

*Private Bills*

not, I, for one, feel this bill will never pass this chamber. I say so for a number of reasons. For one thing, we are considering a measure which is concerned with United States ownership in the communications field, precisely the field in which there should be, at best, public ownership or, at least, Canadian ownership. Personally, I could not give a tinker's damn about the welfare and good order of various United States communications companies. I will not be a party here or anywhere else to improving the health and welfare of corporations of this kind.

I maintain that systems of communication, whether by telephone, radio, television or telegraph, should be completely and totally the business of the nation concerned, not entered upon or interfered with by any other nation. I believe, along with my hon. friends and members of my party across the country, that there must be no foreign ownership of telephones, radio, telegraph, television or similar methods of communication and broadcasting in Canada. It is bad enough that a telephone company should be privately owned. It is even worse that it should be foreign privately owned. As a Canadian I don't like it when I know that if I live in Gaspé or Rimouski and pick up the telephone it is really owned and controlled by a United States corporation. You may think, Mr. Speaker, that I am overly worried about foreign interests. Nevertheless I do not think it would too difficult for somebody in the C.I.A., for example, who wished to find out what a subscriber of the service was saying on the telephone, to arrange to listen to his conversations.

For these and similar reasons it seems to me no Canadian worthy of the name would have anything to do with the passing of legislation which allows the transfer of a Canadian communications business to foreign ownership. I do not envy the sponsor of this bill, the hon. member for Rimouski (Mr. LeBlanc). I feel sorry for him for having sponsored it. I would not touch it with a ten foot pole; I would not sponsor it in this house or anywhere else on a bet. The efforts of this company to complete its transfer to the Quebec Telephone Company represent nothing more than the consolidation of various United States companies owned and operated in Canada. We are told the present arrangement is causing extra expense, duplication of administration and so on. That is too bad. As I said earlier, I am not interested in improving the good order and financial position of

United States companies in the telecommunications industry in Canada.

The telephone is a public service and by its very nature such a service should be provided by public enterprise. This is a proper field in which public enterprise should operate. I hope that some day the government in the province of Quebec will say: Enough of this; we intend to take over all the telephone companies operating in Quebec and provide at cost, or as near cost as possible, a completely integrated and wholly publicly owned telephone service in the province. Three provinces have already done this. I do not altogether agree with the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) that the establishment of a nationwide telephone service operated by one company is necessary at this time. The system may one day evolve into that, but in the meantime it seems to me the ten provinces, owning and operating their own telephone services and integrating their long distance and microwave networks would provide not only a better and cheaper service for Canadian citizens, but a system—and this is even more important—which was owned and run by Canadians.

When I look at Moodies Public Utilities Manual and take a look at the entry concerning the General Telephone and Electronics Corporation, I am impressed by the fact that this is not a company one could easily feel sorry for. It is not ready to become a welfare case and it is certainly not one whose survival depends upon the transfer of supposedly one-tenth of one per cent of the shares of the Bonaventure and Gaspé Telephone Company. Its acquisitions go back many years. When one looks at the amount of debentures, both convertible and cumulative—preferred and subordinate convertible debentures, whatever those are—it becomes apparent that the company is not ready for the social welfare department. It cannot be said to need any part of the Quebec Telephone Company or the Bonaventure and Gaspé Company for the success of its operations.

In Moodies directory there is a map of the United States showing the extent of this corporation's holdings. They do not really consider the operation in Canada to be of sufficient significance to justify putting it on the map. I do not even know why they bothered with it. I suspect the main reason is that the corporation has plans for moving into the communications field to a greater extent in the future, not only in the telephone service but in the manufacture of communications