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Carolina Telephone, recognized as one of the most progressive firms in the communications field, appears determined to steadily reduce the number of its party lines.

However, don't expect a wholesale switch overnight, or even in the predictable future. Cost of converting is so prohibitive that no company can do as much as it would like to.

Unfortunately, sharing a line with others isn't always pleasant. That's because subscribers often display the same lack of consideration you find so prevalent among motorists on streets and highways.

Behind a wheel, or clutching a party-line phone, humans are inclined to be unbelievably greedy and rude. Why these two situations bring out the worst in countless individuals is something to ponder.

From time to time, you'll read of extreme cases where neighbors refuse to relinquish lines in an emergency. Homes have burned and people have died as a result. Incidentally, you can go to jail for this sort of criminality.

Although it was never publicized, a patient at Craven County hospital caused quite a tizzy on one occasion. Other phones on the institution's switchboard went out of commission, and the phone he had rented for his room stayed in operation. When asked to give up the line temporarily, he refused. Under pressure, the patient finally gave in and the hospital resumed contact with the outside world.

Party lines do make a contribution to the curious and the lonely who secretly listen to conversations they have no right to hear. Some of the bitterest feuds among neighbors come about when an eavesdropper discovers that he or she is being scandalized in the conversation they're tuned to.

In some instances, we suspect, the bad mouthing is done for the sole purpose of infuriating an individual who has a reputation for listening when they're not supposed to be listening. Anyhow, if you hear what you don't want to hear while invading someone else's privacy, you deserve to be insulted.

Years ago, quite innocently, this editor was treated to a sample of a party-line patron's fury, and the lambasting leveled at us was so explosive it threatened permanent damage to our blistered ears.

It was during the Coastal Plain League season, and as statistician of the loop we had a private phone in the press box. The number was a non-published one, to prevent unnecessary calls from coming in. This had to be done to prevent interruptions while covering the game.

On this particular night, New Bern and Kinston were deadlocked in a mighty battle, and right at the tensest part of the contest our phone rang. The moment we picked it up, some woman sounded like a female goblin started screaming at us.

"You get off of this line," she shrieked. "Every time I pick up the receiver you listen in....I can't make a call without being bothered by you. If you don't

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IN DEEP THOUGHT—All of us associate children with laughter and tears, forgetting much of a tot's day is spent in silent and solemn observation. Renee Mathenson, charming daughter of the C. R. Mathensons of Havelock, really has that brain of hers working at full capacity as she studies the toy dog she holds in her hands, and couldn't care less about having her picture taken. Youngsters in serious mood are not without appeal, although it invariably makes

you tremendously self conscious to be stared at intently for several minutes by an unsmiling child. When a moppet takes inventory of your imperfect countenance, no one has to tell you that you've been thoroughly scrutinized. Common sense tries to convince you that the very young can't possibly be as wise as they appear to be, but Renee and others her age make us wonder nevertheless.—Photo by Eunice Wray.