

The Place of the Laboratories in the Bell System

The recent incorporation of the Bell Telephone Laboratories as one of the group of companies forming the Bell System offers an appropriate occasion for describing in some detail this highly developed research organization. As indicated above, its functions, while distinct from those of the engineering and development departments of the parent company, articulate with them in all respects. The research problems handled in the Laboratories are primarily physical and chemical in nature but work in many other fields of science is constantly in progress and the charter of the company has been very broadly drawn to recognize both the present diverse nature of telephone research and its inevitable future ramifications.

The Laboratories comprise a technical personnel of about 2,000 persons,—highly trained scientists, engineers and their assistants. This number is exclusive of the large groups of scientists and technical specialists in the engineering and development departments of the American Company.

So large a laboratory staff, adequately supplied with the best equipment, provides an exceptionally powerful instrument of research. It is a contribution of our day, and especially of large industrial enterprises, to the advancement of science. It has been developed in response to the need for practical application of research, and is indispensable for carrying forward such concerted programs of investigation as the advancement of the telephone industry, for example, demands. The large laboratory, working to a single end, as contrasted with the individual worker, seems to present a definite stage in an evolutionary sequence. In it the many highly trained individual minds are fused into one composite mind. Some day it will be possible to state the gain in effectiveness which such a closely knit association provides, but in the meantime there can be no doubt that the gain exists. The purpose of all organization lies in the fact that the efforts of a group of people working together