

Eavesdropping Not Peculiar to the Independent Telephone Companies

(No. 19 of Series)

By Mr. A. D. Bruce

There is a very stale joke still afloat, regarding eavesdropping on rural party telephone lines. When this joke first circulated in newspapers, "independent" telephone companies were operating dozens of party lines for every one that was being operated by the Bell Company. This preponderance of independent telephone subscribers on rural party lines, established in the minds of uninformed joke editors the belief that independent telephone subscribers, on rural party lines, were confirmed eavesdroppers. Of course, the possibility and the probability of eavesdropping is just as great on a Bell Telephone Co. line as on an independent telephone company line.

When telephone service was first established it was like a new toy to a child, and some people who were not born eavesdroppers succumbed to the temptation, but as the novelty faded, so also did eavesdropping. Early in our history we adopted a bylaw imposing a penalty for this offence. This bylaw became obsolete when Provincial legislation imposed a penalty for the offence. However, eavesdroppers are not an extinct species, and doubtless will remain with us.

A very annoying, but comparatively rare offence, has been that of malicious provocation over the telephone.

At one time we had a subscriber who was notorious for his fits of illwill towards some of his neighbors. When the fits were on him he would go to great trouble to be grossly provocative. At one time he conceived a hatred towards a neighbor on the next farm, and he pestered that neighbor and his family in various ways. Among other methods of conducting his persecution, was liberal misuse of the telephone, and he developed a remarkable array of methods of making a nuisance of himself.

His victim made complaint to our Company. When the offender was informed of the complaint and of the name of the complainant, he declared that the charge was groundless. If the complaint had any effect, it was to intensify the hatred and increase the activity of the disturber of the peace. The suffering neighbor could endure no longer, and informed us that if nothing could be done to remedy matters, he would order the removal of his telephone. The writer decided to do a little experimenting and instructed our Line Superintendent, Mr. Miller, to make a midnight visit to the vicinity of the offending subscriber, and to make certain that that particular telephone would be out of commission; moreover, it was suggested that when that telephone appeared on the trouble sheet, he should not make haste to remedy the trouble, but should delay as long as

he possibly could, short of ignoring the trouble entirely. Bert Miller was also instructed to not inform a single person, concerning what was being done. We managed to keep that telephone out of commission for several days, and immediately preceding Bert Miller's "search" for the trouble, I called the subscriber who had been the object of his neighbor's persecution, and inquired how his neighbor had been behaving. I was informed that for several days there had been no trouble; that apparently his persecutor had experienced a change of heart. A couple of days later I repeated the inquiry and was informed that the annoyance was as bad as it had ever been. We removed the telephone without further parley.

Let us now turn to the employees of the Company, the people who have kept the system in operation. First let us look at our switchboard operators. Contrary to an opinion, sometimes expressed by thoughtless persons, telephone operators as a class have a highly developed sense of their responsibilities as servants of the public. We sometimes read in the newspapers of some notable service rendered to the public by some telephone operator, sometimes at a risk to her own safety. In our local experience I recall how our operators remained at their post while the building known as Daley's Hall was burning. Our exchange was on the second floor of the Ratcliff building, and only a narrow street lay between it and the Daley building, which was large, and being built entirely of wood, it burned fiercely. The heat was intense; all the glass on the west side of Ratcliff's Hall soon vanished. The sash and the window frames were burning and live coals were falling on the floor in Ratcliff's Hall, but our operators in the next room continued to service the switchboard, while a gang of men kept the floor in the hall wet and doused the burning fragments that hurtled through the unprotected windows.

Our Line Superintendent Bert Miller reassured the girls by standing as watchman ready to warn them if the fire got beyond control. Concluding that the danger of the interior of Ratcliff's Hall suddenly bursting into flame, was imminent, Bert Miller called to the girls to vacate their chairs, and not until that moment did they falter in their service. Twenty minutes later the girls returned to their duty, the danger having subsided.

There are other causes than fire, which sometimes make the work of an operator nerve-racking. Among these are dissatisfaction and annoyance expressed and directed at the operator, because of delay caused by the two words, "Line busy." In short, the operator is the buffer that has to take all the knocks, and is expected to

never make any reply. On one occasion I was called from bed about 3 a.m. by the night operator. She told me that a man had been trying to force his way into the office. She was certain that he was drunk, and when he found that he could not force the door, he told her that he had brought his telephone with him and that he was leaving it on the doorstep and was going to see me. She said he had gone to the westward and warned me to expect a visit from him within a few minutes. I returned to my bed but not to sleep. I lay awake expecting to hear the approaching truck.

When morning came I called the operator and told her that my expected visitor did not arrive. She told me that he had returned to Stouffville, about half an hour after she had called me, and had stopped his truck in front of the office, and she had feared that he was about to renew his attempt to force his way into the office. Knowing that men were at work in the bakery across the street, she called the bakery and explained her predicament and Mr. Stover came out to the man and persuaded him to go home.

