

## ACQUISITION OF BELL SYSTEM 15

Government-developed systems in Rome, Paris or Vienna. It was not until after 1900 that a rapid expansion of the service in Manitoba became possible. Between 1900 and 1908 the service did expand rapidly and the Bell Company anticipated and prepared for still further expansion.<sup>5</sup>

### POLITICAL AGITATION FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF TELEPHONES

In 1898 there arose, chiefly in the sparsely settled "rural municipalities,"<sup>6</sup> a mild sentiment in favor of the installation and operation of telephone exchanges by municipal authorities. The first municipality to take up the matter actively was Neepawa, which had slightly more than 1,000 inhabitants. It was found, however, that the Municipal Act of the Province did not endow municipalities with power to establish commercial undertakings. Consequently, despite the fact that as a whole the municipalities were not anxious to embark in a venture involving the provision and risk of capital, to meet the individual case of Neepawa and to provide for a few similar cases, in 1899 the Provincial Legislature passed an Act permitting municipal ownership and operation of local exchanges.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Cf. pp. 26-28, *infra*.

<sup>6</sup> In Manitoba "rural municipalities" comprise rural territory exclusively. They are somewhat analogous to rural counties in Eastern Canada and in the United States.

<sup>7</sup> *Statutes of Manitoba*, 62-63 Vic., 1899, cap. 25. Cf. also *The Winnipeg Telegram*, February 4, 1908.