

Supply—Transport

The letter of the constitution was complied with, but only one company was granted the largest monopoly of public utilities and finance that could possibly be conceived in North America and in the world.

The company can now disregard the population and even the governments. As long as its public relations are running smoothly with plenty of dollars, the company thinks it can do anything it likes and is justified legally in doing so, as a result of its 1880 charter and of its ever increasing powers. Capitalization has now reached \$1 billion.

If you refer to the epic and so justified struggles of the year 1902 and other periods, you would think they took place in 1961. At the time, 22 years after the company was set up, such abuses were pointed out and criticized in this house and in the other place. The Toronto board of trade then came to the defence of the Canadian people. If we look over the record for that period, we note that the company suggested that the subscribers were cry-babies. Who is right today?

Here are some concrete results:

(a) The board of transport commissioners has no authority whatsoever over the Bell Telephone Company of Canada, except as far as rate increases are concerned.

(b) The provinces have no jurisdiction.

(c) This is a tremendous game and the same club is always on the winning side, namely the Bell Telephone Company of Canada, while it keeps on saying in a paradoxical way: "At your service".

The company can even go as far as claiming with impunity—and with legal justification—that it has the "absolute" right, without any restriction whatsoever, to build, erect and maintain its telephone lines along, through or on all highways, streets, roads, bridges, waterways or other such places, located in Canada.

I should like to point out to the house certain obvious results: The company divides arbitrarily the territories within a municipality, thus showing discrimination and spreading discord among local citizens, as is the case throughout central Ontario and Quebec.

The company takes pleasure in waiting that all development is completed in a given area, be it in the vicinity of Montreal, Toronto or Hamilton, and coming in afterwards in order to collect the revenue of communications by making all kinds of imaginary drawings, circles, or zoning, and nobody, neither the

[Mr. Pigeon.]

board of transport commissioners, the Ontario service commission nor the public utility control board of the province of Quebec, can say anything.

When the company decides to strangle a competitor or a territory, everybody has to kowtow to it.

An investigation would show readily how many federal services are stifled by this company. It must be realized that the railways which are entitled to operate in the field of telephone communications, are the first to suffer from the control of the Bell Telephone Company and eventually the Canadian taxpayers must suffer the consequences while the company reaps high profits by charging rates that are becoming prohibitive. And such is the situation, Mr. Chairman, since the Bell Telephone Company of Canada has had its charter.

You should take a look at the spider's webs interwoven by the company so as not to lose the significant profits arising from long-distance calls of people who have common interests with a large city like Toronto or Montreal. I will let my colleagues from Toronto give their examples, but we have pleasant ones around Montreal. In fact, you can phone directly from Saint-Mathias to Montreal, by-passing Chambly or Longueuil, without having to pay any long distance charge, but if you phone to Chambly or to Longueuil, which is on your run, you are charged the famous long distance duty.

Also, if you go over the statements made by the company before the committees, here in Ottawa, you will see that the company easily solves any problems. Indeed, when parliament refused to grant an increase in the registered capital of the company which would have made it possible to buy other companies and to charge the expense to the subscribers of other areas, bringing about an inevitable rise in rates, you will note that two different answers covering the same period are given by the company. On Thursday November 28, 1957 the company stated here in Ottawa that, during a given period, it has taken over 40 companies, of which 17 were subsidiaries. It protested against intending to control the market. Now then, in a letter and a brief dated August 7, 1958, having forgotten, too soon perhaps, its previous testimony, the company writes unhesitatingly that it has purchased 150 independent companies and bought part interests, in 29 others, during the same period of 1957. Quite edifying indeed.