Before dismissing the operators, let me record that on occasion, the Provincial Police have taken the trouble to transmit, to our night operator, thanks for valuable assistance in solving a burglary, and thus bringing a gang of burglars to justice.

Next to our switchboard operators, stand our maintenance men as the persons who establish or injure our reputation with the public. In 1907 we hired Bert Smith as our first full-time lineman. As other men were engaged, he became our first Line Superintendent. In the early summer of 1914 Bert became restless and tendered his resignation. He had been with us for more than seven years, and had taken no holidays.

Our Directors believed that Bert was anxious to visit his mother in England, and offered to give him one month's leave of absence, with full pay, and to buy for him a ticket to Liverpool and return, if he would withdraw his resignation. He accepted, and sailed for England during the first week in July. He was about to sail for home when the First World War bust like a bolt from the blue. No ships were allowed to sail from British ports for several days, while convoy service was being organized, so his return was delayed.

In the end of the summer of 1916 Bert Smith resigned, and we engaged Bert Miller as Line Superintendent. He continued with us until January, 1926, and was succeeded as Superintendent by Thomas Jennings, who is still with us, and was Line Superintendent until 1954, when a complete re-organization of our maintenance staff was necessitated by

Local Team At Dairy Day

The 1955 Provincial Dairy Day is being held at the Agricultural College, Kemptville, this week. One of the highlights of this day will be the Junior Farmer Quality Milk Competition. The aim of this competition will be to select the winning County team for proficiency in quality milk production and to select worthy Junior Farmers for the Provincial awards for Dairy Maid and Dairy Man for 1955.

The Ontario County Junior Farmers will be represented by Ron Neale and Ron Werry. Both boys have been members of the Brooklin Junior Farmers for the past number of years and this year Ron Werry is secretary of that organization. Both boys have been very active in 4-H Club work. Ron Werry completing 9 4-H Club projects and Ron Neale completing 12 4-H Club projects. Ron Werry was assistant Club Leader in the Oshawa 4-H Dairy Calf Club for 1954, and is assistant again in this club this year. Ron Neale has been an assistant leader for the Pickering Dairy Calf Club in 1954 and at the present time is assistant leader for the Bringham 4-H Dairy and Beef Calf Club.

Each team will be required to demonstrate the correct procedure with regard to producing quality milk. This will include the care of milk-house and the proper cooling and storage of milk. The Ont. County Team is scheduled to appear on the programme at 9.15 a.m. on Thursday, June 16, and we wish them every success in the competition.

the growth of the system.

Thomas Jennings has had an unusual record of service. Commencing as one of our line men in 1908, he remained with us until 1912, when he went west and worked as a lineman with the Alberta Government-owned telephone system, and later with the C.P.R. Telegraph. In 1917 he came east to visit his parents. We had just suffered from the most devastating ice storm in our history. Because of war conditions it was next to impossible to hire extra men and we appealed to Thomas to assist us, while he was visiting his parents — he has continued with us to this day. Again and again he has been in hospital under the care of the Workmen's Compensation Board. One of his injuries was extremely dangerous, but he always comes up again, ready for work.

With the installation of the new switchboard in Stouffville in 1948, we engaged Mr. Graydon Baines as our switchboard Superintendent, and he continued with us for more than 3 years, when he resigned. We engaged Mr. C. D. Woolvene, who is still with us and is in charge of plant maintenance, with Del Jennings as foreman.

Those who have been named are the men who have been responsible for the maintenance of our system, and in this they have been assisted by a host of men who have, almost without exception, been good men, and true.

The work of a lineman is not easy, and frequently demands sacrifice. Here, again, a good lineman develops a high sense of his responsibility as a servant of the community. Weather conditions may be bad, frost may be intense, roads may be next to impassable, a tangle of ice coated, and broken wire may be an uninviting mess, but service must be restored as quickly as possible.

In the early days Bert Smith and Charlie Nendick set forth to repair broken wires in the neighborhood of the 6th Con. Line. The thermometer was far below zero. Arriving at the neighborhood they found so many wires broken that they stabled their horse in Ratcliff's warm stable and set to work, exposed to the keen north wind. Charlie Nendick suffered frozen feet, although he was not conscious of the fact until he went home for his dinner. In the warmth of his own home his feet began to tingle. Many weeks passed ere he was able to climb poles again.

Having regard to the nature of their work, our men have been fortunate. There have been some serious accidents, even near fatalities. One broken back and a near electrocution were very serious accidents.

