

made an important suggestion to Bell Canada, I think it would be appropriate to conclude by reading it. The editorialist wrote about Bell Canada:

Bell Canada gave a very personal gift to its subscribers just before Christmas—an increase in monthly rates. For many people, 50 cents is not a tragic increase, but it is different for many others.

We shall not argue that the telephone has become a necessity nearly of the same order as food. In an era of modern communications, the telephone is part of the effective operation of a world which has become a victim of its innovations and its intelligence. Bell Canada can rest comfortably in the knowledge that it has a monopoly and that no competitor can bother it.

However, we should like to take this opportunity to make a valid observation to this company. You probably remember the adventure of the dozen boys and girls who got lost in the woods of the Joliette area a few weeks ago. Searches were undertaken as soon as they were missed at a certain place. Two courageous young men walked all night through the snow and discovered a public telephone in a desolate place. They were saved. But were they really? The first question they asked each other was: "Do you have a dime?" One of them found this miraculous item, a measly dime, in his pocket. What would have happened if they had had no money? They had safety within their reach, but they could not have made contact. They could have suffered a terrible fate because of this.

All this goes to say that Bell Canada never gives anything free. Even in a telephone booth you must pay ten cents before reaching the operator simply to ask for information. Then, they will say that Mother Bell thinks of us. This is a striking example of the lack of responsibility of a company whose structures are often debatable.

And the editorialist closes with a suggestion:

—at least correct this anomaly in telephone booths; the communication should be given first without the customer having to deposit this famous dime. There are other aspects to public telephone than its non-urgent use.

I believe that this suggestion deserves to be considered by Bell Canada.

● (1742)

[English]

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate and to express some surprise that an hon. member from Saskatchewan, the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), and a member like myself, members who live in provinces which have publicly owned telephone systems which for generations have consistently supplied efficient service at substantially lower rates than now provided by Bell Canada, should participate in the debate while Liberals and Conservatives from Ontario and Quebec, who should be protecting the interests of their constituents, remain silent on this issue.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Orlikow: Let me point out, as did the hon. member for Yorkton-Melville, that the publicly owned telephone systems in Manitoba and Saskatchewan were not some kind of wild experiments instituted by radical governments. I do not remember precisely when the Saskatchewan telephone system was set up as a publicly owned utility, but in my province of Manitoba the telephone system for the whole province became publicly owned and operated in 1908, long before the NDP, the CCF or its predecessor, the Independent Labour Party, were formed.

It was formed long before J. S. Woodsworth, the founder of the CCF and the predecessor in the seat now occupied by the

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hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), came to this parliament. That publicly owned system was established by a Conservative premier of Manitoba, Sir R. P. Roblin, the grandfather of a later Manitoba Conservative premier, Duff Roblin, and the people of Manitoba have benefited every year since.

I am not going to go over the comparable rates for various cities, but I want to point out to hon. members from Ontario and Quebec, who should be interested, that in the 15 years I have been here there has not been a year in which the rate for telephone service for a month in the city of Winnipeg has been higher than that in the city of Ottawa. And Winnipeg is bigger than Ottawa. We are told by representatives of Bell Canada, when it suits them, that it is very expensive to instal and operate telephones in very big cities because very complicated and sophisticated equipment is required, so I have to assume that, if Bell Canada tells the truth—and I assume it does sometimes—if anything, it would cost more to instal an efficient telephone system in Winnipeg than it would in Ottawa. But every year since I have been here the monthly charge for telephone service in Winnipeg has been substantially less than the amount charged by Bell Canada in the city of Ottawa. Yet we have this strange silence of Ontario and Quebec members and the even stranger introduction of this bill by a member from Toronto.

If this bill is passed—and I can assure the hon. member it will not be passed very easily, if it is passed at all—it will give to Bell Canada the authority and power to charge the subscribers of telephone service in Ontario and Quebec even more than it does now, and to rip off the subscribers even more than it has been able to do up until now. I would not have expected the hon. member for Scarborough East (Mr. O'Connell), who is one of the better members on the Liberal side, to introduce this kind of bill.

Bell Canada comes here and tells members of parliament that this is a bill which simply relates to the company's ability and methodology of capitalization, including the removal of the scrutiny of the appropriate regulatory government agency, which at the present time is the CRTC, and Bell Canada advances reasons, which I will try to analyze briefly, why that kind of regulation—which we have had until now and which, in my view, has not been very successful because Bell Canada has been permitted increases in its rates almost every year since I have been here—is not necessary.

If it passes, this bill would grant Bell Canada the power to borrow, issue stocks, bonds, debentures or other securities as the company deems necessary. It would also give Bell the right to fix whatever price on such sales that it wishes. Certain clauses of the bill would provide Bell with the authority to establish such voting rights, bylaws, procedures and alterations to share issues as Bell may deem necessary.

The present authorized capital of the company is \$1.75 billion. Bell proposes a capitalization capacity of \$5 billion. It proposes to broaden the company's incidental and auxilliary powers, and to provide the company with the authority for the alteration, by letters patent, of the company's objectives and