

Private Bills

a telephone call with any kind of equipment from any part of the country to almost any other system even when mobile, remote, satellite and radar communications are used. In the United States this is not always possible. There is considerable difficulty there in intercommunication. In England the system is chaotic. On the European continent it probably takes half a day to make a telephone call. This is also true in other countries.

I think one of the advantages that we have in Canada where there have been so many small companies with subscriber shareholders is that we have been able to unite them into a unified telephone service across the country. If large units had been involved, we would have been using Northern Electric equipment in one area, automatic equipment in another and English Electric in still another. We would find then that these various pieces of equipment were not totally compatible and the difficulties in communications would have been compounded.

We in Canada are probably more dependent on telephones than any other place in the world. We are notoriously the greatest users of telephones in the world. Our per capita use of the telephone indicates a female tendency to long windedness, and therefore telephones have become a very important part of our everyday life. Therefore, I think it behooves us to be very careful in passing this type of bill, which I consider to be very dishonest. The bill does not say anything dishonest but it does not present the whole picture. Perhaps we cannot do much about it. It may be that we will soon have to face up to whether or not we want a monopoly in the telephone system in Canada. I believe we do. I believe that we satisfy provincial separatist traits when we allow the Northern Telephone to operate in northern Ontario, the Quebec telephone system to operate in Quebec, the British Columbia telephone system to operate in British Columbia and the Saskatchewan telephone service to operate in Saskatchewan. We may be fostering provincial pseudo nationalistic pride, but this will not really solve the problem of the establishment of the best type of telecommunication that can be obtained for the money available.

I am sure that when the Northern Telephone Company, which was one of the largest independent companies, was bought out, many methods were used to purchase the control of the stock. In effect, however, Bell Telephone now owns the Northern Telephone Company which might as well be called Bell

[Mr. Peters.]

Telephone. The Quebec telephone service might as well be called General Telephone because that is what it is. I do not even think it should be called Anglo Canadian Telephone because that is a wholly owned subsidiary of the parent company, General Telephone. There is nothing wrong with this situation and I am not suggesting any dishonesty, but I do not think it is in the interest of the Canadian public. I presume that the problem facing the people in Masson today is that they have to make up their minds whether or not they will sell their stock and allow a large corporation to control their shareholder controlled company or whether they wish to participate in a larger corporation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Richard): Order, please. I wish to advise the hon. member that the time allotted to him has expired.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I rise to take part in this debate mainly because of some personal feelings I have about matters like this, feelings that I have held for a number of years, and also because I think I have some idea of how the members of my party right across this country feel about it. I also wish to take part in this debate because I am convinced that a fairly large number of Canadian citizens, some of whom do not necessarily support or do not belong to my party, would agree with the kind of arguments that my colleagues and I are putting up in this house on this measure.

We are told that the Bonaventure and Gaspé Telephone Company merely wants a slight change in the wording of previous legislation in order to eliminate any possible doubt that they can dispose of the remainder of their shares. We are also told by the sponsor of the bill, and this was said in the other place also, that there is not much to this request because after all 99.9 per cent of this company is already owned by the Quebec Telephone Company. Therefore, it is only a matter of arranging for the remaining one tenth of one per cent ownership.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, I suspect—I hope I am wrong—that if this is all that is bothering these various companies they would be unlikely to allow the small matter of a few words about which they are in doubt to prevent them from completing the transfer of ownership. Methinks there is more to this than meets the eye. Whether this is true or