

EXTENSION OF EXISTING MANUAL EXCHANGES

Additional switchboard equipment was installed at thirty-nine manually-operated exchanges to meet the demand for telephone service at the places concerned. It is interesting to note that since the war ended the number of subscribers at several manual exchanges has been doubled.

SUPPLIES OF EQUIPMENT

A great deal of automatic equipment is on order both for entirely new exchanges and for extending existing exchanges. The largest single order is for 26,000 lines of equipment for the Auckland metropolitan exchange area. Orders have also been placed for manual-exchange switchboards to provide for some 29,400 new lines. In addition, large quantities of both automatic and manual telephones, private branch exchange equipment, &c., are under order, and deliveries are coming to hand. The approximate value of equipment and material associated with the development of the telephone service on order is £6,000,000. Of this, £3,500,000 represents expenditure for switching equipment and £2,500,000 for cable, wire, and poles.

TOLLS

Although the Department is to a great extent pre-occupied with plans for providing telephone connections for some 49,000 people who are waiting for telephones, improvements to the toll service are not being neglected. Since the war ended a great many new toll circuits have been provided, and toll-operating suites have been modernized and extended and new ones installed. This programme will be accelerated until the aim of universal "on-demand" service is achieved. Since 1939 toll traffic has increased greatly: in 1939 toll calls totalled 15,500,000 and in 1949 over 25,000,000. A big effort is required to provide sufficient circuits, operating positions, and personnel to keep pace with the increasing demand. On top of this, additional facilities must be provided to speed up the service and eliminate the delays that now occur over busy routes. Toll-switching equipment is not easily obtained, and almost all of it must be manufactured abroad, and as a result some time must elapse between the placing of an order for equipment and final delivery.

Although toll traffic has increased by 66 per cent. in ten years and is being handled with no greater delay than in 1939, the Post Office does not regard the present position with complacency, and there will be no avoidable delay in pressing on with the extension programme. Notwithstanding the difficulties, a quick toll service is at present provided on many routes even during peak traffic periods. On most circuits delay is largely confined to the mid-morning period, and to the beginning of the half-rate period at 6 p.m. It is interesting, as an indication of the growth of toll traffic since the war ended, to note that traffic during the year increased by 5,733,889 calls over the total number of calls (19,545,441) handled during the year ended 31st March, 1945.

For detailed particulars of the number of toll calls handled during the year, and the revenue derived therefrom, see Table No. 7 in Appendix.

TOLL EQUIPMENT

To meet the ever-increasing demand for toll service, additional toll-operating positions have been provided at Hamilton (eight positions) and Masterton (two positions). A new toll exchange of twenty-two positions is now being installed at Palmerston North, and extensions are being made at Dunedin (ten positions), Marton (two positions), and Whangarei (two positions). These will be brought into use during the coming year.