

public interest, and that no restraint upon trade or restriction upon legitimate business in any part of the country should be regarded as reasonable and in harmony with public policy unless it can be clearly shown that it does not interfere, or tend to interfere, with the rights and interests of the public in that locality.

It may be said that an exclusive privilege such as that in the telephone agreement, does not interfere with the public interest, because the public will be better served by a strong well equipped organization, such as the Bell Telephone Company, than it would be served if free competition were allowed. That may or may not be so. One thing we know, viz., that this is the argument of all monopolists. We know, also, that generally speaking, the people are the best judges of their own interests, and on a well established principle of government in free countries they should be allowed to decide such questions for themselves—whether to depend wholly on an organization such as the Bell Telephone Company, or establish a municipal system of telephones for their own use.

There is a clear cut decision by one of the commissioners, saying that it was in the public interest that the people of Port Arthur and Fort William should be allowed telephonic access to the stations of the Canadian Pacific Railway. But unfortunately this was made a question of law, and the opinion of the two other commissioners is worthless, because the Act says that the opinion of the chief commissioner is everything on a law question and that the opinion of the other two commissioners is nothing. That is not a condition of things we should have in this country. We wish to have that exclusive privilege taken away from the chief commissioner, and if this question of compensation is to arise, we say that it should be strictly limited to the damages by the entrance of the wire and the maintenance of the wire, and that there should be no compensation for any monopolistic clause. Let me put it in this way to the government. Suppose that the government should decide to introduce a national telephone system without buying out the Bell Telephone system, would the government for one moment let the Bell Telephone Company, and the Canadian Pacific Railway say: you shall not come on our premises with your national system until you compensate us for any loss we may sustain in the monopoly we have created by the contract? And who are these two companies that seek to create a monopoly against the people of Canada? Both have been created by this parliament; they are the creatures of the people of Canada, and yet they think it well to make a long contract in order to create a monopoly against the people of this country. The Canadian Pacific Railway has received over \$100,000,000 of the people's money. It has received enormous land grants, and when it was in dire distress for money and credit, it came to the people of Canada and had an enormous credit voted to it. I am glad the Canadian Pacific Railway paid

back the money, but nevertheless it got millions and millions of the people's money when in dire distress, and yet it has the hardihood to say to-day, that it will join with the Bell Telephone Company to create a monopoly, objectionable to the people. The Canadian Pacific Railway should be above that. I grant that the Canadian Pacific Railway may say to the Bell Telephone Company: we will give you passes; we will carry your freight free in consideration of reciprocal advantages. But the Canadian Pacific Railway should never have allowed itself to be a party to a monopoly which is against the interests of the Canadian people. Take my own community of Locust Hill for instance, the people there are all customers of the Canadian Pacific Railway; they give all their freight to that railway; and before the Bell Telephone Company was in that country, the people offered to build their own telephone line to facilitate business, but they were denied access to the Canadian Pacific Railway station.

That is not in the public interest; it is not what we were led to hope last session would be the case when this clause was put in the Bill; and I appeal to the government for their assistance to have it made clear that the only compensation to be paid shall be compensation for entering upon the premises of the railway company. Now, we are going a roundabout way to afford relief to the public in regard to telephones and other matters. There is an easy way to grant the relief, and that is made clear by the despatches in the papers of this morning, which state that Lord Stanley introduced a Bill in the British parliament yesterday to take over the National telephone service. The reason for this is that the telephone service, which has been nationalized in England, has been a great success, and now they propose to nationalize the telephone service. Lord Stanley yesterday asked for a credit of £3,000,000 for the purpose, and a small select committee to consider details, and he said that the scheme would result in telephones costing the people £2 less than the cheapest now in use. In this House two years ago, the Minister of Justice gave his solemn word that he would introduce a Bill to regulate telephone companies, and I took for granted, as every one else did, that it would contain provisions preventing discrimination by any telephone company against any portion of the public. We have not that Bill yet, and the relief that was promised has not yet been granted. Representatives of the people of Port Arthur and Fort William are now on their way here, and will be here to-morrow or some other day this week, to ask the government to give them relief. The easy way to grant relief is to nationalize the long-distance lines, and to let the municipalities own the local lines. Look at what is happening at the present time. Last night the Bell Telephone Company, through distress, offered to