

AUTOMATIC PRIVATE-BRANCH EXCHANGES.

There is a steady demand for the installation of automatic private-branch exchanges in the larger business houses where the "interphone" key-box system does not meet requirements. Although it was not until 1926 that private automatic branch exchanges were introduced into the Dominion, there are at present sixty-five such exchanges in operation, while an additional sixteen are under order or are in course of installation.

PARTY-LINE TELEPHONE RENTALS.

Adjustments of rentals consequent on the addition of subscribers to or the withdrawal of subscribers from party or rural telephone lines are now made from the first day of the month succeeding the change instead of, as in the past, from the date on which the next six-monthly rental payment is due. It is considered that the new procedure will be more suitable to the wishes of subscribers generally.

PUBLISHING OF TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES.

With a view to effecting a saving in the cost of printing and publishing telephone directories, it has been decided, as a temporary measure, to issue telephone directories yearly instead of half-yearly. The change will result in a saving of from £5,000 to £6,000 annually. The longer period during which the telephone directories will be in use has been provided for by a better quality of paper for the cover. In view of the longer intervals between the publications of the directories, six-monthly lists of additions, &c., have been arranged for each directory.

TELEPHONE-EXCHANGE SERVICE: TERM OF CONTRACT.

In view of the new system under which telephone subscribers are enabled to pay telephone rental on a monthly basis, it has been decided to reduce, in ordinary circumstances, the term of contract from one year to one month. Previously, subscribers were obliged to enter into contracts to hold service for a minimum period of one year. The term of contract for one month applies only to subscribers situated within base-rate areas of exchanges. In respect of new connections beyond base-rate areas, the term of contract is to be for one year, except that where nominal installation expenses are incurred the contract is not required to exceed one month. In cases where heavy construction charges are involved beyond base-rate areas, the term of contract is to be extended by one year for approximately every £200 of capital expenditure involved, with a maximum term of five years.

TELEPHONE-EXCHANGE CONNECTIONS: REDUCTION OF SERVICE-CONNECTION FEE IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

In many cases telephone-exchange subscribers who vacate their premises and who do not desire to continue telephone service fail to notify the Department of their intention to relinquish their connections. Under the regulations any incoming tenant who desires to take over such a connection has either to pay a transfer fee of 5s. and assume liability for the rental from the beginning of the next rental period, or to pay a service-connection fee of £1 and assume liability for rental from the date he occupies the premises.

Approval has been given for reduction of the service-connection fee from £1 to 5s. in all cases in which service for a new subscriber can, without complications, be established by the use of wires and an instrument already in place, provided that no change is required in the type or situation of the instrument.

SPECIAL TELEPHONE-EXCHANGE ATTENDANCE ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS DURING SUMMER MONTHS.

During the period 2nd November, 1930, to 26th April, 1931, the Sunday and holiday attendance usually observed at a number of the smaller exchanges—viz., 9 to 10 a.m. and 5 to 6 p.m.—has been extended to run from 9 a.m. to noon and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The question whether such attendance is to be extended as a permanent arrangement will depend upon the demand for the facility as indicated by the traffic results.

FIRE-ALARM TELEPHONE CIRCUITS: LISTING BY TELEPHONE AUTHORITIES.

The charges made by the Department in respect of fire-alarm telephone circuits leased by fire authorities have been reviewed. As a result it has been decided in the case of those lines which were in existence prior to the 1st October, 1923, and which have been erected at the cost of fire authorities, to reduce the annual charges from £4 per mile to £2 10s. per mile for metallic circuits, and from £3 per mile to £1 10s. per mile for earthworking circuits.

The reduction took effect from the 1st October, 1930.

LOUD-RINGING EXTENSION BELLS.

It has been found that there is a considerable demand on the part of telephone-exchange subscribers for the installation of loud-ringing extension bells in positions where the ordinary extension bells would not be audible. Applications for such equipment are now acceded to. Ordinary extension bells are installed upon payment of an installation charge of 12s. 6d. and a rental charge of 7s. 6d. per annum, or 8d. per month. In the case of applications for loud-ringing bells, the same installation charge (12s. 6d.) is applied, and the rental charge has been fixed at 10s. per annum, or at 11d. per month.