

# The Canadian Engineer

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## The Canadian Engineer.

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### NOTICES.

Those requiring the index of the 1904 volume of the Canadian Engineer for binding will receive it upon dropping us a card.

We have run short of the January Number, and if any subscriber who does not preserve the paper for binding will send us his copy of that issue we shall be pleased to extend his term of subscription a month.

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### TELEPHONE LEGISLATION.

As a result of the recent decision of the Judicial Committee of the Imperial Privy Council, by which the right of the Bell Telephone Company to erect poles and construct conduits on the streets of the municipalities without the consent of the local authorities, is confirmed, the Union of Canadian Municipalities is pressing the Dominion Government for the following legislation:—

1. The purchase by the Government of the long distance lines.

2. The amendment of all existing telephone charters, so as to provide that no companies shall erect poles or construct conduits on any road or street in a municipality without the consent of the council of such municipality, "and upon such terms as such council may approve."

With regard to the Government ownership and control of the long distance lines, while we endorse any movement for the public ownership of utilities,

we believe it is far more essential at the present time, for the Government to call upon the Bell Telephone Company to give and receive connection over the long distance lines of its existing system with the subscribers of all local telephone services, without regard to the ownership of such exchanges. In other words, every telephone user should have the right of long distance service whether he is a "Bell" subscriber or not. The inevitable result of this would be that the monopoly would no longer be able to keep out local competition, municipal and independent exchanges would be established in all parts of the Dominion, and in a few years the demand for increased long distance telephone facilities would be such that the Government would be compelled to recognize the necessity of establishing a State-owned long distance system, either by duplicating or acquiring and extending the lines of the Bell Telephone Company.

We would point out that the charter of the Bell Company declares the works of that corporation to be "for the general advantage of Canada." That being so, the "Bell" Company has no more right to restrict the use of its long distance system to its own subscribers, than a railway company has to refuse to haul the cars of another system over its lines. We do not, of course, suggest that the company should not be compensated for the use of its lines by outside companies. A system similar to that in operation in Great Britain for the use of the Government long distance lines, could be arranged without difficulty. In Great Britain a subscriber to the Glasgow Municipal Telephone exchange wishing to speak to a subscriber of the National Telephone Company in London, Manchester, Liverpool, or elsewhere, would pay, in addition to the usual toll charge for the long distance line, a terminal fee to the National Telephone Company for the privilege of connecting with its local subscriber. In the case of a "National" subscriber speaking to a "Municipal" subscriber in Glasgow or any other town, a similar terminal fee would be paid to the municipality. This is a perfectly equitable arrangement, and it would be imposing no unfair conditions upon the "Bell" Company, if a similar arrangement was made compulsory in Canada.

In the petition to the Governor-General on this subject, reference is made to the fact that in Great Britain the long distance lines are owned by the Government. It is, however, overlooked that the conditions over there differ widely from those in Canada. In the first place the Government acquired this part of the system because of the inroads made by the telephone in the revenue of the Post-office telegraph department which was owned and operated by the State. Secondly, the purchase of the long distance lines on satisfactory terms was made possible by the fact that the right of the National Telephone Company to carry on a telephone exchange business, either local or long distance, ceases in 1911, after which date the company is entirely in the hands of the Government.

In the case of Canada, the Government does not