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New Phone Setup Started To Save Time and Circuits

By VICTOR K. McELHENY

The Bell System plans today to put into commercial service between Chicago and Madison, Wis., the first leg of a nationwide signaling system designed to shorten the time it takes to place long distance calls and to economize on circuits for carrying the conversations.

The system is called Common Channel Interoffice Signaling, or C.C.I.S. for short. It handles key pieces of information about an attempted call—whether the phone on the other end is ringing, is busy or has been picked up—on circuits separate from those used for talking.

Cost of System

The Bell System plans to spend \$250 million over the next 10 years in installing Common Channel equipment, according to a prepared statement by the Long Lines Department of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

Use of the system is expect-

ed, the statement said, to save a total of \$500 million in capital outlays by 1986, and to cut annual operating expenses by up to \$30 million that year.

The savings are expected because one third of the 45 million long distance calls attempted now on an average business day do not get through, either because the called telephone is busy or doesn't answer. Each attempt ties up a voice circuit.

Because the system puts the "housekeeping" information about a call on a separate line from the talking circuit, it cannot be used by the tone-generating devices used by so-called "phone phreaks" to place long distance calls without paying.

The new signaling system is expected to spread rapidly, as equipment compatible with it is placed into service in Kansas City, Dallas, Jacksonville and Waukesha, Wis., later this year,

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and in about 37 other cities by the end of 1977.

The compatible equipment includes a new, ultrarapid long distance telephone exchange known as the Number 4 Electronic Switching System, first placed into service in Chicago between January and April, and a modified version of the Number 4-A Crossbar long distance exchange.

A total of about 21 Number 4 switching systems all equipped for Common Channel, are scheduled for service by the end of 1978. By the end of 1977, about 30 of the nation's 181 Number 4-A Crossbar exchanges are to be converted to the new signaling.

In the 1980's, according to Billy B. Oliver, vice president for engineering planning of Long Lines, the new system could be used for such features as an automatic call-back to busy numbers and provision for automatic acceptance of collect calls from pre-selected numbers.

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