer, Mr. Walter C. Lewis, Orwell, was elected Chairman, and at once opened the proceedings by pointing out the splendid work that had been accomplished by the rural telephone companies and associations, and the beneficial effect on the country districts by alleviating the isolation and loneliness of farm life.

Dr. George Shannon, Sparta, was asked to introduce the subject which was the cause of the meeting. He explained that there was an Independent Telephone Association, and it was necessary to come to some general plan about the interchange of messages, especially between the rural companies. The formation of the rural companies was not at all regular, either in time or locality, and it was only when the systems grew to touch each other that the need of common action became apparent. He urged very strongly the danger of making connection with the Bell Company, for every such connection strengthened the monopoly, and injured the Independent position. The methods by which the Bell tried to secure connection were very smooth and it was only when the contract had been signed that it boasted of trespassing on the Independent field. If the rural companies entered the cities by paying toll to the Bell, it meant that they paid the whole cost. He urged every rural company to become a member of the Independent Telephone Association, and advocated the formation of a local central board.

Dr. Crane, Wallacetown, gave an address, showing what had been the result of competition in West Elgin. He said that the people had asked the Bell Company to put in systems, but the prices asked were prohibitive, though a few had agreed to them. His Company, the Wallacetown and Lake Shore, had a contract with the Bell for long distance but they were not badly tied up, as they could terminate it by thirty days' notice. He claimed that St. Thomas should have a central energy system, and if the Independents were given the franchise by the city, there would be not only a central energy system, but underground wires, instead of the unsightly poles in the streets. He was certain that if the Independents would only hold together, they would secure long distance lines of their own. He recommended the formation of a local association, and that it should hold an annual Convention.

Warden Summers, Aylmer, expressed his firm belief that united action would secure full success for them.

Mr. J. C. Lowther, Iona Station, was very emphatic in his declaration of the necessity of being thoroughly Independent, and refusing any connection with the Bell monopoly whatever advantages it might apparently of-

fer. He offered some illustrations of what had occurred in West Elgin. The Bell Company asked the farmers for a bonus of \$400 to extend the line from Lawrence Station to Shedden, which is 3½ miles. As they could do nothing else, this was agreed to, and the necessary money was almost secured, when the Bell Company insisted that the farmers should draw the poles themselves. This attempt to get more that they had asked for so disgusted the people that they gave it up. Then when the plan of an independent line was started, the Bell threw every obstacle in the way, and when that failed, tried to get hold of the line, but failed. The Independent Companies should keep entirely apart from the Bell.

Mr. J. F. Goodman, of the Century Telephone Company, Buffalo, gave a very interesting and instructive address, and said that within a very short time there would be continuous independent systems all the way from Buffalo to Detroit.

Mr. H. T. Goodwin, ex-M. P., Bayham, gave some instances of trouble and annoyance from the Bell Company, and pointed out that a thorough affiliation of independent lines would secure a long distance system, and make them indispensable to every municipality.

Mr. W. R. Pollard, Iona, gave an inspiring speech on the principles of the independent movement, and advocated the adoption of some plan by which the independent companies could join together in building long distance connection.

Mr. W. E. Wardell, Fingal, said he felt proud to be a farmer considering the earnest way in which they had all entered into the proposed business, and was sure it would be successful.

Dr. J. Steel, Fingal, said that his line was obliged to have some connection with the city, but his company was strongly in favor of that being secured over an independent line.

Dr. Brown, Aylmer, described the success of the rural telephones in his district and town, and believed that St. Thomas, like Aylmer, would welcome the entrance of the rural telephone systems. There were a couple of thousand users of rural telephones wanting to get connection with the City, and the people of St. Thomas were wise enough to see the value of this.

The meeting then decided to appoint a Committee to draft a form of organization, which could be presented at the afternoon session, and discussed there. The following were agreed upon as the Committee:—Dr. Doan, (Chairman), Mr. S. C. Squires, Dr. Brown, Dr. Crane and Messrs. J. C. Lowther and A. P. McDougall.

Afternoon Session.

After addresses by Messrs. C. F. Heidt, Frome; J. H. McIntyre, Dutton; Thomas Lunn, Port Talbot; and A. P. McDougall, Melbourne, the Committee presented the following report:—

"Having in view the ultimate government ownership