

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, August 12, 1964

The house met at 2 p.m.

PRIVILEGE

MR. MARCOUX—UNPAID BILLS FOR LONG
DISTANCE TELEPHONE CALLS

On the orders of the day:

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Marcoux (Quebec-Montmorency): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege concerning the members of our party.

In view of the fact that the honesty and the integrity of my colleagues and myself are at stake, I feel I must raise the matter before the whole house.

Lately a commercial representative of the telephone company advised the chairman of our caucus that Social Credit members owed long distance call bills and pleaded with him to have those accounts paid up. Those outstanding bills amounted respectively to \$130.95, \$137.15, \$160.65, \$66.65, \$86.50, \$457.65, \$412.55 and \$66.70.

After an investigation, Mr. Speaker, I am in a position to state that no member of our party is owing telephone bills other than the current monthly bills.

It is true that we voted in the house for the increase of the hon. members' indemnity, but we can afford to pay our long distance bills.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, no member of the Social Credit is in debt to the telephone company for the amounts indicated above. I felt I had to make a statement on that matter so that the reputation of Social Credit would not be tarnished in the eyes of that company.

Mr. Gilles Grégoire (Lapointe): Mr. Speaker, on the same question of privilege, I think similar telephone bills must be owed by members of the Ralliement Cr ditiste, and for the simple reason that, about a year ago, the house passed a bill to the effect that telephone calls made by members of this house between Ottawa and their ridings would be paid by the House of Commons.

Time and time again we have asked that the provisions of this legislation we have passed be observed, especially since there happens to be some discrimination in this

parliament against certain members and, I would go so far as to say, the great majority of them. There is a direct line between Ottawa and Montreal on which calls are made without charge and which enables all members from the Montreal area, most of whom are Liberal members, to make free calls to their constituencies. The same situation exists between Ottawa and Toronto.

As for the hon. members living in the Ottawa area, there are also no long distance charges.

Members of the House of Commons living in the west, in the maritime provinces or in rather distant districts do not have the same advantages.

We are asking that the same advantages be given to all members of the house whether they live in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa or in the other provinces.

This is why we have always refused to pay telephone bills connected with our activities as members of the house since the law provides that they must be paid by the House of Commons.

That is why when we met in caucus this morning—and as a matter of principle, since we want to defend those principles—it was decided that we would let our telephone lines be cut rather than pay for what the House of Commons had decided it would pay.

May I add, Mr. Speaker, that this matter concerns not only members of our party but also several Liberal members who came to see me and who asked me to speak at the same time on their behalf, as well as many Conservative members.

[Text]

AGRICULTURE AND COLONIZATION

Third report of standing committee on agriculture and colonization—Mr. Honey.

LABOUR RELATIONS

MARITIME UNION TRUSTEES—TABLING OF CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING APPEARANCE BEFORE HOUSE COMMITTEE

Hon. A. J. MacEachen (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the house to table the correspondence exchanged between Mr.