

and D and that they want to examine them with witnesses in committee. However, that is not what we are hearing. We are hearing no debate, just a muteness rising from the benches of the Government. This is a serious oversight.

Mr. Scott (Hamilton-Wentworth): We just want to hear what you fellows have to say.

Mr. Riis: I appreciate the point that the Hon. Member makes, that they want to hear what the various Opposition Members have to say. That is a fair comment. We do want to say that we are particularly concerned about the lack of research and development in the telecommunications industry, something this Bill fails to come to grips with. As parliamentarians, we have all had over our desks numerous articles and reports about the fact that research and development in the telecommunications field is moving southward, whether it is Northern Telecom or any other corporation that may be involved. More and more of our research and development is being moved southward. It is something that we as Canadians ought to become very concerned about.

This Bill is an opportunity to recognize that particular, apparent process and to require Bell Canada to take some initiative, to take some aggressive steps in terms of guaranteeing that research and development in this critical telecommunications field will in fact continue in Canada. Let us recognize what is going on. More and more often we are seeing corporations moving from regulated areas into non-regulated areas. We are seeing them using profits that they have accumulated in the regulated areas to reinvest into other areas. While this diversification has some good points, and there is no question about that, there are also some very insidious concerns that are being raised by this process.

● (1120)

Earlier today the Government announced regulations to change the financial institutions of Canada quite substantially. For example, a trust company that was unable to get involved with major loans of a commercial nature will now perhaps have the opportunity to open up a bank and call it a trust company bank. There will be another entire set of banks called Schedule C banks in the system. Again, this allows diversification of interest.

With that kind of movement in the market-place arises a certain concentration of power. There are few western industrialized countries that allow for the concentration of economic and financial power as we do here in Canada. The Bill before us and the announcements made by the Government today have indicated that there will be a concentration of power. Trans-national, multinational and national corporations will move into a variety of other economic interests.

We as parliamentarians have a responsibility to the people of Canada. We must ask ourselves if this Bill is in the best interest of the people of Canada. We must ask ourselves if this Bill will provide for better phone service for the people of Canada. The speakers to whom I have listened and the reports which I have read would indicate that it is not clear whether or

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not this is necessarily the case. As a matter of fact, it looks as though this is part of the process that will result in higher rates for local phone calls.

I would like to conclude my remarks by saying that this Bill gives Bell Canada virtually everything it wants. Bell Canada officials could probably have written this Bill themselves.

Mr. Orlikow: They probably did.

Mr. Riis: My friend, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), says that they probably did. Nevertheless, they laid out a list of requirements that they would like to see put into legislation. This legislation gives them virtually everything they asked for.

This legislation is being enacted in the absence of any over-all telecommunications policy, and that is really a failure in the development of public policy, particularly in the critical area of telecommunications where there is a great deal of change and where Canada plays a significant role in the international community. This area is very critical in a country as large as ours. Again, I am afraid I must cast some aspersions not only on the present Government but also on my Liberal colleagues. When they were in power for such a long period of time, this critical piece of public legislation was either overlooked or simply never dealt with.

My other concern is that the profits of Bell Canada as they relate to its telephone system do not necessarily go back to the subscribers in any way. The subscribers pay more and more to guarantee a return to the corporation. Do subscribers receive improved service? Do they receive any of the benefits from more efficient systems? Indirectly they do, but financially, they certainly do not. Do subscribers benefit from new and additional research and development? Not necessarily. As a matter of fact, this legislation just may provide the opening for which corporations of this nature are looking that will enable them to drain more and more of their research and development opportunities into another country.

We have many concerns. Previous speakers have specifically identified some of them. We will certainly be raising these concerns in committee as soon as possible. I do ask members of the Government opposite to consider seriously our amendments when they are brought forward. Too often Government Members feel that they have an obligation not to listen very carefully to the points which are made by Government backbenchers or members of the Opposition in committee. However, many of us feel very strongly about this Bill. Members on all sides of the House have spent a considerable amount of time studying it and communicating with individuals and groups who are deeply concerned about the far-reaching implications of Bill C-19. I ask Members on all sides of the House to give fair consideration to the amendments which will be proposed.

● (1125)

Hopefully, by doing that, we will ensure that Bill C-19 will not only provide better services to telephone subscribers, but will also assist in promoting research and development in