

*(Note: Monte Noelke is recuperating from major surgery, so until he mans the keyboard again, we thought we would pull some Shortgrass Country from the files.)*

There's never going to be any peace on this earth until people quit getting so upset over such trifling matters. Even if President Johnson violates the kidnapping law in recruiting a Peace Corps, and ends up shanghaiing every idle citizen from Harlem to Hollywood, you can't have peace unless people settle down and cease having tantrums over every little thing that happens.

Take for example the way we are always having trouble out here with the telephone company.

A two-phase battle goes on all year long. Either someone is mad because his party line is tied up from dawn until way after dark, or the entire neighborhood is up in arms over the system's failure to work for measly 10-day periods.

Nobody gives the telephone company credit for trying, or even for having the rural subscriber's interest at heart. Especially the foreman of the local gas plant (whose phone is on our line). Why, from the way he storms into the town and bellows to the repair clerks about a four or five-

day interruption in his service, you might assume that a few hundred thousand gallons of gasoline or comparable amount of natural gas (which must be moved by trucks ordered by telephone) are the only means of heating the White House and powering the President's airplane.

The gas plant foreman isn't the only one who stays better than half ready to pick a fight with the huge telephone corporation. A goat-whiskered uncle of mine, over to the west of us, is equally bellicose. If his telephone goes out for a week or so during shearing or shipping time, he launches a verbal attack on the telephone company as if corporations had no feelings. It's downright disgraceful the way he badmouths the system if they happen to charge him a full month's service fee when his telephone worked only about two weeks of that month.

Neither of these men ever gives the company a break. A storm can lash across the country, tumbling windmills by the score, and before the trees quit shaking, both my uncle and the fellow at the gas plant are loudly exclaiming about what a two-bit outfit it is that can't keep their wires off the ground and out of the brush.

And when the telephone company sort of forgets to get around to restoring the service, the deafest man that ever

shot a stick of dynamite could hear their ranting and raving from the lower side of Niagara Falls.

These two characters – and they get support from other sources at various times – wouldn't be such a standout if the company's repair policy was the only reason for their discontent. But it is a sight to behold the way they fall to pieces if they happen to want the line just as another of us on the same line is about midway in reading a few chapters of a new western to a friend who hasn't had a chance to pick up a copy of the book; or on those frequent occasions when our wives need to brief a friend, who has been away on vacation, on what has taken place on the midday TV drama.

From the ways these men keep picking up the telephone and muttering such things as "I'll just be damned," you'd think the fate of the whole country rested on us winding up a 45-minute conversation simply to let them attend to some business.

After all, this is a free country, and one of the very cornerstones of the Constitution is freedom of speech. Besides, there never was a review of a western book or a soap opera that took much longer than a run-down on a Russian novel.

It's hard to say what it would take to tone these gents down. Maybe there never will be peace till age mellows them and makes them more tolerant of both the telephone company and us citizens suffering from a backlog of conversation.

All things considered, I guess everybody concerned probably would have been better off if the company had merely issued us manuals on how to signal with drums and smoke. That way, the strife never would have started in the first place. And after one of the sessions the company has with the aforementioned gentlemen, it's a pretty fair bet that the company would passionately agree. -(06/17/65)