

Bell Canada

a publicly owned telephone system in the province of Manitoba.

● (1740)

In every single case where telephones are publicly owned the rates are substantially lower than cases where Bell Canada is providing service. The figures I have referred to are for cities of comparable size. In every case where the telephones are publicly owned the system is more efficient and is providing service at a much lower cost. I have referred only to the figures for the urban centres, but if I refer to rural areas the rates are significantly lower if service is provided by a publicly owned outlet.

The Conservative and Liberal parties tend to say public ownership does not work, is inefficient, and cannot be properly managed. I should like to point out to them that in the three prairie provinces where the telephone systems are publicly owned service is provided at 10 per cent, 20 per cent and 50 per cent lower cost to people than the service provided by Bell Canada. I do not have the rural rates with me, but in those areas the rates are even lower where the system is publicly owned.

I am not interested whatsoever in Bell Canada getting more money and more privileges in order to expand their facilities. Coming from Saskatchewan I have had a chance to experience publicly owned telephones. Then I came here and experienced privately owned telephones. There is no comparison whatsoever. I am not only referring to the price. I am also referring to the service. When I ordered a telephone for my new home here, it took nearly two months to get a private line. That would never happen in Saskatchewan or Manitoba. If you order a new telephone in those provinces, it is a matter of days before you get it. You do not have to wait for months and months on end. You have to wait with Bell Canada because they are not interested in providing a service. They are only interested in making a profit.

The first priority of publicly owned systems is to serve people. They do not take advantage of people by being pick pockets and taking money out of their wallets. It is nothing short of that in some instances with Bell Canada. I will not expedite this legislation through the House and further line the pocketbooks of Bell Canada.

Mr. Paproski: You had better be careful or Bell Canada will cut your telephone off.

Mr. Nystrom: A week ago my telephone stopped working. Coincidentally that occurred the day after I spoke on the Bell Canada debate. I immediately called their office and they said it would take at least a week and a half to repair my telephone. In Saskatchewan employees would be fired if it took that long to repair a telephone. That is an indication of how efficient the publicly owned system is in Saskatchewan. It is not inefficient like the privately owned Bell Canada system. For reasons like that, I am not interested in filling the pocketbooks of Bell Canada or making the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell) happy.

[Mr. Nystrom.]

Bell Canada takes advantage of too many ordinary people. They should be publicly owned, and the telephone system should be publicly owned by all of the people in each and every province so that those people could enjoy the same privileges and rights as we enjoy in the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta.

When the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Murta) gets up, he will be talking about public ownership of the telephone system in the province of Manitoba because of the low rates he and his constituents pay, compared to the rates which are paid by people in ridings like those of the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie (Mr. Symes) and the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez). That is only because the telephone systems in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta are publicly owned.

It makes me passionate and somewhat angry when I compare the two systems of telephone service. I consistently hear that Bell Canada is poor and needs more money. In the question I answered just a few moments ago, I referred to the profits SASK TEL made despite all the service they provide. If SASK TEL can make such tremendous profits and provide service at such low rates, what is Bell Canada doing with the money they are swindling from the taxpayers of this country? They give various privileges to their executive people and they are involved in various types of investments. They do those things with the money they make from ordinary citizens.

I should like to refer to a list of Bell Canada's shareholders. Unfortunately I do not have enough time to refer to the 76 major shareholders of Bell Canada. I have heard Conservative and Liberal members get up and say that little old grannies own Bell Canada, and private citizens own Bell Canada. Well, very few of them own Bell Canada. Bell Canada is mostly owned by large companies.

In Saskatchewan the telephone system has 950,000 shareholders because every citizen of that province is a shareholder of SASK TEL. The same situation exists in the province of Manitoba, and that is the way it should be in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, as well as the Atlantic provinces.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nystrom: When hon. members of the Conservative and Liberal parties realize they are not winning their argument, they start shouting and heckling.

I should like to return to the list of Bell Canada shareholders. There is Associated Investors Ltd. which has 2,400 common shares; Canada Life E-2 which has 6,100 common shares; Canada Life S-3 which has 22,325 common shares; Canada Life S-9 which has 12,000 common shares; Canada Permanent Investments which has 5,000 common shares; Canada Permanent Pooled which has 10,000 common shares; Canada Trust Investors Equity which has 15,000 common shares; and Canada Trust R.S.P. which has 62,000 common shares. Mr. Speaker, if I had a grandmother like that I would be a wealthy man.

Mr. Paproski: How many shares do you have?