

benefit. The telephone service is of the greatest possible importance to the agricultural community; it brings the country districts into close touch with the towns and cities, and thus greatly adds to the attractions of rural life. But if you embarrass the smaller rural companies, you will deprive the people of the advantages they otherwise would have. In the county of Dufferin there are a dozen telephone companies, and if they have interchange with the Bell Company it would be a great advantage to the people living in the country districts. We know that the railway companies were anxious to allow these local companies to put their telephones in the stations, and that the Bell Company opposed it to such an extent that the railways could not do so. To-night we are only getting the crumbs that are falling from the government table, and mighty small crumbs they are. I venture to predict that the agitation will be kept up in the country, and that the people will at last demand that our legislation here shall be in the interest of the greater number and that these huge corporations shall not stand in the way of the public good.

Mr. M. S. SCHELL. I have no grievance against the Bell Telephone Company; I believe they have given us a good and efficient service. True, they had an excellent franchise, and I do not know that they gave the public more than the public were entitled to and had a right to expect. We are assured to-night that this law will provide for connection between all the telephone companies operating in the Dominion, but I wish to know definitely whether it will provide for a reciprocal interchange.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. It does not.

Mr. M. S. SCHELL. The clause is drawn in such a form that possibly it might require a keen lawyer to interpret it, and so I would like to know from the government what it really means. Suppose that one company is seeking connection with a company of equal strength, will the company seeking the connection be able to get a reciprocal interchange?

Mr. EMMERSON. Yes.

Mr. M. S. SCHELL. Suppose that one company should refuse to reciprocate, will it be compelled to do so?

Mr. EMMERSON. That is unquestionably one of the terms upon which the connection would be made. The moment you have a connection made each company is in a position to avail itself of the lines of the other company. One of the terms of the order of the board would be that the patrons of the connecting company would utilize the lines and service of the company making the application.

Mr. BARR.

Mr. M. S. SCHELL. Then, supposing a number of smaller companies were seeking connection with the Bell Company, and suppose the Bell Company should say: We will give you connection, but our service is very valuable and we will make you pay; what would happen then? A good many of the arguments advanced to-night have been to the effect that the long-distance service given by the Bell Company is worth more than the company is getting for it, and that the Bell Company would be the loser if more business is given to it, but that seems to me to be the weakest argument I have ever heard advanced by men of intelligence. The point I want to have made clear is this—suppose the Bell Company should say to these smaller companies: We will give you connection, but we don't care to have our system operated in such a way that our patrons can transmit business over your line; would the Bell Company be compelled to give an interchange in the same manner as between companies of equal strength?

Mr. EMMERSON. Yes.

Mr. M. S. SCHELL. These rural lines may be thirty or forty miles long, and are practically long-distance connections; will the Bell Company be compelled to transmit business over these other lines, so that the business that comes to the Bell Company may, as a business transaction, offset the business that comes from these rural lines and goes to the Bell Telephone Company?

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. No; one is a long distance and the other is not.

Mr. EMMERSON. The board has power to regulate in respect to that.

Mr. W. F. MACLEAN. Only in respect to long distance telephones.

Mr. EMMERSON. Every one of the telephone systems mentioned by my hon. friend (Mr. M. S. Schell) is a long distance service as described by him, and the terms upon which that interchange will be given will be fixed by the Board of Railway Commissioners. My hon. friend will understand that the connection is made, it is a physical connection; you call up the connecting point and the two lines are brought in contact, and you ask for somebody along the line of that long distance service, and you talk to him; you do not send your message to the Bell Company and have it transmitted by that company to the party with whom you wish to communicate, you have a connection made whereby you can talk with him directly.

Mr. M. S. SCHELL. I understand that. If the Bell Telephone Company refused the company that was making application for the connection they would be receiving no business in return to offset the business they must be giving to the Bell Telephone