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TELEPHONE FORCE TOTALS 59 AGENTS

Assignment Is to 'Protect Equipment and Revenues'

By FOSTER HAILEY

Harold A. McElroy, the New York Telephone Company security officer who is involved in the investigation of alleged bribe-taking by New York City policemen, is one of 59 men similarly employed by the company in its statewide operations.

Their assignment is "to protect the equipment and revenues" of the company. They do not serve as office or plant guards but rather as a company detective force. They investigate cases of robbery or vandalism of public telephones and similar matters. They must work closely with local police forces, since they do not have the power of arrest.

The security group is headed by a general security supervisor. Under him are four special agents in Manhattan, the Bronx-Westchester area, on Long Island and upstate. Under these special agents are six chief investigators, which is the title of Mr. McElroy, who has been suspended. Under these chief investigators are 48 investigators.

New Unit Set Up

When the present investigation, which started as an inquiry into bribery of police officers by gamblers, began to involve telephone employes, the New York Telephone Company, announced that it was creating a new Police Contact Group that would be under the direct control of the general security supervisor and would report directly to him. It would "deal exclusively with a similar high-level police group charged with following through on investigations," the announcement said.

At Police Headquarters it was

said that a group to deal with the telephone company on wire tapping and other matters was being organized but was not yet operating.

There is no sure way, telephone officials say, to prevent leakage of information from telephone company sources that would enable the police, or anyone else, to tap telephone wires. Many telephone technicians, including installers and repairman would have such information.

The last time wire tapping in New York City received wide attention was in 1955 when the New York Crime Commission, since disbanded, disclosed evidence of widespread use of that technique in divorce actions and in business.

A New York lawyer, John Broady, and a private detective, Charles Gris, were accused of hiring New York Telephone Company employes to tap wires for them. They operated from an apartment at 360 East 55th Street. Among the clients were John Jacob Astor, Charles Pfizer and Company, which then was attempting to protect its pending patent for the antibiotic "tetracycline," the Wildenstein Galleries at 19 East 64th Street and others.

The whole matter of wire tapping for private or business reasons was gone into by a Joint Legislative Committee headed by Assemblyman Anthony P. Savarese Jr., a Manhattan lawyer. The committee drew up several bills to close holes in the New York laws against wire tapping and when its program was finally adopted, disbanded in 1962.

Mr. Savarese said yesterday that he saw no need now for new legislation.