

instance it is 246, 246, 246, and I do not know to how many operators the message must be conveyed but the system we have is a system that probably existed before Riviere du Loup existed. I wonder if there is not the possibility of having some improvement? We hear about new telephones which are to be given to new subscribers. It would only be fair to those who contribute and who pay subscriptions to the telephone company to have a better service. I do not complain of the operators and I do not complain of the manager. The manager is a new man but he is a smart young fellow, and the operators do their very best. I understand that the board or table is quite large for only a few hundred numbers, but sometimes the operators require to pull the cable from the edge of the board to the far end. I do not know the system but I have been told it is very antiquated and that is a thing that should not continue. It is nonsense, and I am sure that the president of the company, if spending a summer down at my home—a very beautiful country—would not tolerate the system for a minute. I bring the matter to the attention of the company and I ask the president whether the money he asks for is only for the expansion of the company or if a sufficient part will serve the needs of the old subscribers who have been badly served in the past.

Mr. JOHNSON: Your first question had to do with long distance service on Christmas day from Riviere du Loup to Mexico city.

Mr. POULIOT: Yes.

Mr. JOHNSON: I can assure you that if you had been living in the city of Montreal on Christmas day you would have been very fortunate if you had been able to reach Mexico on the long distance telephone within twelve hours. My own experience on Christmas day the year before last, in trying to reach San Francisco, was comparable. There is very heavy congestion on the lines, not only our own lines but in New York and all over the United States. Everybody has the urge to call somebody on the long distance telephone on Christmas day and the biggest day in our history usually falls on Christmas day. The lines are congested not only here but in all parts of the United States and Mexico as well.

Mr. POULIOT: I will take that for granted.

Mr. JOHNSON: Your next question was about our projected expenditures. Our future program for five years does take into account the rural areas and the modernization of the rural plants as well as expansion in the large urban centres. As evidence of that intention I think I can point to the fact that in the last three years approximately 8 or 9 per cent of our total new telephones have gone in rural areas. I do not know what the amount of money would be but it would represent a substantial percentage of the total spent in the last three years.

Mr. MACAULAY: It would be at least pro rata.

Mr. JOHNSTON: In answer to your question regarding modernization I do not like to boast but I think we can safely say that we have the most modern plant today, in relation to our size, of any system in Canada. 70 per cent of our telephones in service operate from the most modern dial system. It is our expectation that the 70 per cent will be increased substantially within the next five years, taking in many of the smaller centres for conversion from their present systems, which frequently consist of the turning of a handle instead of the dial service.

Mr. POULIOT: Yes, but do we have to wait four or five years more for an improvement?

Mr. JOHNSON: I do not know about the particular locality to which you may refer but I think it is part of the Kamouraska company territory.

Mr. POULIOT: Yes.