

Long Distance Telephone Service

is a complete breakdown of long distance telephone services from the government switchboard. As a matter of fact, I sat by my telephone trying to obtain a number. After dialing the usual number, 151, I waited for 37 minutes and there was no reply. Hon. members of the House have come to rely on this service which has been provided, and our constituents have also come to rely on it.

May I request the government to use its good offices, perhaps through the genial Minister of Labour, to try to persuade the Bell Telephone Company and its slowing operators who are engaged in a slow down—they have come to a complete stop from what I can see—to settle their differences or at least provide some sort of service between the government switchboard and the constituencies. This is a matter of great public inconvenience. It is an essential public service for our constituents. In the alternative, since this is a matter of very great urgency to most hon. members and it may take some days to affect a settlement in the dispute, perhaps the government would give consideration to making appropriate arrangements during this interim period for hon. members who may be obliged to make essential, I repeat, essential, long distance telephone calls to their constituencies.

Some hon. Members: Come on, Bryce.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker,—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Mackasey: —in speaking on the point of privilege raised by the hon. member, may I say that if a slow-down in the telephone service has been causing any inconvenience, I think all of us should be quite prepared to put up with it.

Mr. Nesbitt: What!

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

An hon. Member: Why?

Mr. Mackasey: Well, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help it if hon. members opposite have an anti-labour slant.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Mackasey: Hon. members opposite ought to realize that there may be some labour unrest in the telephone company. I feel very sorry for these operators. They are probably working to rule, which is unfortunate,

[Mr. Nesbitt.]

but that is not against the law of the land. It appears that the dispute could be resolved easily between the Bell Telephone Company of Canada and the lovely young ladies. If hon. members opposite have any argument with the operators, they should telephone them and say so. In the meantime, we shall have to live with the slow-down for the next few hours.

Mr. Nesbitt: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. I can only assume the Minister of Labour did not hear my original question. I say that because I do not think any member should have his remarks twisted and distorted by the Minister of Labour.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Nesbitt: I, therefore, assume the minister did not hear what was said. I am requesting the minister to use his good offices, go to the two groups and ask them to provide a service.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Oxford has made his representation. I doubt whether it is a question of privilege. In any event, he has raised a very important point which is of concern to hon. members and, I am sure, to the minister. May I remind the hon. member that the commissioners of internal economy will be interested in an aspect of his statement. That will be looked into forthwith.

Mr. Nesbitt: This is an example of cheap politics on the part of the minister.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Unless there is another issue to be raised, it seems to me that I may tell the hon. member who has made his representation that an aspect of the matter he has raised is of concern to the House directly, to the Speaker and the Commissioners of Internal Economy, who will be looking into the matter forthwith.

Mr. MacInnis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a separate question of privilege. I take strong exception to the remarks made by the Minister of Labour who, on speaking to the original question of privilege, tried to leave the impression that he was protecting the unionized workers in the Bell Telephone Company. Well, let me say something else. That did not seem to be the minister's position earlier this afternoon when discussing the