

TELEPHONE RATING SYSTEM.

A new scheme of telephone rentals was introduced in 1923. The principal object of the system was to provide a more equitable scale of charges, and at the same time to obtain, in revenue, an amount sufficient to provide for annual charges for maintenance, depreciation, and interest. The chief features of the new system are :—

- (1) The providing of a wider ratio between the charges for business and residential stations :
- (2) The extension of the party-line system to provide for as many as ten stations being connected with the same circuit, the annual rentals varying from £3 upwards.

Persons remote from the base-rate area may erect their own lines to connect with the departmental system at the base-rate area boundary or other pre-arranged point ; or the Department will erect lines to any distance, the annual rental varying with the length of the line. The system now in force is much more liberal than the previous one not only in regard to annual rentals, but in the way it frees from capital expenditure persons remote from a telephone-exchange centre.

The rates for toll communications have also been reviewed, and a more equitable method adopted of assessing the charge in accordance with the length of the circuit employed. Reductions have been made in the charges for communications over circuits exceeding 150 miles in length.

INFORMATION BUREAUX.

Information bureaux were established in 1925 at the telephone exchanges at Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Wellington, whereby subscribers might readily obtain information regarding matters of general public interest.

At offices to which the daily weather forecast issued by the Dominion Meteorologist is telegraphed, telephone-exchange subscribers or private-line owners may receive such messages by telephone on payment of a small annual fee.

TELEPHONE-EXCHANGE SYSTEM.

In regard to the telephone-exchange system, over 50,000 additional subscribers have been provided with telephone-exchange service since 1920, the increase in telephones being from approximately 80,000 to nearly 140,000. The telephone-exchange plant also has been considerably extended by the opening of over fifty new exchanges, and by the installation or erection of an additional 272 miles of underground ducts, 657 miles of underground cable, 80 miles of aerial cable, 235,000 miles of wire in cables, 7,800 miles of poles, and 50,000 miles of aerial wire. In addition, local telephone facilities for the public generally have been very considerably augmented by the installation of an additional 251 public call offices (coin-in-the-slot telephones). Public call offices have been installed in the smaller towns which were previously unprovided for in that direction. A system of installing penny-in-the-slot telephones in shops located in the busy areas of the larger cities also has been inaugurated. Since 1920, coin-in-the-slot telephones—most of which are of the automatic type—have increased in number from 295 to 546.

AUTOMATIC-TELEPHONE SYSTEM.

A great deal has been done in modernizing the telephone-exchange system by converting to automatic working the exchanges in the Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin metropolitan areas, and those in the provincial towns of Hamilton, Wanganui, Hawera, Stratford, Palmerston North, Napier, Masterton, Dannevirke, Blenheim, and Oamaru. Provision has been made for the conversion to automatic operation of the exchanges in the Christchurch metropolitan area, and for the installation of automatic exchanges at Whangarei, Marton, and Gisborne. Private branch exchanges of the automatic type, and a large number of intercommunicating systems of a semi-automatic type, have also been installed in large business establishments throughout the Dominion. Since 1920 the number of automatic-telephone stations has been increased from 7,500 to over 60,000. The proportion of automatic telephones to the total number of telephones in use in the Dominion is now 44 per cent.—probably the highest percentage of any country in the world.