

S. 375 would add a new section 223 to the Communications Act to prohibit, in substance, the making of obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, or indecent telephone calls or those intended to annoy, abuse, threaten, or harass, either in interstate or foreign commerce or within the District of Columbia. It provides for a fine of not more than \$500 or imprisonment for not more than 6 months, or both.

The Federal Communications Commission is fully in accord with the effort to deal with the problem of obscene and harassing telephone calls which is embodied in this bill.

Obscene and harassing telephone calls have become a matter of serious concern. The dimensions of the problem are already large and are apparently growing. At the request of the Commission, the Bell Telephone System, which provides more than 80 percent of the Nation's telephone, began to compile statistics in February 1966 concerning the number of calls as to which it receives complaints.

The Bell System lists as abusive calls those falling under the heading of obscene, harassing, threatening, or interference. The figures show that, for 11 months of 1966, the Bell System received over 568,000 complaints concerning abusive telephone calls that threaten or harass the recipient. This is an average of over 51,000 such complaints each month. In the first 11 months of 1967 more than 640,000 such complaints were reported. This represents an average of over 58,000 complaints each month, an increase of approximately 7,000 monthly over the previous report.

When compilation of complaints began in early 1966 the number of reported abusive calls was between 40,000 and 45,000 per month. The number of such calls increased to between 50,000 and 55,000 per month as of the latter part of 1966. Available 1967 figures show a range of approximately 51,000 to 68,000 such calls per month.

A detailed breakdown of the statistics for the two most recent months available (October and November 1967) is attached to this statement (see p. 11), together with the total monthly figures of the number of abusive calls for each month since the Bell System began compiling such statistics.

It should be noted that only a small portion of the total number of reported abusive calls were interstate in nature. During the 11-month period in 1966 in which the Bell System compiled statistics, 512 complaints of abusive interstate calls were reported. There were 470 such calls in the first 11 months of 1967.

S. 375 would deal not only with obscene calls, but also the anonymous call made with intent to harass, and repeated calls made solely for the same purpose. The bill thus covers certain types of anonymous calls which have been of increasing concern. The telephone may ring at any hour of the day or night, to produce only a dead line when answered. Sometimes the caller will merely breathe heavily and then hang up. Sometimes he will utter obscenities. Recently a new and most offensive form of harassment has been devised. Families of servicemen are called and given false reports of death or injury, or even, hard as it is to believe, are gloatingly reminded of the death of a son or husband in the service. S. 375 reaches all of these vicious practices.

Some remedies do exist at the present time. All States have statutes generally prohibiting the making of various types of obscene, harassing, or annoying telephone calls. These laws, many of which are of recent origin, should assist the efforts to solve the problem of intrastate