

INCREASE IN TOLL CALLS.

The outstanding feature of telephone business was the increased use of the telephone for toll purposes. The total number of calls exceeded 11,000,000, representing an increase on the previous year's traffic of over 7 per cent. The toll revenue amounted to £482,571, an increase of approximately 9 per cent. While this greater use of the toll lines was stimulated to some extent by greater commercial activity and by the more extensive use of the telephone in the social life of the community, probably the largest contributing factors were the increased speed of service, the improved quality of speech, and the greatly extended range of service that has been provided during recent years. The toll revenue for the year exceeded the revenue derived from telegrams, the relative figures being—Toll, £482,571; telegrams, £405,604. Ten years ago the corresponding figures were—Toll, £211,911; telegrams, £392,310.

RADIO-TELEGRAPH AND TELEPHONE SERVICES.

An outstanding radio event has been the inauguration on the 30th April, 1930, of the public radio-telephone service between Great Britain and Australia. Since its introduction the service has been extensively availed of, proving that the charges—£2 a minute—which may appear high in comparison with those levied in respect of short inland service, are no obstacle where the prompt transaction of business and urgent social communications are concerned. Arrangements have been proceeding for the institution of a radio-telephone service between New Zealand and Australia, which will, in addition, furnish facilities for communication with the United Kingdom and other European countries. It is expected that the New Zealand—Australia service will be established shortly.

The New Zealand radio-stations continue to give excellent service, and radio communication generally in New Zealand is keeping well abreast of modern advances. The increased reliability of the short-wave radio-telegraph service between Wellington and the Pacific islands has enabled the high-power long-wave station at Awanui to be closed. A similar direct service between New Zealand and Rarotonga has been inaugurated (12th May, 1930). The value of radio communication in the event of the dislocation of land lines was exemplified during the recent earthquake period, and for some time radio provided the only reliable means of communication between certain affected areas and the outside world.

BROADCASTING.

The broadcasting service continues to be conducted satisfactorily by the Radio Broadcasting Co. of New Zealand, Ltd. The steady increase in the number of receiving licenses issued indicates that the public generally appreciate the service, which has been considerably extended during the past year. On the 31st March, 1930, the number of receiving licenses totalled 53,407, as compared with 44,609 on the 31st March, 1929.

A feature of the service has been the increasing recourse to the toll lines of the Department for the purpose of relaying important national and sporting events. It is also satisfactory to record that the Broadcasting Co. is alive to the potentialities of rebroadcasting transmissions from the stations of other countries whenever technical circumstances permit.

While the programmes at the various stations are at all times open to criticism from listeners, it is obvious that the company makes a genuine endeavour to meet the varied viewpoints in this respect, and, in general, to intersperse the matter transmitted so as to provide satisfying fare for all tastes.

TELEPHONE-EXCHANGE SERVICES.

The Christchurch Telephone Exchange was converted to automatic working at midnight on the 14th September, 1929. The cut-over, a work of great magnitude and intricacy, constituted the most important telephone-exchange event of the year, and was accomplished without hitch, an undertaking which reflects much credit on the engineers and mechanics concerned.