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Excerpt from Report of the Pennsylvania State Railroad Commission: For the Year Ending December 31st, 1911

To His Excellency,

The Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

Sir: The Pennsylvania State Railroad Commission begs to submit this report for the calendar year, 1911, and in doing so will refer only to such matters as seem to possess particular interest in connection with its work during the past year, and which the Commission deems worthy of especial consideration, and the whole in as brief a manner as the subject will permit of.

The subject of telephone rates and service has been conspicuously prominent among the new complaints, and the Commission has given much attention to it, not only because of the number of the complaints, but also because of the fact that the telephone has come into such general use that it has practically become a common necessity of everyday life; and the Commission, therefore, feels the importance of securing for the public the best possible service at a cost consistent with the character of the service demanded, and equitable to all concerned.

The subject is one presenting unusual difficulties, since it differs in almost every essential element from the characteristics presented by the question of rates of every other carrier, as, for example, the cost of the service increasing to the subscriber as the number of subscribers on a given exchange increases, making the rates in a large community higher than those in a small one presenting the same physical difficulties to be overcome: also the question of distance and contour of the country through which toll lines are constructed and operated; and the difference in the quality of service demanded in the different communities and localities. These are some of the elements met with which tend to render the attempt at equalization of rates by any rule generally applicable throughout the State apparently impracticable.

After much consideration the only practicable way which the Commission could see of determining the reasonableness of local rates was on the unit or local exchange basis, and thus taking up each case as it arose and making an analysis of the conditions of the service within the limits of the particular exchange or locality in which the complaint originated. This plan has been productive of apparently satisfactory results, as is evidenced by the expressions of appreciation received from the complainants, as well as by the increased number of complaints from other localities.

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