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Phone Company Official Admits Increasing Difficulties in City

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY

A New York Telephone Company executive admitted under questioning yesterday that service in three central offices with 210,000 subscribers would probably be worse at the end of this year than it was at the end of 1968.

Charts provided to the Public Service Commission by the company also showed 23 other offices in the lower part of the state in which excess of demand over capacity could be more acute at the year's end than it was at its beginning.

Of those, the central offices in New York City alone have a total of 852,000, or somewhat less than one-third, of the city's telephone subscribers.

William G. Sharwell, the company's vice president for operations, made his statement under cross-examination by Vincent Furlong, a lawyer for the commission, as it continued hearings on the company's service.

Mr. Furlong concentrated his questioning on three central offices: at East 167th Street and Cruger Avenue in the Bronx, and at Bridge Street in Brooklyn.

Mr. Sharwell, after repeated questions by Mr. Furlong, said: "Service in the Bridge Street office on Dec. 31, 1969, will not be as good as the service there on Dec. 31, 1968."

The charts shown by Mr. Sharwell listed 31 upstate offices with the same "difficulties of demand-overcapacity as those in lower New York.

The company officer said later that the charts "represent our best estimate of the serv-

ice customers in those areas are going to get at that time."

Among these are the offices of the Cypress 3 exchange in the Bronx and the Plaza 8 exchange in the East 50's of Manhattan.

Plaza 8 Problems

The Plaza 8 exchange was particularly troublesome in the summer, with many numbers not in service, or with circuits so jammed that it was impossible to place calls to numbers in the exchange.

Commission Examiner Isadore E. Crade, who presided at yesterday's hearing, asked Mr. Sharwell what had happened to the Plaza 8 exchange.

"Plaza 8 was the only entity at our East 56th Street office that had any spare on it this spring, and when we added a few more lines we went slightly over its capacity," Mr. Sharwell said.

He said the exchange was now in good order, but that the East 56th Street office was one of those in which excess of demand over capacity will have worsened during 1969.

The company has said that unforeseeable expansion in the demand for telephone use caused its service problems, and it has proposed a \$10-billion expansion program over the next decade to improve its facilities.

It has also petitioned for a \$175-million rate increase. Hearings on that have ended, but the hearings on service will continue today at the commission offices, 199 Church Street, at 10 A.M.