



Exploding The Phone

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TELEPHONE NIGHT HABITS

By F. A. COLLINS.

NEW YORK has acquired the long-distance telephone habit. Conversations carried on across the continent have become a commonplace. The city has long held the record for the frequency of its telephone calls, and now, by its general use of 3,000-mile circuits, has become readily the telephone centre of the world. The Pacific Coast and many far Western cities are in continuous telephone connection with New York every hour of the twenty-four.

The peak of the telephone traffic across the continent comes at night, when the rush continues without a break for hours. Much of the time there is actually a long waiting list of people at either end of the 3,000-mile circuits who must take their turns on the wires. The heavy traffic which begins in the early evening in New York continues throughout the night, so that daybreak finds many people awaiting connections. Despite the depression in business conditions, the extreme long-distance telephone habit shows a steady growth.

The regular nightly rush is largely due to the reduction in rates for night calls. During the day the charge is a little more than \$5 a minute for a California call. Beginning at 8:30 P. M., there is a half-rate for four hours, or until 12:30 A. M. From then on there is a 25 per cent. rate for four hours, or until 4:30 A. M. The hours sound rather difficult, but the great bulk of business telephoning is carried on in these two periods. Try to call up a friend in California while the city sleeps and you will soon discover that you must patiently wait your turn.

Long before 8:30 in the evening the calls for the Pacific Coast begin to bank up. You will be given a connection in your turn, but of course not before it comes. The same condition obtains in telephoning to all far Western cities. Half an hour past midnight, when the cheaper rate comes on, finds an even longer list of calls waiting to be put through. The volume of telephone traffic is so heavy at present that it is common for many of the calls, which have been made in the middle of the night or before to be carried into the regular rate period after 4:30 A. M.

It is surprising to find that the lateness of the hour and the difference in time between Eastern and Western cities should have so little effect on the volume of business. There is about three hours' difference, as all the country knows, between New York and the Pacific Coast cities. Since it is therefore always three hours earlier in California than in Atlantic Coast cities the advantage is greatly in favor of the West. The beginning of the nightly rush period is at 8:30 P. M. in New York and only 5:30 in the afternoon in San Francisco or Los Angeles. The beginning of the cheaper period, which is 12:30 in New York, rather late for a business transaction, is only 9:30 on the coast. California unquestionably derives considerable benefit from this state of affairs.

The great bulk of the night telephoning is, of course, about business affairs. The calls are not sent in, however, from the offices in the business section of the city. They have long since been closed, so the business man takes his office home with him. A large proportion of the long-distance calls throughout the night come from private residences uptown. The hotels also do an immense volume of such business, which is readily explained by the fact that traveling business men are in the hotels.

Although New York cannot control the difference in time the general use of long-distance telephones has had a marked influence on the country's business hours. The time in Chicago is one hour behind that of New York, but the telephone traffic with New York is so general that many business houses in Chicago have been forced to open when New York starts work, which is at 8 o'clock in the morning as far as Chicago is concerned. The volume of telephone traffic between the two cities is enormous. There are very many business houses in both cities which think no more of telephoning from one city to the other than they do of calling up a suburban town ten miles away.

Telephone communication is growing steadily between business centres. Distance seems to have little influence. The telephone inevitably follows the regular lines of trade. New York is therefore in constant telephone communication with the great business centres in the South and West. The volume of telephone traffic is an interesting indication of the growth of business between various cities and sections of the country. One of the most significant facts, for instance, is the recent growth of telephoning with Los Angeles. Formerly San Francisco carried on more long-distance conversations with New York than any far Western city, but today the traffic with Los Angeles has actually passed it. The growth of the moving picture industry doubtless explains much of this increase.

The long-distance telephone traffic is

of course not limited to New York. Philadelphia comes next among Eastern cities, then Boston, in the volume of traffic, while Washington is a poor fifth. The traffic between Northern cities and Florida has grown very rapidly of late. It is known technically as a seasonal traffic, and only reaches large proportions during the Winter months and the tourist season. The new line to Havana and other Cuban cities is also much used.

An extreme long distance call from coast to coast can be put through under normal conditions in from ten to fifteen minutes. When there is a long waiting list, as during the cut rate period, it, of course, takes much longer. The system of trunk lines has been so perfected that there is little more difficulty in arranging for a transcontinental call than for a message to another station in the same city. There are at present three through telephone lines between New York and the Pacific Coast, which bear the great burden of the traffic. When occasion calls, other lines, known as built-up circuits, are employed. It is possible on short notice to connect up the lines to various Western cities, such as St. Louis, Denver, Salt Lake City and so on, and by a roundabout way put through messages to the coast with trifling delay.

The next step in the development of long-distance telephoning will doubtless be the linking up of a transatlantic radio system with the land telephone lines. Transatlantic conversations are entirely feasible, and will be placed on a commercial basis whenever the demand warrants them. It is simply a question of the public being willing to pay enough to support the service. A remarkable test was made recently which established the practicability of the system beyond question.

A radio telephone installed aboard the S. S. Gloucester was used to broadcast a message from a point off the coast of Virginia. This was picked up at Asbury Park, N. J., and transmitted by transcontinental telephone wires to Los Angeles. From here the words were sent by radiophone to Catalina Island, thirty miles off the coast of California, where it was again carried by land wires to the terminus of the line. The message was heard with perfect distinctness by many people who listened in from New York.