

too, at your committee's interest in the problem, and I appreciate this opportunity to present our views to you. We certainly welcome legislation at the Federal level along the lines proposed in the bills which are the subject of this hearing.

The Bell System policy has always been to insure that customers receive the best possible telephone service. When the telephone becomes an instrument of annoyance or harassment, it is a matter of serious concern. Removing sources of customer irritation is an integral part of providing high-quality telephone service. In our attempt to eliminate this problem we welcome help.

Since early 1966 we have been filing monthly reports with the Federal Communications Commission which indicate the number of customer complaints involving abusive calls received by the Bell System and their disposition.

During March 1966, for example, about 46,000 customer complaints were received. Subsequently, the number of such complaints received per month increased for a while, reaching a high of about 68,000 in August, but declined to about 51,000 in December of 1966. During 1967 the number of complaints again fluctuated monthly, averaging about 58,000 per month. We believe the overall increase in the number of complaints received by the Bell System was due, at least in part, to our pledges of assistance made to the public during 1966 and 1967 rather than solely to an increase in the abusive calling. Of course, the only way we can know about such calls is when they are brought to our attention by our customers.

We consider abusive calling to be a serious problem even though the number of complaints received each month represents only a small fraction of the more than 10 billion calls made monthly by our customers. I shall in this statement attempt to explain the problem and the steps we are taking to remedy it.

We really do not know exactly how much of this abusive calling is interstate or how much is intrastate, but it is our judgment that most of the problem is predominantly local in nature. An interstate call may be a toll call of which there is a record in a form of a toll ticket or the automatically recorded equivalent—or it may be a local call such as one from Arlington, Va., to the District of Columbia. It is only after an investigation of a complaint has been successfully completed that we are able to classify the offending calls as interstate or intrastate.

Of the almost 700,000 complaints received during 1967 only about 500, an average of 40 per month, have so far been classified as involving interstate calling. Although this is a small percentage, we believe Federal legislation will also have a deterring effect on potential offenders in intrastate calling and that such legislation would be of practical advantage to us in attempting to deal with this abusive calling problem.

Existing State and local criminal legislation is of great help to us. In view of the fact that most abusive calling appears to be intrastate and local in nature, we have found that in many cases appropriate remedial action can be promptly and effectively taken by using our procedures and tariffs and by our customers having recourse to State and local criminal prosecutions.

At the time of my initial testimony before the Senate subcommittee