Important contributions were made by Ratcliff & Co. at Stouffville, and by the Shirk family at Claremont. Ratcliff & Co. gave central office accommodation and switchboard service from August 1, 1904, to January 1, 1906 — a period of 17 months, without compensation. On April 1, 1906, we paid to them \$50.00 for services rendered during Jan., Feb. and March of that year, and entered into a contract with them to give space, light, heat and switchboard service for 12 months, for \$300 plus two residence telephones free from charge.

The best thing you can do for spring fever is to do nothing. But use moderation — don't overdo it.

Civitan Day Held at Gormley Farm

The spacious farm of M. W. McCutcheon was made available to the North Toronto Civitan last Sunday afternoon, when victims of multiple sclerosis and their families were treated to a day in the outdoors. This is the third year that the McCutcheons—known as Wally and Eva to their friends—have made this day possible. Refreshments were provided by the hosts, and other members of the club provided the transportation for the guests.

The day was thoroughly enjoyed amid an ideal setting. The farm consists of 200 acres of rolling fields, and is located on the 3rd concession of Whitechurch, just north of Haynes Lake. The outing was timed with the completion of a new swimming pool on the grounds, which was ready just in time for the event. The pool was installed by K. W. Betz of Betz Construction, Stouffville, and measures 25 by 50 feet. It holds about 65,000 gallons of water.

A young son, Douglas, showed us around the farm, and pointed out a large bell used to announce the meal hours. It was learned that the bell was from a locomotive, and was presented by Donald Gordon, President of the CNR, and a friend of the family. On a previous visit he had missed having lunch when he failed to hear a small bell. On his next visit he took steps to make sure this would not happen again, when he provided a larger bell.

LOOSE HOUSING VERSUS STANCHION BARN

Loose-housing for dairy cattle cuts considerably the time and travel required for dairy operations as compared with stanchion barns.

Labour analysis of ten dairy farms using the loose-housing system was studied in detail by the Economics Division, Marketing Service, Federal Department of Agriculture. This analysis revealed that in loose-housing barns, 14 percent less time and 27 percent less travel were required annually than in stanchion barn systems.

Savings in winter dairy chores accounted for the major differences in loose-housing

barns. Only about three-quarters as much time and three-quarters as many steps were used when caring for 20 milking cows and 30 cow equivalents. During the summer months six percent more chore time was needed in the loose-housing system. This difference in time was due mainly to the fact that the cows moved slowly into the stalls at milking time.

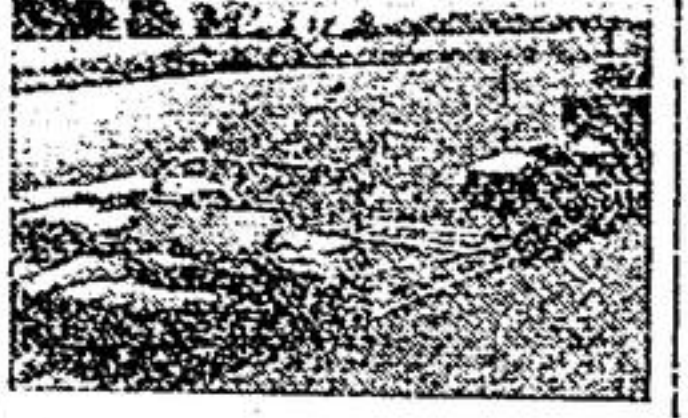
In future years these figures may be revised as the loose-housing manner of handling cows is still comparatively new on Canadian farms. For further information on the subject write to the Information Service, Canada Department of Agriculture in Ottawa, and request Publication 913—Labour Analysis of Dairy Barn Chores.

