

## INFORMATION BUREAUX.

Arrangements were made for much useful information to be made available to subscribers through the "Information" attendants at the exchanges at each of the four chief centres. In addition to information relative to the telephone numbers of new subscribers, to removals and transfers of existing connections, and to other matters of general information concerning the telephone service, subscribers to the exchanges at the four centres may obtain the correct time, the results of sporting events (except horse-racing) as supplied by the secretaries of athletic associations and clubs, information regarding departures and arrivals of overseas mail-steamers, the times of closing of overseas mails, the names of ships within range of New Zealand radio stations, and times of departure and arrival of the more important trains, &c.

## PUBLIC CALL OFFICES (COIN IN THE SLOT).

The revenue derived during the year from public call offices (coin in the slot) bears testimony to the value of the utility to the public. As an indication of the extent to which some of these telephones are used it may be stated that the total number of calls made from the public call offices outside the General Post Office, Wellington, was nearly a quarter of a million.

Twenty-nine new installations were completed during the year. This number includes four temporary installations provided at the Dunedin Exhibition. In several of the larger towns additional installations are required to meet growing needs and the question of sites is being carefully looked into. The number of slot telephones available at Auckland and Wellington particularly will probably be materially increased.

In August, 1925, the flat rate of 1d. was made to apply to calls from all public call offices situated within the base-rate area of any exchange. Later, a charge for calls from public call offices outside the base-rate area was fixed as follows: Up to three miles from the base-rate boundary, 2d.; beyond three miles from the base-rate boundary, 3d.

The reduced charge which affects quite a number of installations is being brought into operation as equipment becomes available for the necessary alteration in mechanism in the apparatus affected. It is anticipated that the increased number of calls will soon more than make good the loss of revenue resulting from the lowering of the charge.

The new type of public-call-office telephone, referred to in last year's report, for use in areas where the telephone system is wholly automatic is now in general use in three automatic telephone centres—namely, Auckland, Wellington, and Palmerston North. With the adoption of the uniform charge of one penny per call from all public call offices in base-rate areas, the new automatic telephone has superseded in the base-rate areas at the automatic centres mentioned the one-penny, two-penny, and three-penny manual types previously in use. The operation of the new telephone is similar in all respects to that of the subscriber's automatic instrument, with the single exception that when the wanted party answers the call it is necessary for the caller to insert a penny in the machine to enable conversation to take place. The adoption of this "coin-last" principle was immediately recognized by the users of public call offices as a decided advance upon the methods previously in existence, and this feature combined with the uniformly satisfactory operation of the automatic telephones has caused a marked increase in the popularity of public call offices.

The total number of public call offices in operation on the 31st March, 1926, was 409, and the revenue derived from them amounted to £25,187, an increase of £540 on the figures for the previous year.

## LABORATORY.

With the rapid development now taking place in scientific and technological matters relating to telegraph and telephone services the technical laboratory of the Department is being called upon year by year to carry out an increasing number of investigations regarding the characteristics—mechanical, chemical, and electrical—of materials and apparatus before the materials and apparatus are brought into service. The number of tests and investigations now carried out annually is approximately 3,000, and the total value of the material coming under review is about £300,000. These developments have rendered necessary an extension of the laboratory premises, the greater amount of the additional space being utilized for the accommodation of the more delicate testing instruments and apparatus. The careful study and examination of the characteristics of electrical plant are becoming more and more essential in order that the Department may secure the full benefits which result from the application to telegraphy and telephony of modern invention and discovery.