

Some of the major activities in this Bureau which are underway and have been underway are the comprehensive study of A.T. & T. We have made a decision as to the first phase, establishing a range of return and a rate base or defining such a rate base. It is this Bureau which is in charge of the study of the relationship between computers and communications. The Bureau has only recently completed a study of the telegraph industry. It is a bureau in which there are tremendous new policy issues under consideration.

Mr. Bernard Strassburg can give you more detailed information about it if you would be interested in hearing it.

Mr. Brooks. Briefly. And while you are covering this, have you made any study of the kind of services out of the telegraph companies? I have found that the service has deteriorated severely in my area and other Members of Congress have had the same experience. I don't think there are too many telegrams, but you have trouble getting them delivered to a newspaper office or a radio station or a television station. The quality of transmission is so bad—names, figures. If you write them four times they still get it wrong and I do not know what their problem is. Have you looked into that?

Mr. STRASSBURG. There are a number of factors that enter the problem. Yes, we have looked into it. We follow it very closely because we know that the message telegraph service has been deteriorating and declining in this country. It is in part an economic problem, a financial problem.

Mr. Brooks. If you send a telegram in a business transaction, the market could change considerably by the time it is received or they might buy something else due to misinterpretation.

Mr. STRASSBURG. We are well aware of those concerns. As I say, the problem from Western Union's standpoint is a financial one. The demand for public message service has been declining for many years. There was just a report in the London press recently that the British Post Office is considering eliminating the public message telegraph service because of the problems of putting it on a paying basis in that country.

Well, the economics of public message telegraph service apparently are not very favorable. Nevertheless, Western Union realizes and we impress upon them constantly that they have an affirmative obligation to the public to maintain an adequate standard of service. We do get monthly speed-of-service reports which are based on studies made pursuant to rules and regulations of the Commission which give us a barometer of how service is improving or deteriorating.

Last year, because of the extent to which service had been degenerating, the Commission did bring the matter to Western Union's attention in some rather firm and specific terms, and Western Union, as a result of that, has embarked upon a conscientious and real effort to rehabilitate and restore the general level and speed and accuracy of service to the standards which it has set as its own service objective. So you can say that the Commission is living with the problem and it is working with the problem and so is the telegraph company.

Mr. Brooks. How many people are in your Bureau, Mr. Strassburg?

Mr. STRASSBURG. The Bureau is presently staffed with 156 personnel.