

The following table shows the total number of cable messages forwarded by each route during each of the past five years, and also the percentage of such traffic falling to each :—

PACIFIC.				EASTERN.			
Year.		Messages.	Percentage of Total.	Year.		Messages.	Percentage of Total.
1915-16	..	114,151	67	1915-16	..	56,684	33
1916-17	..	114,718	71	1916-17	..	47,790	29
1917-18	..	114,046	63	1917-18	..	66,318	37
1918-19	..	103,347	59	1918-19	..	70,591	41
1919-20	..	139,772	67	1919-20	..	68,832	33

Press messages numbering 946 were sent via Pacific and 1,767 via Eastern, compared with 482 and 1,278 respectively during 1918-19.

The number of cable messages sent at "deferred" rates shows a further decrease of 28·2 per cent., although the acceptance of deferred messages was resumed by the Pacific Cable Board in September, 1919. The decrease is due to the removal of the censorship, thus allowing commercial messages to go forward in all codes. While the censorship was in operation many of these were sent at deferred rates.

Expeditionary Force messages sent during the year totalled 192 only, against 5,907 the previous year. The use of this class of message has been in abeyance since November, 1919.

WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY.

The New Zealand wireless-telegraph stations, including Chatham Islands and Rarotonga, have continued in operation at a high state of efficiency. The Apia (Samoa) station is still being staffed by officers of the Department.

The New Zealand stations have returned to a pre-war basis, and are engaged upon commercial work under control of the Post and Telegraph Department. The use of wireless telegraphy for communication with ships has become better known, and its advantages are being recognized. As a consequence, considerable increase in wireless-telegraph traffic has resulted.

In addition to affording a means of communication with ships, the wireless-telegraph mainland stations of the Dominion maintain an unbroken service with Apia-Radio and the Chatham Islands.

During a recent interruption of the submarine-cable service between Norfolk Island and Suva the Awanui and Suva stations filled in the gap by wireless telegraphy, and maintained communication with the outside world until cable repairs were effected.

Considerable development in wireless transmission has taken place during recent years, and this, among other advances, will shortly be investigated abroad by the Chief Telegraph Engineer of the Department.

Hitherto the charge for transmission of an ordinary radio-telegram to or from ships trading exclusively between Australia and New Zealand, or between ports on the coast of New Zealand (except between Wellington and Lyttelton), has been 5d. per word, and to or from ships trading otherwise than between New Zealand and Australia or between New Zealand ports, 10d. per word. The Administration of the Commonwealth of Australia some time ago adopted a flat rate of 6d. per word for all vessels registered in Australia or New Zealand. It was considered that, as a matter of policy, New Zealand should not charge more than Australia; and, apart from this, the lowering of the charge would encourage traffic. It was accordingly decided to fix the rate at 5d. per word for all vessels registered in New Zealand or Australia, irrespective of the trade in which they are employed; the special rate of 2½d. per word for vessels in the Wellington-Lyttelton ferry service to continue.

TELEPHONE EXCHANGES.

Four exchanges were opened during the year, and none were closed. Additional switchboard accommodation was provided at 72 exchanges. There are now 62 central and 229 sub-exchanges, a total of 291.

The work of converting single-line earthworking systems to metallic circuits has proceeded steadily. At the end of the year there were 245 metallic circuit and 38 single-line exchanges, whilst 8 were undergoing conversion.

The number of party-line connections now stands at 4,947, with a total of 16,846 subscribers, an increase of 577 and 1,906 respectively.

GENERAL.

There are 10,860 miles of wire being used exclusively for toll work, and 14,648 miles used exclusively for telegraph Morse work.

During the year 2,023 miles of line were reconstructed and overhauled; 9 miles of duct line, 7 miles of pipe line, and 8 miles of armoured cable were laid, making totals of 77 miles, 169 miles, and 129 miles respectively now in existence.

The total number of telephone-stations (meaning exchange connections of all kinds) in use in the Dominion on the 31st March, 1920, was 80,723. This includes 12,520 extensions and 3,807 bureau and service connections.

The number of telephone-stations at the ten principal exchanges on the 31st March, 1920, was as follows: Auckland, 9,158; Christchurch, 7,625; Dunedin, 5,623; Gisborne, 2,086; Hastings, 1,782; Invercargill, 1,880; Napier, 1,924; Palmerston North, 1,647; Wanganui, 2,170; Wellington, 9,395.

The following table shows the distribution of telephones in the Dominion and the four chief centres:

				Population.	Telephones.	Inhabitants per Telephone.
Dominion	..	..	..	1,223,915	80,723	15
Auckland	..	..	..	144,646	9,158	16
Wellington	..	..	..	100,898	9,395	11
Christchurch	..	..	..	101,747	7,625	13
Dunedin	..	..	..	72,048	5,623	13