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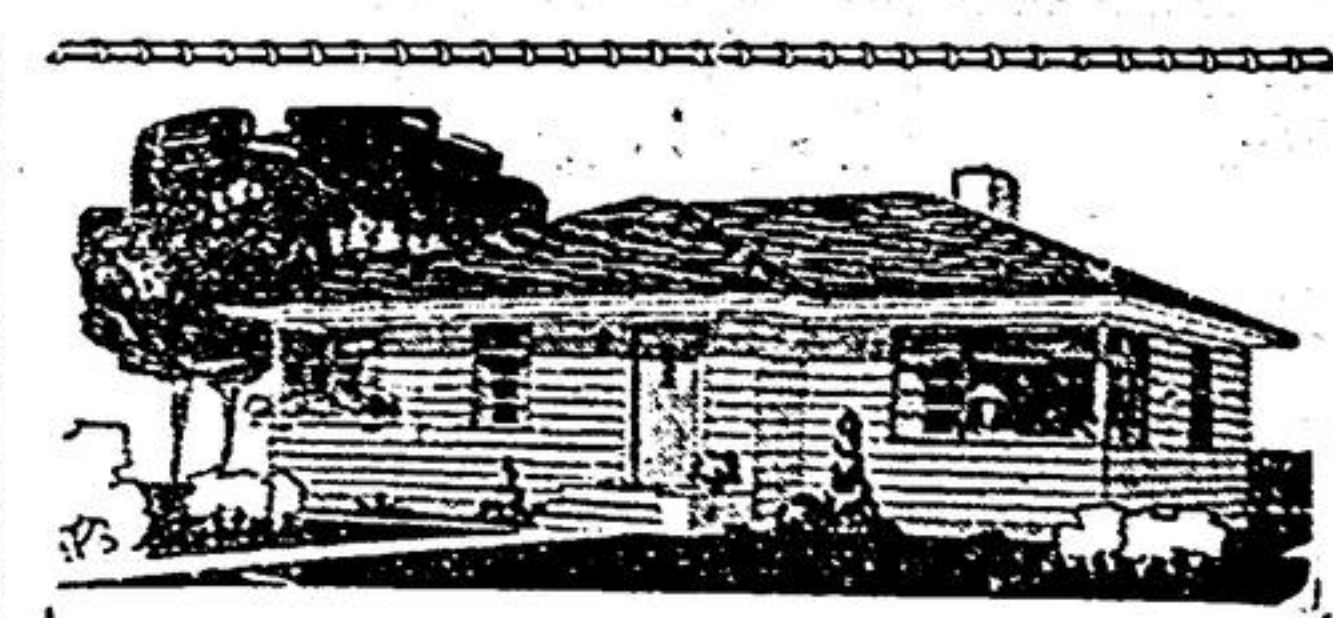
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Summer camps will soon be opening so children can be sent away for their parents' vacation. There'd probably be teen-age crime if more parents knew more about how to lose their patience.

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THINK



DON'T try to beat the traffic light

THINK—you may save 30 seconds
AND—you may lose your life

Remember your signal light is GREEN

Remember the RED will be against you

FOR ONLY 30 SECONDS

THINK—Are 30 seconds worth saving at the risk of killing yourself—your passenger—another motorist—a pedestrian who is moving on his GREEN

THINK SLOW DOWN and STAY ALIVE

ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS
Hon. Jas. N. Allan, Minister



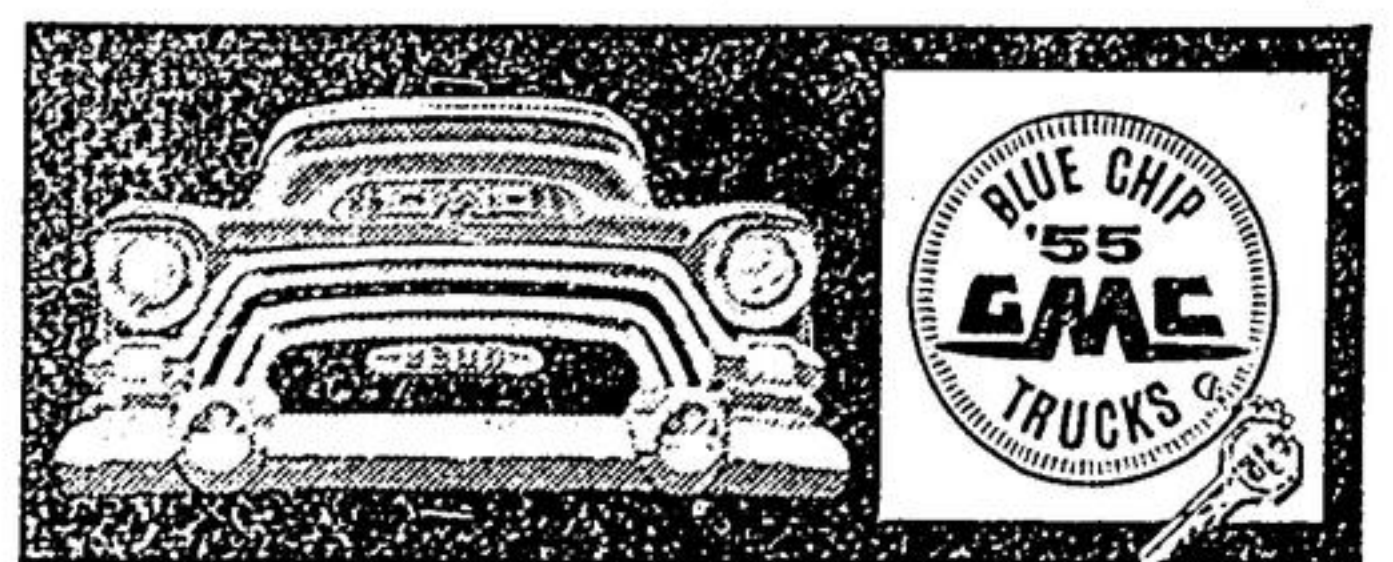
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