

## CAN YOU HEAR ME, WATSON?

A letter from "Ma Bell" - what can it be? What it can be, in fact, is a notice to forget about free-calling to our neighbors in Metcalfe.

Do we need the service? Let's be serious - our kids go to high school in Metcalfe, three of our ministers live in the 821 exchange and, for those of us who live in Marionville, Marvelville or along the Boundary, some of our next-door neighbors are long distance. You can shout over the fence, but Bell Telephone wants to charge you to phone!

You might think it ungrateful to talk this way - we just got free calling to Hull (do you have any neighbors in Hull?), but don't doubt for a minute you pay quite well for it. Free-calling to Winchester is also nice, but certainly no more important to us than calling Metcalfe.

Now why would dear old Ma Bell go back on her promise? The reasons are quite simple - she engineered a legal (if not moral) excuse to avoid going through with her obligation, and she is, for want of a better word, on strike.

Bell Telephone on strike? Well, if I withhold services for more money, that's called a strike. Ma Bell is sulking because the Canadian Transport Commission didn't give her all she asked for. What do you call that?

Does Bell Telephone need the money? I've never seen the company's balance sheet (who has?) but I do know Bell Telephone owns land all over the place (guess who owns the old railway bed north of town) and is moving at breakneck speed and great expense into the data transfer business. Ma Bell is not broke. She does not need money for day-to-day operations and she does not need to hold people at ransom to force the issue.

A company with a monopoly that does not provide its service is behaving irresponsibly. Delaying hook-up to new residences and going back on promises are chintzy, crass techniques. If Bell can't use our money to give us the service we want, let the government do it. The rest of the country has provincial telephone giving better service for lower cost. What do you say, Mother Bell?

My message is for all of you,

It's full of love and cheer;

"Merry Christmas, everyone,  
and a bright and happy year!"

**BILL LOUCKS BARBER**

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