

# Canadian Independent Telephone Association

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## Independent Telephony in the U. S.

The position of Independent Telephony in the United States is in many ways a great deal stronger than ever. But a danger lies before it which is so great as to threaten its existence, if not averted, and that is the possibility of disunion among the members.

This danger always threatens, and too frequently destroys, every reform movement. Reformers, naturally, are enthusiastic and pugnacious while the enemy is full of fight. But when the enemy quiets down, too often the reformers, believing that a single battle, or even a campaign, means conquest, sink into satisfied rest, rejoicing that freedom has been won; while the enemy, cowed into temporary submission, lies quiet, accumulating strength for a greater battle against a foe which has been lulled into a false sense of security.

This is the great danger in the States, for Independent Telephony.

The International Association has become strong and powerful. The Bell Company has apparently been beaten along the line—but it is not dead. It is only that its tactics have been altered to meet the changed conditions. For a long time the Bell Company, believing itself invincible, refused to sell any equipment to an independent company. Finding, however, that this was playing into the hands of the independent manufacturers, it is now offering its goods, made by its subsidiary companies, to any and all independents, while its agents run down the "Bell" in order to fool their customers into believing that the Western & Kellogg Companies are not owned by the Bell.

More than this; instead of refusing to give connection to other exchanges, as it used to do, the Bell now is doing its best to secure control—by first granting connection—of such independent companies as will prevent the completion of a long distance independent system.

Here lies the danger of the Independent Association.

While it is true that the Bell cannot beat the Association, it is possible that it may break its power by disintegrating it; by stealing — through force, graft or bluff—a few members here and there, so as to spoil the union as it exists now.

A great weakness of the Independent Association is that it cannot secure a chance of bringing its position before the country through the newspapers. The Bell Company has a fund of \$30,000 for publicity purposes, and letters from "Aunt Mary", and other correspondents with ingenuous names, and little squibs appear, which are copied—at line rates—in the daily papers.

It should be mentioned in this connection that one of the great Chicago dailies has magnanimously offered to print an editorial, written by the independents, to show the true position of the question. But the condition of publishing this news, which is of vital interest to the community, is that the usual advertizing rate, for read-

ing matter, amounting to \$250, must be paid in advance! How is that for enterprize on the part of a daily which claims to keep its readers informed of actual conditions in the affairs of life?

Even this, disreputable as it is, is a concession from the usual attitude of the dailies in the States. It pays better to print "Aunt Mary's" letters—supplied by the Bell Company,—than to show the real situation in the "land of the free."

One consoling incident may also be noted. A certain high class magazine was about to publish an article on the Telephone situation, supplied of course by the Bell publicity department, but in such a round-about way that the Editor was really hoodwinked. Mr. Ware, Secretary of the Independent Association, made a point of seeing the Editor, knowing him to be actuated by a desire to publish only the truth, and after a long conversation, was pleased to find him admit that he had not previously understood the real situation. The result is that the articles—which would have been thoroughly misleading—have not appeared.

Another reassuring fact is that some of the magazines have published articles showing up the situation. As an example may be mentioned the series by Paul Latske, published in "Success".

But, as one enthusiastic independent said when discussing this, "Our side must succeed, because the right always does succeed."

## Points for Telephone Users

The following circular has been issued by the Harrietsville (Ont.) Telephone Association, of which Dr. W. Doan is President and Manager, and other companies may get some good hints from it:—

We are sending you this circular letter, hoping that you will understand how anxious we are to improve the service for you and your neighbors.

Again we are obliged to issue a directory showing some changes in telephone numbers. These are inevitable with progress and building branch exchanges. Please refer to the new book for numbers, and destroy the old book.

We ask you not to answer any signal other than your own on the line, for listening to other people's conversations over a telephone is as ungentlemanly or unladylike as it would be to creep up to other people's doors or houses and listen to a private conversation between those inside. Then, too, when you only answer your own call there is no need of concealing your identity, as is customary when parties are being called over rural lines. This makes service slow and irritates party calling, as it causes him to doubt whether the party answering is the one he wished to talk to. Consequently it is very disagreeable for all concerned.

It is important that conversations should be limited to five minutes, for, as you know, oftentimes you want