

respect to telephone use is that of the people who live 20 miles or more outside the city who are not serviced by the department of the City of Thunder Bay which operates the telephone system. It is another example of municipal socialism that appears in various Canadian cities in which the telephone system is operated within the city limits as a utility, just as hydroelectricity is operated by a commission.

My constituents who live outside the city are in an unfortunate situation. As Bell Canada subscribers, they must pay long distance rates to talk to people in the city, to communicate with doctors, drug stores, and to do business. Whether those people are in the lumber or dairy business, they have to communicate with business people in the city.

I was recently at a public meeting in the small community of Pass Lake and that problem was brought to my attention. Some people were paying telephone bills regularly in the range of \$80 to \$150 a month. I was astonished that people could carry those costs. Those people have no choice. The farther they live from the city, the more important the telephone lines are. The charge represents an inevitable tax, given the present problems in getting sensible tie-ins between Bell Canada and the telephone department of the City of Thunder Bay. It is one of the taxes which people have to pay because they live outside the city.

I do not think that people who are living on social assistance rates as set by the Province of Ontario could afford to pay the costs. Some people are trying to manage on a few hundred dollars a month. Single people who are unable to find work have no choice but to try to maintain an apartment and have a telephone line available to them. If the CRTC were to allow the increases which Bell Canada could impose on Canadians, people in those circumstances would lose their telephones. That might well happen to people who are living on unemployment insurance and seeking work. In fact, in the City of Thunder Bay there is an unemployed workers' association which has sought a reduction in the bus fare in order to assist unemployed people in finding work. People who are hunting for jobs may have to depend on public transit, which represents a very heavy drain on their resources. Similarly, to charge for telephone calls by the call, and to allow telephone rental rates to rise significantly, would represent an unbearable drain on the resources of people who are in economic difficulty. Those economic circumstances are no accident. Governments helped to create those circumstances. The people who are already driven to the edge of despair would find themselves loaded down with additional costs. That is the human reality with which this Bill deals.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member has graphically described the problems of his constituents who live outside the city limits of Thunder Bay. I wonder, has he received representations from senior citizens' organization? I have received representations which are very direct in expressing the feeling that the telephone service is a necessity for senior citizens and that the sharp increases, such as those which are occurring in the United States owing to the competition for long distance service, would mean that many senior

citizens would have to give up their telephones. Has the Hon. Member received that type of representation? If so, what has his response been?

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, I must say in all honesty that I have not received that kind of representation. However, I have had representations from senior citizens in the City of Thunder Bay who are concerned about rental increases. In many cases the rent increases strike me as being inordinate. The rent increases seem particularly outrageous as they relate to non-profit housing. Non-profit housing is supposed to be social housing, but it is controlled by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in such a way that rents are being driven upward significantly. Under those circumstances, I cannot imagine a senior citizen who is living on a pension being able to manage all of the costs. In the end, senior citizens may have to abandon their telephone service. I am an active member of the St. Paul's United Church Family Committee in Thunder Bay. The committee is concerned about the plight of senior members in the congregation. We recognized in that committee that the telephone service is one of the means of keeping in touch to ensure that people are in good health and have not suffered accidents.

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Beyond the physical, of course, the regular telephone call is one way of ensuring that a good outlook on life is being maintained. It is necessary for mental health, if you will. We all realize, I am sure, although we forget the fact sometimes, that encouraging people to remain in their homes and carry on as long as possible is of enormous value to society. It saves the Government money. Again, this Bill is creating circumstances in which it is going to be more difficult for people to keep in touch and maintain a happy outlook on life. Telephones are essential to ensure that someone has not taken a fall and lain on the floor for two or three days before this person is missed at church on a Sunday which causes someone to go by his house to check whether he is all right or not. Again, those are dimensions which I appreciate my good friend from Winnipeg North drawing to my attention and thereby giving me the opportunity to lay them before the House.

Mr. Vic Althouse (Humboldt-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend a few minutes this afternoon looking at Bill C-19 which is an effort to reorganize Bell Canada. I have some questions for you which I will come to just before my time is up this afternoon, but initially I would like to comment on the content of this Bill. It seems to be following a process we have seen in Canada before.

Historically, only a few large monopolies have developed in this country. That applies whether we talk about the fur trade, our transportation system or the telephone system. As we know, the telephone is believed to have been invented in the Brantford area by Alexander Graham Bell, whose name this company still uses. The CPR's development in Canada came about through its railroad operations. Subsequently it moved into other areas like hotels, tourism, ocean shipping, trucking, accumulating a multitude of assets, including real estate, until