

II.—THE STRIKE OF TELEPHONE OPERATORS AT TORONTO—ITS CAUSES, NATURE AND INCIDENTS.

General statement of causes.—Increase in hours of work.—A five-hour schedule introduced at Main Exchange in 1903.—Continuance and extension of 5-hour schedule.—Determining factors in arrangement of operators schedule of hours.—The traffic curve.—The sex and age of employees.—Advantage of 5-hour schedule.—Objection to 5-hour schedule.—Inefficient service leads to investigation.—Report by H. V. Hayes, Chief Engineer of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.—Report by Jos. C. J. Baldwin, expert of same company.—Important communication of local manager upon these reports.—A conference of officers of company, held at Montreal during first week of January, 1907.—Inefficient service due to high pressure of work and low wages. Insufficiency of remuneration to meet cost of board and lodging.—The necessity of increasing wages leads to consideration of change of hours.—Difficulties in the way of changing hours without injustice to employees until equipment at Toronto improved.—Evident wish of Montreal conference to effect change in wages and hours immediately.—Decision to change notwithstanding difficulties.—Chief operators and assistants of local staff consulted, but not operators.—Letter of local manager (January 16) recommending change to 8 hours schedule.—Reasons for change clearly set forth.—Letter of General Superintendent (January 23) authorizing change to be made on February 1.—Local staff notified of intended change (January 25, 26).—Immediate signs of dissatisfaction among local staff.—View taken by operators of proposed change.—Meeting of operators held (Sunday, January 27).—A petition signed and solicitor consulted (Monday, January 28).—Company refuses to see solicitor or to consider petition.—A personal interview with manager discussed.—A strike threatened for Friday, February 1.—Long-distance operators wait on local manager (Wednesday, January 30).—A committee of employees wait on His Worship, Mayor Coatsworth (January 30).—The Mayor secures the intervention of officers of the Dominion and the provincial governments.—Correspondence between His Worship the Mayor and the Minister of Labour.—Intervention of Deputy Minister of Labour for Canada, and Secretary of Ontario Bureau of Labour (Thursday, January 31).—The local manager interviewed.—The strike precipitated by the company.—Letter from Deputy Minister of Labour to local manager, suggesting joint conference and arbitration (January 31).—Letter in reply from local manager to Deputy Minister of Labour.—Mass meeting of operators held at Labour Temple.—Resolution passed requesting government to order a public inquiry.—Operators agree to return to work if investigation made into grievances under oath.—Royal Commission appointed.—Scope of the commission.—Commission enter upon duties at Toronto, February 4.—100 employees brought in from outside localities to temporarily fill places of strikers.—Strike lasts three and a half days.—Service partially crippled.—Strike ends February 4.

THE differences between the Bell Telephone Company and its employees which resulted in a large number of the employees at Toronto going on strike on January 31 were the outcome of the company's decision, reached during the month of January,

to enforce a new schedule of wages and hours whereby the hours of work of its operators were to be increased from five to eight per day, and the manner in which this decision was made known to those whom it concerned. The circumstances which led up to the company's action require to be set forth at some length.

In 1903 the company undertook the enlargement of its premises on Temperance street and the installation of a new equipment. During the carrying on of this work the operators were subjected to considerable inconvenience, to offset which, it is alleged, the company made a reduction in their hours of work, from a day of eight hours with reliefs and intermissions to one of five consecutive hours, the wages scale remaining unchanged so far as the company's then employees were concerned. To newcomers this scale was at different periods of the year as follows :—

LEARNERS AND RELIEF OPERATORS.

\$16 per month for first 6 months.
\$18 per month for next 3 months.
At end of 9 months placed on regular staff.

REGULAR STAFF.

\$20 per month for one year.
\$22.50 per month for next year.
\$25 per month for next year and thereafter.

LONG DISTANCE.

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| After 1 year..... | \$ 22 50 |
| After 2 years..... | 25 00 |
| After 3 years..... | 27 50 |
| After 5 years..... | 30 00 |
| Supervisors..... | 32 50 |

On August 1, 1903, the above minimum salary of \$16 was raised to \$18 for first six months and thereafter operators were at the end of six months placed on regular staff.

The arrangement introduced as a temporary expedient at the main exchange in October, 1903, was continued as such throughout 1904, and then from December, 1904, as an experiment 'on its merits' until January, 1905, when it appears to have become the adopted and generally recognized practice of the company. The five consecutive hours day was extended to the branch exchanges on or before January 1, 1905.

A word of explanation may here be given as to the alleged determining factors in the arrangement of a time schedule for telephone operators. In the first place, the work of necessity varies considerably from day to day, though in volume it follows an order very similar. To this is given the technical name 'the traffic curve.' Commencing at seven o'clock in the morning the curve mounts gradually, with the increase in the number of telephone communications as the day advances, until by 11 o'clock in the morning the busiest hour, or what is called 'the peak of the load,' is reached. A falling off occurs as the noon hour is approached, and the rise does not again commence till on toward three in the afternoon, when there is a gradual increase in volume till 'the peak of the afternoon load' is reached about 5 o'clock. From this time, under normal conditions, the work eases off and there is a steady decline in the