

*Bell Canada*

of parliament if this bill passes because they will not have an opportunity to do so.

I want to know why Bell can spend \$1.5 million annually on charter aircraft flights for its executives and still charge people living in Searchmount, 25 miles from Sault Ste. Marie, long distance rates. There are too many inconsistencies in the arguments put up by Bell when it goes before the CRTC and claims it cannot afford to improve services. The regulatory process does not afford an opportunity for close scrutiny. It is only in parliament that we have an opportunity to raise these issues, and we want to have the right to continue to discuss these matters and to hold the company accountable.

I do not object to Bell coming to parliament to get its capitalization increased. In fact, had it brought a bill before us containing a clause to that effect, I am sure such a bill would go through. But the corporation has not been content with that. It has added these other clauses which restrict our ability to scrutinize the company's affairs and restrict the ability of the regulatory agency to do so. For these reasons the bill, as presently drawn up, is unacceptable to members of the New Democratic Party, and we shall continue to oppose it until there is some indication that Bell is willing to modify its stand and serve the people of Canada in accordance with the directives issued to it.

**Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Mr. Speaker, the number of this bill used to be S-2. I notice it has been changed. The first thing which caught my eye is the new number, a very significant number—1001. That is an historic number, one which will forever remind us of "The Arabian Nights". It would seem to me that Bell has learned a lot from Scheherazade, a most resourceful and intelligent young woman, one who was able to deliver the womenfolk of her community from the designs of a very cruel sultan. She certainly showed a lot of courage. It seems to me Bell is now bringing forward a Scheherazade of some kind to get its capitalization increased and to escape criticism by the CRTC. Some of the stories we associate with "The Arabian Nights" are capable, perhaps, of being incorporated in this bill. For example, "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" could become "Bell Canada and its Forty Subsidiaries"; "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp" could become "Ma Bell and the Wonderful telephone"; "The Merchant and the Genie" could become "The Company and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs".

**An hon. Member:** Ay, there's the rub!

**Mr. Rodriguez:** One can find a lot of history in these things. I have often commented on the history of Bell Canada. Some time ago the government agreed to give Bell Canada a monopoly over telephone communications. There was one proviso—that the company should come before parliament each time it needed to increase capitalization and that it should be subject to regulatory provisions within the scope of the program laid down at that time. My hon. friend from Sault Ste. Marie has correctly stated that, if this bill were to carry in its present form, the company would escape proper scrutiny by parliament. Individual members of parliament would be pre-

[Mr. Symes.]

vented from playing a meaningful role in examining requests for increased capitalization. I know there are members across the way who agree with us, and I hope they will get up and speak on this bill, too.

I have been here since 1972, and I have gone before the CTC, and, latterly, the CRTC, to make interventions with regard to applications by Bell Canada for rate increases. Mr. Speaker, you never saw such a charade. The process is absolutely meaningless. You go and make your presentation. You ask questions. The question I have been asking for some time was simple. All I wanted was an answer to a simple question. The question was: what does it cost to produce a black plastic telephone, and how much does Bell Canada pay for it? That is all I needed to know. That is a very crucial question. It puts into question the whole Bell Canada multinational corporate structure. It puts the whole matter in focus.

● (1752)

At these hearings I was also concerned about rural service. I was presented with a schedule a couple of days ago showing what they call non-urban telephone service. They listed communities, these non-urban communities, which were going to receive telephone service in 1978. I looked for the exchanges for communities in my riding and I was amazed to see that Burlington, Grimsby, and Beamsville have now suddenly become non-urban communities. I looked for my own community, but it was not there. The controller was a very knowledgeable chap and I asked him where my exchanges were. He said, "Oh, I think you must be scheduled into 1982."

I think that this bill is going to be scheduled into 1982, Mr. Speaker, or until I see some improvement in rural service in northern Ontario as a whole, and in my riding of Nickel Belt in particular. I am opposed to this bill and I will do everything in my power to block its passage.

**Mr. Douglas (Bruce-Grey):** Like what? Talk it out?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** That is exactly correct. I will talk and talk until this bill is defeated. I am here to serve the particular concerns of my constituents, and I would be absolutely stupid to let this bill through. The hon. member in the Liberal party across the aisle can make smart remarks, but he is laughing at the people in my constituency where there are 10 families on one line. Hon. members opposite would not know that; they probably come from big cities and don't know about the inconveniences of the rural telephone service. The hon. member's constituency representatives went to the hearings in Sudbury and complained about rural service in Owen Sound.

Bell Canada has suddenly discovered the need to improve non-urban telephone service. Magically this has been discovered in 1977. I have been here since 1972 and I, along I am sure with other members in the House, have been telling Bell it has to improve its service.

Some of the exotic equipment which Bell Canada is developing for the business community includes dataroute and memory banking. The rentals paid by families who share 10 to a line are going to pay for all kinds of exotic equipment. These