

company in regard thereto, are to be found in these concise statements of the local manager at Toronto in his letter of the 16th of January to the head office, containing his recommendation for immediate action. "The service given in Toronto is poorer than the service given to subscribers in Montreal," wrote the expert, Mr. James C. T. Baldwin, and he adds, "From observations made in Toronto during fairly busy times on the switchboard, I am forced to the conclusion that the service on that board on rush days of the year must be nothing short of wretched." "The faults of the present service," wrote Mr. Dunstan in another communication, "are those of too rapid operating. . . . Complaints with regard to wrong numbers, bells ringing, operators' failure to repeat, hurried utterance, and other troubles from the same cause are common. . . . People cannot work at high pressure forever, and this is now realized. . . . We never suffered so severely as during the past service. . . . It is impossible in an office like the Main to employ a plan which invokes operators working at an extremely high rate. There is no room for beginners, nor for operators who, because of sickness or other reasons are not of the best. . . . From 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the staff board, and this percentage must govern. They require a living wage, and are now feeling it impossible to meet the increased cost of board. . . . To pay the present high rate per hour for much overtime is most inconvenient, and results are not secured if there is any foundation for the idea that the service suffers when operators become tired. Service may not be materially depreciated at the end of the day when operators have been working under ordinary pressure, but it certainly must suffer when operators work overtime after being subjected to a heavy strain for the preceding five hours."

"Broadly speaking," wrote Mr. Hammond V. Hayes, chief engineer of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, 'the system should be judged from the standpoint of cost, service, and the ability to secure operators.' That it was judged from these standpoints is abundantly apparent, as were also the results, viz., that (from the standpoint of ability to secure operators) operators could not be secured because of the low rates being paid; that (from the standpoint of service), the service as a consequence was materially impaired; that to secure operators and improve the service it would be necessary to increase the wages and reduce the speed of operating, which would mean also an increase in the number of operators. Increase in wages and increase in the number of operators, other things remaining the same, would mean increased cost; (from the standpoint of cost then) to offset an increase in cost it would be necessary to increase the hours.

Health of Operators not a Main Consideration.

Had the company made the health of its operators a matter of first concern, it is difficult to see how it could have permitted operating being carried on at such a high rate of speed for so long a time after its ill-effects upon the health of the employees had become known, or how the company could have permitted its operators under any circumstances to work a certain number of days each month for a period of 10 hours, being two consecutive stretches of five hours each, as was the common practice under the five-hour system, when it had become apparent to the management that five hours' consecutive work at the high rate of speed which characterized the operations of the Toronto exchange was inimical or injurious to the health of its employees.

In the letter above referred to, of the local manager, recommending the changes as well as in other correspondence, and reports, one looks in vain for any reference which would indicate that the health or well-being of the operators was a matter of any consideration save where it was forced, so to speak, upon the company in its consideration of the three commercial tests above set forth, namely, cost, service, and ability to secure operators. Where mention, for example, was made of relief in the above-mentioned letter, in connection with its advocacy of two continuous stretches of four hours each per day, it was worded so hypothetically, and made to apply in cases only of such extreme necessity, that its insertion for commercial rather than humane reasons is but too apparent. 'We may give a twenty-minute relief morning and afternoon, in the discretion of the chiefs, to operators handling *very busy positions*, especially on *busy days*.' If anything further were needed to explain the motive it would be found in the words which immediately precede and follow, 'With the exception of the Main there will be little difficulty'. . . . 'this may not be necessary but can be used to tide over.' It was a question not of the health of the operators, but as Mr. Dunstan very tersely expressed it 'a choice of evils,' for commercial reasons.

In view of these facts, and taking into consideration the circumstances existing at the time, the fact that the change was not delayed until the other exchange had been completed, and what transpired at the conference in Montreal, we are forced to believe that it was for commercial and business reasons rather than because of any humanitarian considerations that the company decided to substitute for the five-hour schedule the schedule which it attempted to enforce on February 1. We are the more confirmed in this belief, inasmuch as the management does not appear to have considered any alternative other than the one of an eight as against a five-hour schedule. Had the lessening of the pressure under the 5-hour system been the main consideration, as was urged, this might have been effected if humanitarian considerations had been uppermost, by an increase in the number of operators and the lessening of the load which each operator was obliged to carry. Moreover, there were as alternatives all the possible arrangements both in the matter of time and reliefs which might have been made through an adjustment on any basis less onerous than that of the eight-hour system as proposed.

That commercial reasons rather than any consideration for the health and welfare of the operators were the motives which prompted the change was no less apparent from the testimony given before the commission than it was from the written records of the company, which were filed as exhibits. In his evidence in regard to the wages paid, and the inability of the company to secure operators as a consequence, Mr. Dunstan was very clear in the replies given to questions put by the commission:—

'Q. As I understood it, in discussing this matter of wages, what you said was equivalent to stating that during the past three years the Bell Telephone Company has not been paying wages sufficient to enable these operators to pay the cost of their living?

'A. I think you are right, with this qualification, I am not sure that that goes back three years. . . . To the girl who lives at home the salary which we have been paying was perhaps sufficient, that depended entirely on what she did with her money. To a girl who can make some money in some other occupation, and I have heard of such occasions, it would be perhaps a very good thing. To the girl working a good deal of overtime it was all right, but the overtime was most objectionable from the