

SESSION II.
1912.
NEW ZEALAND.

TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE MATTERS IN AMERICA AND EUROPE

(REPORT OF CHIEF ELECTRICIAN, POST AND TELEGRAPH DEPARTMENT, ON).

Laid on the Table of the House by leave.

The SECRETARY, General Post Office, to the Hon. the POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

(Memorandum).

General Post Office, Wellington, 24th June, 1912.

I BEG to submit the report of Mr. Buckley, Chief Electrician, on his observations on telephone and telegraph matters in America and Europe. Mr. Buckley recommends—

- (1.) That the more extended use of the telephone generally should be promoted as far as possible. The development of the telephone in centres of population in the Dominion as compared with that in many other parts of the world is low.

Action has already been taken as far as possible. Later on, as new switchboards are installed, I propose to recommend that canvassers be employed to increase the number of subscribers. I have no doubt that the number can be increased from 50 to 75 per cent.

- (2.) That the full automatic system of giving telephone service be adopted for Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Wellington.
- (4.) That the Western Electric Company, London; Messrs. Siemens Bros., London, who supply the Siemens-Halske system; and the Automatic Electric Company, Chicago, who supply the Strowger system, be invited to tender for a full automatic equipment for Wellington.

There is no doubt that full automatic is a pronounced success, and it would be out of the question to adopt any less modern system. At present our switchboards in the chief centres are altogether obsolete, and new exchanges are imperatively necessary, as the present boards are not only costly to work but are becoming worn out and require a considerable annual expenditure for maintenance. Fortunately, we have not adopted in the chief centres the system which came before the automatic was fully developed—namely, the common battery. As the installations at Wellington and Auckland are the most urgent, I would recommend that authority be given for the installation of the automatic system at both places. Leaving ample margin for future developments, the cost will be £40,000 for each place. It is recommended that tenders be called for from the firms named by Mr. Buckley. One of the firms offers to lay down an installation and to maintain it for a year free of cost to the Department provided interest at 4 per cent. is paid until the installation is taken over. If the system is not approved it will be removed without cost to the Department. The other firms should be asked to make a similar offer. The financial aspect of the automatic as compared with the present system will be an annual saving of £2,000 on each installation or, say, £8,000 per annum when the four chief centres are in working-order. This allows for interest and all charges. If, on the other hand, the common battery system is adopted, which is not recommended, the annual cost will be £6,000 more than automatics for the four centres.

As the first installation cannot be completed in less than eighteen months no special vote will be required until the year after next.

If it is decided to adopt the recommendation to install automatics, it is recommended that no more women be employed, and that until the automatic system is working any vacancies in the staff be filled by lads, who can eventually be trained as mechanics or drafted to the position of letter-carrier, &c. As the process of changing over will be a gradual one and will occupy about five years, I anticipate that with vacancies at country places and the natural wastage of the staff the