

tion system was first mooted the company had only 92 subscribers in the whole telephone area; their rates were very high and their service was so bad that out of 92 subscribers some 85 signed a memorial to the Postmaster-General vouching for the general inefficiency of the service. After a year's work the Tunbridge Wells Corporation had at August 7 no fewer than 834 lines at work. The company are supposed to possess some 600 others, so that the effect of a corporation system has been to provide the Tunbridge Wells Telephone area with 1,434 telephones in lieu of the original 92.

Brighton presents a field for telephonic development which is out of all proportion greater than that at Tunbridge Wells. The Brighton corporation have very wisely kept the company out of their routes. Overhead wayleaves are more difficult to get in Brighton than in most other places, so that the corporation, with power to make an unlimited use of the roads for underground work, would be out of all proportion in a better position to give a telephonic service than the company. The company's present Brighton system is single wire, and to meet the corporation competition two wires would have to be placed overhead where one is now. Under these circumstances, there can be no reasonable doubt that the corporation, with the additional advantages of the most modern plant, which they would be able to command, would create a large exchange in a very short time; so much so that Hove might be left entirely out of the question in the meantime, as the Hove citizens would only be too glad later on to take advantage of the cheaper rates and better service that the Brighton citizens would be in possession of as a consequence of the corporation system.

I would venture to point out that if Brighton town council gave up the telephone scheme now they would not only sacrifice all the time, trouble and money which have been expended in bringing it so successfully so far, but they will have to abandon for the future all hopes of the low rates for telephones that were intended to be charged, and will burden their burgesses permanently with telephone rates far in excess of anything that the circumstances call for. In the future the action of the council in abandoning their scheme will unquestionably be condemned, as, with the examples of other towns before them, the Brighton citizens will consider themselves very badly treated by having to pay £10 for telephones when other towns will be getting them for £6 or £5. I venture to predict that the act of abandoning, if it should be decided upon, will hereafter be characterized as timid and short-sighted.

If the scheme be dropped, the council will have to face the contingency of granting underground wayleaves to the company. If they once get into the hands of the company they will find them severe masters. The town clerk of Hull will tell you that his corporation granted the N.T.C. underground wayleaves some few years ago. Recently the Hull corporation went to parliament for power to effect some street improvements and they found themselves opposed by the N.T.C. on the ground that the improvements would necessitate a deviation of the company's telephone pipes, and they asked parliament to order that such deviations should be carried out at the expense of the corporation. It would seem, therefore, that even a change in the tramway routes could not be carried out without arrangement with the company. On another ground the Hull corporation have been threatened with litigation in consequence of this grant of wayleaves, and the same grant has been the cause of the N.T.C. introducing a Bill in parliament which the corporation had to oppose at great expense. Tunbridge Wells corporation granted the N.T.C. underground wayleaves. This has already led to one action at law which was carried through several courts, and a second action arising out of a different cause, but growing out of the same wayleaves, is threatened. The states of Guernsey had to fight the company through all the courts, including the Privy Council, and you may depend upon it that Brighton will not be singular if they place their necks under the yoke.

I would also commend to the consideration of the council those contractors who tendered for the carrying out of the work in conformity with the elaborate specifications which were prepared and advertised widely.