

EXTENSION OF HALF-RATE PERIOD FOR TOLL CALLS.

Prior to the 1st October, the periods during which half-rates for toll calls applied were 8 p.m. to midnight and 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. (a slightly lower rate being applicable between midnight and 6 a.m.). Investigation disclosed that there was considerable congestion of traffic during the first hour of the half-rate period (8 p.m. to 9 p.m.). From the 1st October, therefore, the commencing-time for half-rate calls was altered to 6 p.m. on week-days and 5 p.m. on Sundays and holidays. By the extension of the period it is hoped to relieve the congestion by diverting to the 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. period a portion of the abnormal traffic load previously experienced between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m., and also to encourage, and to provide for the expeditious handling of, a greater volume of social and domestic traffic between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

HALF-RATES ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.

Two months later a further extension of the half-rate period was introduced. Traffic analyses showed that, on account of the absence of business calls, the number of calls on Sundays and holidays was only about one-fifth of that on week-days, and that a great deal of additional traffic could be handled on those days without additional cost. It was decided, therefore, with a view to increasing traffic, to charge half toll rates all day on Sundays and holidays except when the new "quarter" rates applied.

The results obtained in the short period since the extensions of the half-rate hours were inaugurated show that the proposals were sound in principle. Already there are indications that the evening rush of traffic is being spread as desired, and that the volume of traffic is increasing.

INTRODUCTION OF QUARTER-RATES WITH CERTAIN MAXIMUM CHARGES.

In conjunction with the decision to apply half-rates to toll calls made at all hours on Sundays and holidays, consideration was given to the question of charges for calls during the slackest hours of the night. Prior to the 1st December the charges for calls between midnight and 6 a.m. were the same as those during the half-rate period, except that for the initial rate a six-minute instead of a three-minute conversation was allowed. For the reason that in some cases this resulted in a slight anomaly in charges—the charge for a call of twelve minutes' duration, for example, being more than that for two separate calls of six minutes' duration each—and because traffic in the early hours of the morning is at its lowest, it was decided to reduce the charges between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. to one-fourth of the ordinary rates, with a minimum of 4d. and maxima as under:—

					Not exceeding	Each Additional
					Three Minutes.	Minute.
					s. d.	s. d.
For a call within either Island	..	..	..	..	1 0	0 4
For an inter-Island call	..	..	..	..	1 6	0 6

REDUCTION OF "NO-REPLY" FEE.

Hitherto a "no-reply" fee was charged in respect of a toll call when the completion of the call was not effected in certain circumstances, in all cases the fee being one-third of the charge applicable to a three-minute call, with a minimum of 4d. While the principle of charging a "no-reply" fee in certain cases was considered to be sound, it was thought desirable that the amount of the fee and the conditions governing its application should be reviewed. Accordingly, it was decided to reduce the fee to one-quarter of the initial rate, with a minimum of 3d. and a maximum of 1s. 6d., and, in addition, to extend the service given for the fee and to modify the conditions governing its application. By the adoption of these proposals it is expected that a great many calls will be completed which, under the former system, would have been allowed to lapse. Furthermore, telephone-users will be able to appreciate more readily that the charge is for services rendered in attempting to establish a toll call that proves ineffective through circumstances for which the Department is in no way responsible.

REDUCTION OF TELEPHONE CABLE FEE.

Previously a special cable fee of 3d. was added to the cost of all inter-Island toll calls handled either in the full-rate or in a reduced-rate period. To simplify the calculation of the charges, and as a further concession to telephone-users, the fee was reduced by 50 per cent. and 75 per cent. during the half- and quarter-rate periods respectively.

REDUCTION OF CHARGE FOR LOCAL CALLS.

A call from the public telephone at a toll station to a local telephone-exchange subscriber is treated as a toll call. In the past all such calls were charged at the minimum toll rate of 4d. While it was considered reasonable that this charge should apply at an office at which a public-call office is provided for local calls, it was recognized that a concession should be made in respect of a call from an office at which public-call office facilities are not available. It has therefore been arranged that local calls at offices at which public-call offices are not installed are to be charged for at the nominal rate of 1d. for each three minutes.

"PERSON-TO-PERSON" TOLL SERVICE.

Up to last year the only form of toll service available in the Dominion was "station-to-station" service, in which the calling subscriber is placed in communication with some one at the premises of the person with whom he desires to speak, and the chargeable time commences immediately communication is established.