

The most serious interruption was caused by a westerly gale of violent intensity which swept the Wairarapa District from midnight on the 30th September until 2 p.m. on the 1st October, causing very extensive damage to telegraph and telephone lines, as well as to private property, over a considerable area extending from fifteen miles north of Masterton to Pirinoa in the south. Telegraph and telephone communication between Featherston and Eketahuna was completely disrupted and the telephone-exchange service of some hundreds of subscribers interrupted; in addition, the telephone exchanges at Masterton, Carterton, Greytown, Martinborough, Pirinoa, and Hinakura were temporarily isolated. Such was the velocity of the wind that over 200 poles, including 129 concrete poles, were wrecked and a large number thrown out of alignment, while many miles of wire had to be re-erected. Conditions in the district were aggravated by the failure of the electric-power supply; but, at Masterton, by bringing into use the Department's stand-by generating plant, it was possible to keep the automatic exchange working, to the relief of those subscribers whose service remained intact. Working under most arduous conditions the maintenance staff enabled telegraph communication to be restored during the afternoon of the 2nd October, while telephone-exchange service was restored gradually until it was more or less normal, so far as subscribers were concerned, about a week later. The effecting of permanent repairs was, however, a work of considerable magnitude, and extended over a period of several months. The cost of the repairs was approximately £4,800. During the period telegraph communication was interrupted communication with the Wairarapa was maintained by means of radio services. Use was also made of motor-vehicles for the purpose of exchanging telegrams between Featherston and offices in the affected area.

On the 3rd July one of the heaviest snowstorms experienced in the Kaikoura District for many years resulted in the loss of all communication north of Waiau and Cheviot. Over fifty poles in the affected area were broken, while approximately the same number were pulled over at heavy angles. Subscribers' wires were broken at every pole. The main cause of the damage was due to the snow accumulating on the wires, followed by a heavy wind. On the morning of the storm only thirty subscribers at Kaikoura had service out of a total of nearly 300. Repair gangs were quickly despatched and temporary service was restored in a short time. So great was the damage, however, that it was necessary to retain one gang in the locality for several months to effect permanent repairs.

A violent southerly storm, bringing heavy snow, sleet, and rain, was experienced over Canterbury on the night of the 24th August, causing extensive damage to the Department's telegraph and toll systems. Heavy with clinging snow and swept by a fierce sou'wester, poles wilted under the terrific strain, and miles of wires and arms were snapped. Altogether approximately forty poles and hundreds of spans of wires were broken. Repair gangs were hurriedly despatched, and, notwithstanding the difficult conditions under which the men worked, communication was re-established with a minimum of delay. The restoration of the lines to their normal state occupied several months.

Following torrential rains, the Hokitika River flooded on the morning of the 20th February, resulting in the dislocation of the telephone-exchange system in Hokitika and the carrying-away of the main south toll and telegraph lines at Kanieri. The main damage was in the Hokitika Exchange where the cables were saturated with water. Breakdown gangs were despatched from Christchurch, and by working night and day normal services were restored on the 24th idem.

It is a matter of gratification that, notwithstanding the severity of the storms and the extensive damage caused in those cases specifically mentioned, the personnel and the resources of the Department proved equal to the task of restoring communication without any avoidable delay.

CARRIER-CURRENT TELEPHONE SYSTEMS AND VOICE-FREQUENCY TOLL REPEATERS.

Additional toll outlets have been provided during the year by the installation of one single-channel carrier system between Gisborne and Napier and another between Napier and Palmerston North.

In last year's report it was stated that the volume of toll traffic between Auckland and Wellington had increased sufficiently to justify the installation of a three-channel carrier system for direct operation between those cities. The necessary equipment for this installation is due to arrive from England in May, and it is expected that the system will be brought into service about October next.

For some time past consideration has been given to the matter of increasing the speech efficiency of the Auckland-Whangarei and Auckland-Dargaville circuits so that they will compare more favourably with circuits in general use over similar distances in other parts of the Dominion. It has now been decided to effect the desired improvement in these circuits by the installation of voice-frequency repeaters or amplifiers, and these will be located at Wellsford. It is expected that the installation of the repeater equipment at Wellsford will be commenced during next financial year.

MACHINE-PRINTING TELEGRAPHS.

Machine-printing telegraph systems continue to be of valuable service in the expeditious disposal of the telegraph traffic of the Dominion. During the year the machine-printing network was extended by the installation of multiplex sets at New Plymouth and Gisborne, and by the installation of an additional set at Napier for repeating purposes. As a result of these installations new multiplex channels were brought into operation between the following offices: New Plymouth and Auckland, New Plymouth and Wanganui, New Plymouth and Wellington, Gisborne and Auckland, Gisborne and Napier, Gisborne and Wellington.

In addition, it is now possible to provide for press telegraphic traffic alternative machine-printing outlets from Wellington to Wanganui, New Plymouth, and Auckland on the west coast of the North Island, and from Wellington to Napier, Gisborne, and Auckland on the east coast.

It was anticipated that teleprinter apparatus would have been installed during the year at a number of the smaller centres of the Dominion (Invercargill, Nelson, Masterton, for example); but this was not possible, owing to delay in the receipt of the instruments. It is hoped that the installations will be carried out during the next few months.